

HERO SYSTEM SIXTH EDITION



STEVEN S. LONG

VOLUME

2

COMBAT & ADVENTURING

HERO SYSTEM SIXTH EDITION



VOLUME TWO
COMBAT & ADVENTURING

HERO SYSTEM 6TH EDITION

VOLUME 2: COMBAT & ADVENTURING

DEDICATION

*To Andy, who was taken
from us far too soon.*

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You're all Heroes!

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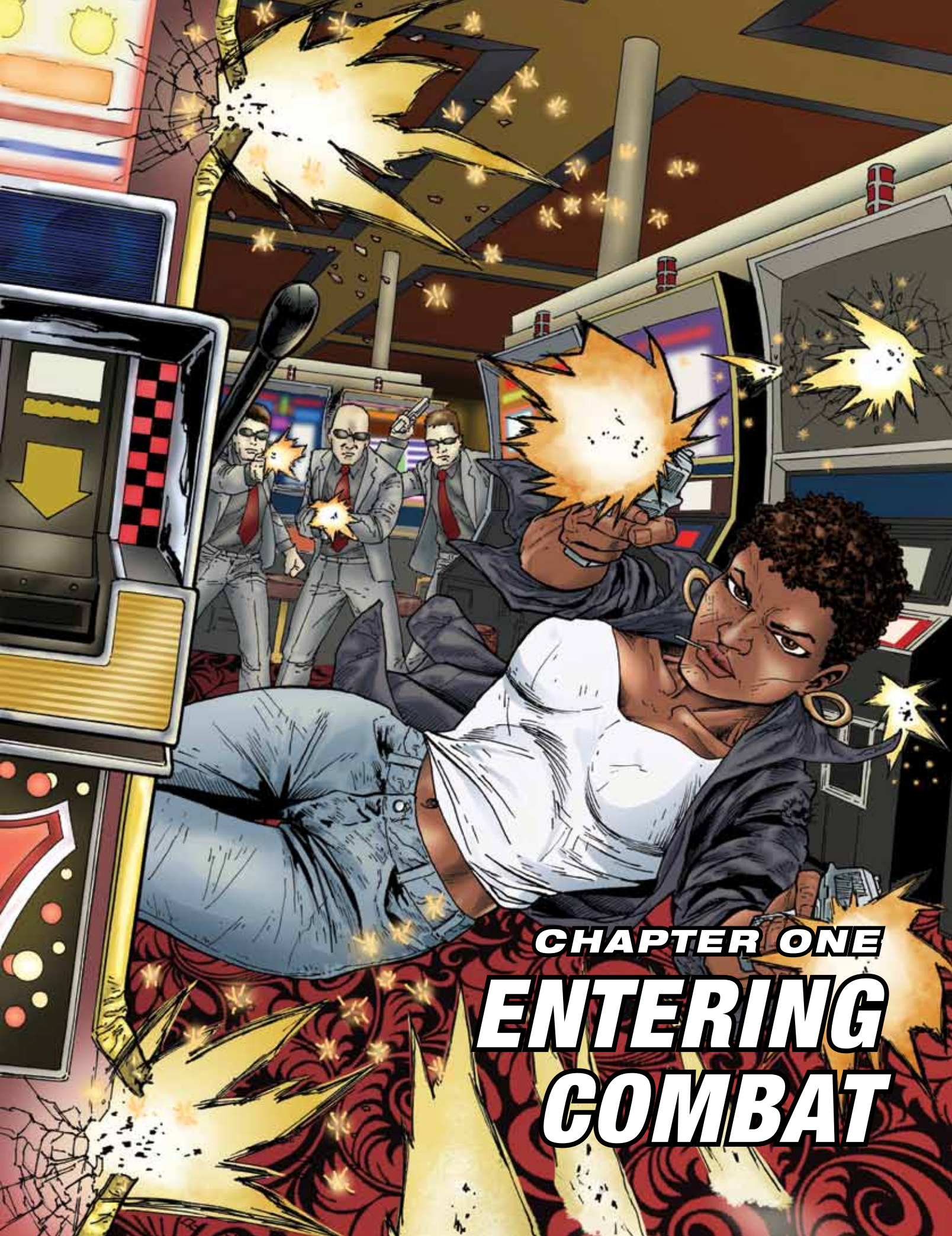
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CHAPTER ONE
ENTERING
COMBAT



BEFORE COMBAT

1

WHERE'S THE INTRODUCTION?

See 6E1 (*Volume 1: Character Creation*) for the introduction to *The HERO System 6th Edition*.

Most of Volume II of *The HERO System 6th Edition* provides rules for running combats and similar encounters.

Combat ranges from throwing a punch, to drawing and shooting a pistol, to casting a lightning bolt spell. *The HERO System* breaks combat down into several steps. The rules explain each step thoroughly, with examples to illustrate how you might conduct actual game combats.

The HERO System covers all types of combat with a set of simple rules. As you gain experience with these rules, there are optional rules you can use to make your combats more “realistic” and exciting. Add in optional rules when you feel more comfortable with the game and can deal with the added complexity. For the most part, the optional rules are better for Heroic games than Superheroic games.

COMBAT AND NONCOMBAT TIME

In the *HERO System* there are two types of time: combat and noncombat.

Combat time is very precise, measured second by second, with exact actions and results. Because so much can happen in only a few seconds of combat time, there are extensive rules for playing it out. It may take a couple of hours (real time) to play out a combat that’s just a few seconds or a couple of minutes (game time) long. As you become more familiar with the rules and rhythm of the game, the combats you run will typically take less time.

Noncombat time, on the other hand, isn’t as exact. This is when the GM sets the scene for the players, tells them what’s happening to their characters, and begins (or advances) the plot of the session’s adventure. Hours, days, or weeks of game time can pass in a few minutes of real time as the GM describes what’s happening. This tremendous variation in time is similar to what happens in movies and novels. In a novel, weeks may pass in one paragraph or sentence, or a whole chapter may describe a scene that lasts for a minute.

Think of a game session as the telling of a story with the help of the players. First, the GM describes where the characters are, either dealing with each one individually or starting with the group as a whole. As he describes the setting, the characters will probably want to do things. For example, the GM says, “Reynolds, you hear the high-pitched whine of a laser pistol shot. It sounds like it’s right around the corner.” The player, acting out the part of Reynolds, describes what he does in response: “I’ll run around the corner to see what’s happening.” The GM shouldn’t worry about exactly how far it is to the corner, or how long it takes Reynolds to get there, because this is still noncombat time. What’s important to the adventure is that Reynolds gets to the corner, looks around, and sees an assassin shooting the ambassador.

Unless it looks like there’s going to be a fight (or some other sequence you need to detail precisely, like a car chase), you don’t have to be exact about things like time or distance. It’s not really important to know exactly how long it takes Reynolds to eat his breakfast, drive to work, or talk to his boss. The GM starts the adventure by telling the characters their current locations and activities. After that, the adventure may include some investigation, conversation between the players and NPCs, or perhaps some mood-setting emotional scenes. All this happens in noncombat time.

Often the event that marks the change from noncombat to combat time is when the GM has the PCs make Perception Rolls to spot their enemies (or vice-versa).

SENSES IN THE HERO SYSTEM

Characters are constantly perceiving — seeing, hearing, and smelling the world around them. In some games, they may even have exotic Senses such as “x-ray vision” or the ability to detect magic. Here’s how they use those Senses.

Perception Rolls

Characters aren’t always aware of everything going on around them, especially during combat. Whenever something’s obvious, the GM tells the character about it (“You see a ’67 Chevy in front of you”). But he may require characters to make *Perception Rolls* (PER Rolls) to notice something inobvious, or to notice something during a combat or crisis situation. Every character’s base PER Roll equals 9 plus his Intelligence divided by 5:

$$\text{Perception Roll} = (9 + (\text{INT}/5)) \text{ or less}$$

For example, a character with INT 14 has a PER Roll of $(9 + (14/5) =) 12$ or less.

To make a PER Roll, the character should roll this number or less on 3d6. The GM should apply modifiers to this roll depending on the circumstances (see below).

THE RANGE OF SENSES

Many Senses can perceive things at a distance — in other words, they work at Range. For example, characters can see and hear things far away.

The *HERO System* rules don’t establish any specific outer limit or boundary for a Ranged Sense. However, the Range Modifier (6E2 38) applies to all PER Rolls. In effect, this restricts the Range of a Sense significantly. However, the GM should also establish any other limits that seem appropriate based on common sense, dramatic sense, and considerations of game balance. For example, even if a character on Earth rolls a 3 on his Sight Group PER Roll, he can’t see what’s happening on Mars. As a guideline, when the Range Modifier reaches the point where it reduces a character’s PER Roll to 0 or below, beyond the outer limit of that Range Modifier category things are too blurry, indistinct, or obscured for the character to perceive, even if he rolls a 3.

TARGETING AND NONTARGETING SENSES

Of course, not all Senses are equal — a normal human can learn a lot more about someone by looking at him than by smelling him. To reflect this difference, the *HERO System* divides all Senses into two categories: Targeting and Nontargeting.

A *Targeting Sense* is a Sense a character can use to determine the exact location of a target. For normal humans, Sight is the only Targeting Sense.

A *Nontargeting Sense* is one with which the character can, at best, sense the general location of a target. For normal humans, Hearing and Smell are Nontargeting Senses. Taste and Touch

both have no range, so characters can’t use them to locate targets at all (to use these Senses, the character would already have to have found his opponent).

LACK OF SENSES IN COMBAT

In combat, a character must normally use a Targeting Sense to detect his target. If he can do so, there’s no change in his OCV or DCV, and combat proceeds normally.

However, characters can’t always perceive their opponents with Targeting Senses. For example, a character may have been blinded by a Flash, or his opponent could be Invisible. When a character cannot perceive his opponent with any Targeting Sense, he suffers modifiers to his OCV and DCV:

- In **HTH Combat**, the character is at $\frac{1}{2}$ OCV and $\frac{1}{2}$ DCV. This applies both to when he makes attacks in HTH Combat, and is attacked in HTH Combat.
- In **Ranged Combat**, the character is at 0 OCV and $\frac{1}{2}$ DCV. This applies both to when he makes attacks in Ranged Combat, and is attacked in Ranged Combat.

If a character can make a PER Roll with a Nontargeting Sense (a Half Phase Action) to perceive a particular target, then against that target only he is at -1 DCV, $\frac{1}{2}$ OCV when attacked or attacking in HTH Combat, and full DCV, $\frac{1}{2}$ OCV when attacked from or attacking at Range. Against all other targets he is affected by the standard “lack of Targeting Sense” modifiers described above. The benefits of making this roll last until the beginning of the character’s next Phase; if he wants them to continue, he has to use another Half Phase Action and succeed with another PER Roll.

Example: *Orion, under attack by the supervillain team Eurostar, has been Flashed, and therefore can’t see. He’d normally be $\frac{1}{2}$ DCV, $\frac{1}{2}$ OCV in HTH Combat and $\frac{1}{2}$ DCV, 0 OCV at Range — a sitting duck. However, he makes his Hearing PER Roll against Durak. He’s now only -1 DCV, $\frac{1}{2}$ OCV in HTH Combat and full DCV, $\frac{1}{2}$ OCV at Range against Durak only. He’s still at $\frac{1}{2}$ OCV and DCV in HTH and $\frac{1}{2}$ DCV, 0 OCV at Range against all other opponents.*

MOVING WHILE BLIND

The *HERO System* rules have no specific penalties or restrictions for moving while a character is blinded (*i.e.*, unable to perceive his surroundings with a Targeting Sense). The GM may impose any penalty he considers appropriate. A character could usually eliminate the penalty by moving slowly (2m per Phase as a Full Phase Action) — that way he can feel his way safely past anything he might trip over or bump into. If a character runs into a sufficiently large object, he may take Move Through damage based solely on his velocity (see *Collisions*, 6E2 72).



Sense Groups

The *HERO System* divides Senses into seven Sense Groups: Hearing, Mental, Radio, Sight, Smell/Taste, Touch, and Unusual. The Senses with which a character is born, or that he later naturally develops, are considered Inherent. Other Senses, such as Infrared Perception bought as OAF Night-vision Goggles, are only Persistent (at best).

Although normal Senses, those which all humans possess, are not exactly “Powers” *per se*, they have a Character Point value so a character can sell them back to represent blindness, deafness, or similar conditions. See 6E1 209.

THE SIMULATED SENSE GROUP RULE

Characters in *HERO System* games often have unusual Senses bought using the *Enhanced Senses Power* (6E1 209). Many of these Senses (primarily those belonging to the Unusual Sense Group) are subject to the *Simulated Sense Rule*.

The Simulated Sense Rule is this: if one of a character’s Senses is based on or “mimics” one of the standard Senses, that Sense is affected by Sense-Affecting Powers that affect the mimicked Sense’s Sense Group *and* by any Sense-Affecting Powers that specifically target that Sense. It receives the Sense Modifiers (like Sense and Targeting) associated with that Sense Group for free. The rules usually refer to this as “assigning” a Sense to a particular Sense Group.

Example: *Infrared Perception bought to represent a character’s ability to see heat patterns is assigned to the Sight Sense Group — it “simulates” Sight. If the character’s Sight Group Senses are Flashed, that Flash affects his Infrared Perception. On the other hand, his Infrared Perception automatically gains several Sense Modifiers (Discriminatory, Range, Sense, and Targeting) for free, because all Sight Group Senses have those Modifiers.*

This rule typically applies to the members of the Unusual Sense Group, Sense-like Talents, and so forth. For example, Spatial Awareness and many forms of Detect have the special effect of being “super-sensitive” or “super-powerful” versions of one of the standard Senses. Spatial Awareness could be a form of Sight powerful enough to see right through most objects. It would be affected by a Flash versus the Sight Group, or by a Flash versus Spatial Awareness specifically.

If a Sense is not defined as “belonging to” one of the standard Sense Groups, it can only be affected by Sense-Affecting Powers individually. For example, Combat Sense and Danger Sense both “stand alone” — they don’t simulate any Sense Group, so only Sense-Affecting Powers specifically designed to affect them (such as with Darkness versus Combat Sense, Invisibility to Danger Sense, and so forth) work against them.

Because of the Simulated Sense Rule, characters cannot use Sense-Affecting Powers on the Unusual Sense Group as a whole. They must affect its Senses individually, or whatever Sense Group an Unusual Sense belongs to as a whole.

THE HEARING SENSE GROUP

The Hearing Sense Group includes Normal Hearing (which every character possesses unless he sells it back) and any other Enhanced Senses based primarily upon hearing. Active Sonar and Ultrasonic Perception are almost always bought as part of the Hearing Sense Group.

The Hearing Sense Group provides the following Sense Modifiers: Discriminatory, Range, Sense. The Discriminatory effect provided by the Hearing Group is not the full Discriminatory obtained by buying that Sense Modifier, but rather an effect of somewhat cruder degree. For example, a character can tell a bird’s song from a trumpet solo, but might not be able to tell two different types of bird songs apart. Characters can make Normal Hearing (or the entire Hearing Sense Group) fully Discriminatory by paying the usual cost. Although Normal Hearing has Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), the Hearing Sense Group does not provide this Sense Modifier to other Senses assigned to the group.

Normal Hearing is worth 25 Character Points. Lack of hearing in one ear (a 15-point Physical Complication [Frequently, Slightly Impairing]) means Hearing PER Rolls are at -3.

THE MENTAL SENSE GROUP

The Mental Sense Group includes Mental Awareness, Mind Scan, and any other Enhanced Senses based primarily upon mental powers. To a limited extent, Telepathy (which acts as both “mental hearing” and a “mental voice”) and Mind Link (a more limited form of Telepathy) are also a part of this Sense Group for purposes of applying Sense-Affecting Powers. No character has any Mental Group Senses normally.

The Mental Sense Group provides the following Sense Modifiers: Range. Mental Awareness functions as a Sense, but the Mental Sense Group does not provide this Sense Modifier to other Senses assigned to the group.

Mental Awareness allows a character to perceive the user and target of Mental Powers, which are normally not perceivable (except to those two characters). Mental Awareness is not a 360-Degree Sense, Discriminatory, or a Targeting Sense. Discriminatory Mental Awareness would allow the character to determine (with a successful PER Roll) the specific Mental Power being used, the level of power (*i.e.*, Active Points, plus or minus 10%), and whether the power is being used grossly or subtly. Analyze with Mental Awareness allows the character to know the exact Active Points in the Power, and any Advantages bought for it.



THE RADIO SENSE GROUP

The Radio Sense Group includes Radio Perception and any other Enhanced Senses based primarily on radio. No character has any Radio Group Senses normally. High Range Radio Perception, Radar, and Radio Perception/Transmission are almost always bought as part of the Radio Sense Group.

The Radio Sense Group provides the following Sense Modifiers: Range, Sense. Radio Perception has Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), but the Radio Sense Group does not provide this Sense Modifier to other Senses assigned to the group. However, many of them buy it separately — HRRP, Radio Perception, and Radio Perception/Transmission all have it. Radar does not have it, but is a Targeting Sense.

THE SIGHT SENSE GROUP

The Sight Sense Group is the most important Sense Group and the one most often affected by Sense-Affecting Powers. It includes Normal Sight (which every character possesses unless he sells it back), Nightvision, and any Enhanced Senses based primarily on sight. Infrared Perception and Ultraviolet Perception are almost always bought as part of the Sight Sense Group.

The Sight Sense Group provides the following Sense Modifiers: Discriminatory, Range, Sense, Targeting. The Discriminatory effect provided by the Sight Group is not the full Discriminatory obtained by buying that Sense Modifier, but rather an effect of somewhat cruder degree. For example, a character can tell two people apart based on their visual appearance, but cannot always determine a person's ethnicity or religion through Sight. Characters can make Normal Sight (or the entire Sight Sense Group) fully Discriminatory by paying the usual cost.

Normal Sight is worth 35 Character Points. Blindness has severe effects on a character. Not only can he not make Sight PER Rolls, but his CV may be reduced (see 6E2 7). A character who's blind in one eye (and thus lacks depth perception) suffers no penalties in HTH Combat but is at ½ OCV in Ranged Combat (in most campaigns this is a Frequently, Greatly Impairing Physical Complication worth 20 points).

THE SMELL/TASTE SENSE GROUP

The Smell/Taste Sense Group includes Normal Smell and Normal Taste (which every character possesses unless he sells them back) and any Enhanced Senses based primarily on smell or taste.

The Smell/Taste Sense Group provides the following Sense Modifiers: Discriminatory, Range (Smell only), Sense. The Discriminatory effect provided by the Smell/Taste Group is not the full Discriminatory obtained by buying that Sense Modifier, but rather an effect of somewhat cruder degree.

For example, a character can tell a steak from a potato by smell or taste, but can't necessarily identify every ingredient in either dish. Characters can make Normal Smell or Normal Taste (or the entire Smell/Taste Sense Group) fully Discriminatory by paying the usual cost.

Although Normal Smell has Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), the Smell/Taste Sense Group does not provide this Sense Modifier to other Senses assigned to the group. Normal Smell works at Range, and provides this effect to other Smell-based Senses; Normal Taste and Taste-based Senses do not have Range.

Normal Smell and Normal Taste are each worth 5 Character Points.

THE TOUCH SENSE GROUP

The Touch Sense Group includes Normal Touch (which every character possesses unless he sells it back) and any Enhanced Senses based primarily on touch.

The Touch Sense Group provides the following Sense Modifiers: Discriminatory, Sense. The Discriminatory effect provided by the Touch Group is not the full Discriminatory obtained by buying that Sense Modifier, but rather an effect of somewhat cruder degree. For example, a character can tell a dollar bill from a piece of ordinary paper of the same size, but cannot tell a \$1 bill from a \$5 bill. Characters can make Normal Touch (or the entire Touch Sense Group) fully Discriminatory by paying the usual cost.

Normal Touch has Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), but the Touch Sense Group does not provide this Sense Modifier to other Senses assigned to the group. Normal Touch is not a Targeting Sense, but touching a target would allow the character to make a PER Roll with Normal Touch (a Nontargeting Sense) to reduce the standard penalty for not perceiving the target with a Targeting Sense.

Characters generally cannot make themselves Invisible to Touch; this is more or less the same thing as Desolidification and should be bought using that Power. Characters can, however, Flash the Touch Sense Group (with effects indicated below) or create Images that affect it (see 6E1 237-38).

Normal Touch is worth 10 Character Points. A lack of Normal Touch (whether permanent or as the result of a Sense-Affecting Power) generally imposes penalties of -3 (or more) on DEX-Based Skills, OCV in HTH Combat (and even some Ranged combat, if the character has to, for example, shoot weapons), and any other activities requiring dexterous action. Lack of Touch does *not* render a character immune to pain or reduce the degree of damage he takes from attacks. He still takes full damage — he just doesn't feel it. Thus, the character may think he's perfectly uninjured and healthy, when in fact he's about to collapse due to system shock (STUN damage) or has suffered a life-threatening wound (BODY damage). However, at the GM's discretion, characters who lack Touch may receive bonuses to rolls to resist pain.

THE UNUSUAL SENSE GROUP

This Sense Group includes a hodgepodge of Senses that don't belong in any other group: Active Sonar, Clairsentience, Detect, High Range Radio Perception, Infrared Perception, Radar, Radio Perception/Transmission, Spatial Awareness, Sensory Talents, Ultraviolet Perception, Ultrasonic Perception, and any form of Detect that's not primarily based upon some other Sense Group.

The Unusual Sense "Group" really isn't a Sense Group in the normal meaning of the term — instead, it's a way of categorizing several odd Senses that don't fit in another Sense Group. Characters cannot buy Sense-Affecting Powers that affect the entire Unusual Sense Group (unless the GM permits this). Instead, the Simulated Sense Rule applies to the Senses in this group: they're affected by Sense-Affecting Powers that affect the Sense Group the character assigns them to.

CLAIRSENTIENCE

Clairsentience has several unique properties. Its focal point can be at any location within the Power's range, instead of just at the character himself (other Senses' focal points are the character's sensory organs, unless the Sense has the *Adjacent Sense Modifier*). From that perception point the character uses the Sense in the standard fashion, and the Range Modifier applies.

Clairsentience is thus "Indirect" in some ways (since a character can project it "through" walls, around corners, and so forth). It can approximate Improved Arc Of Perception — the character can establish the perception point wherever he prefers within his range, including behind him, and sense in any direction from that perception point — but is not inherently a 360-Degree Sense. For a discussion of how Sense-Affecting Powers affect Clairsentience, refer to *Sense-Affecting Powers*, below.

For purposes of Sense-Affecting Powers, Precognitive Clairsentience and Retrocognitive Clairsentience should be considered separate from each other and from normal Clairsentience. Thus, a Flash versus Clairsentience affects a character's ordinary Clairvoyance or Clairaudience, but not his Precognition or Retrocognition; a Flash versus his Precognition won't affect his normal Clairsentience or Retrocognition. If a character has more than one form of Clairsentience (say, Clairvoyance and Clairaudience), it's the GM's decision, based on special effects and logic, as to whether they're affected separately or together by Sense-Affecting Powers.

Characters can buy Clairsentience as a Targeting Sense. However, this can be extremely unbalancing in combat, since it allows characters to hide behind complete cover and still perceive their opponents. Therefore GMs should be very cautious about allowing any character to buy Clairsentience as a Targeting Sense. However, even if Clairsentience is Targeting, a character cannot establish LOS with it (unless the GM permits otherwise).

DETECT

Detects allow the character to perceive virtually anything he can think of — enemies, minds, life force, gold, secret doors, starships, you name it. Typically a Detect is subject to the Simulated Sense Rule — for example, if a character has the ability to "smell" gold, his Detect Gold is part of his Smell/Taste Sense Group.

SPATIAL AWARENESS

Spatial Awareness allows a character to perceive his surroundings without contacting them. This usually means he can perceive through barriers and other solid objects, as appropriate. It's often defined as some sort of super-refined version of one of the ordinary senses, and thus is subject to the Simulated Sense Rule. Spatial Awareness does not operate in 360 Degrees and is not Discriminatory, but is a Targeting Sense. If Spatial Awareness is bought Discriminatory, it can sense fine details, but still isn't a full substitute for Sight (for example, it can't perceive differences in color or lighting).

EVEN MORE UNUSUAL SENSES

This "category" includes several "Senses" that don't belong in any other group, not even the Unusual Sense Group. These Senses are covered by the Simulated Sense Rule.

Voice As A "Sense": A character cannot use his voice to "perceive" anything. However, since characters' voices are silenced by Darkness that affects the Hearing Group, the voice has some Sense-like aspects. Voice is worth 25 points as a Power.

Sense Talents: Several Talents are unusual types of Senses. See 6E1 104 for further discussion.

OTHER SENSES AND SENSE GROUPS

If he wishes, the GM can establish other "Sense Groups" based on common special effects. For example, all of a character's Senses that derive from his mystic powers might belong to a "Mystic Sense Group," which would then be subject to Sense-Affecting Powers directed against it.

The GM can also establish other Senses if he wishes to. For example, he could create "Mystic Awareness," which functions just like Mental Awareness regarding mystic or magical energies.



Perception Roll Modifiers

Like Skill Rolls, PER Rolls are subject to modifiers. Some of these modifiers are the same as those for Skills; others are different, or are specific to PER Rolls based on a given Sense.

SKILL MODIFIERS

As a general rule, GMs can apply the following types of Skill Modifiers to PER Rolls (see 6E1 58 for details): modifiers for Routine, Easy, Difficult, and so on; taking extra time; and excellent or poor conditions. Other such modifiers apply as the GM sees fit.

RANGE MODIFIER

Attempts to perceive things at a distance are subject to the Range Modifier. See 6E2 38.

MODIFIERS FOR SPECIFIC SENSES

The accompanying Perception Modifier tables show modifiers for specific objects or conditions which affect those Senses. The GM should add up all of the modifiers; if the total is positive, then the character can probably perceive the object, substance, or phenomena without making a PER Roll. If the total is zero or negative, the character has to make a PER Roll with that modifier to perceive the subject.

If a character tries to perceive someone using Stealth, they compete in a Skill Versus Skill Contest. In essence, you subtract the amount the character makes his Stealth roll by from the other character's PER Roll. A failed Stealth roll does not automatically mean the character is perceived; if the other character fails his PER Roll, the Stealth still works, albeit barely.

These modifiers do not apply to a character's CV in combat; they apply only to PER Rolls. However, the GM may require characters to make PER Rolls every Phase in combat if it's difficult to see (or otherwise perceive) their opponents. Any character who fails a roll suffers the standard penalties for not being able to perceive his target with a Targeting Sense.

SIGHT PERCEPTION MODIFIERS

Situation	Modifier
Contrast	
Extremely high contrast (<i>e.g.</i> , a lighted object in darkness)	+5
Low contrast	-1
High contrast (<i>e.g.</i> , black object on white)	+1
Darkness and shadow	
Night	-2
Dark night	-4
Moving object	+1
Object Size (Large)*	
Large (up to 2x human sized)	+2
Enormous (3-4x human sized)	+4
Huge (5-8x human sized)	+6
Gigantic (9-16x human sized)	+8
Gargantuan (17-32x human sized)	+10
Colossal (33-64x human sized)	+12
...and so forth	
Object Size (Small)*	
Small (down to ½ human size)	-2
Diminutive (down to ¼ human size)	-4
Tiny (down to 1/8 human size [about 1 foot])	-6
Minuscule (down to 1/16 human size)	-8
Minute (down to 1/32 human size)	-10
Insectile (down to 1/64 human size [about 1 inch])	-12
...and so forth	
Sight aids	
Binoculars	+2
Telescope	+3
Time spent looking	
Looking (Half Phase)	+1
Long look (Full Phase, ½ DCV)	+2

*: Object Size modifiers to Sight PER Rolls most often apply when someone's trying to hide the object, it's a long way away, or the like. A small object isn't inherently hard to see when it's in plain sight; it's simply more likely to be hidden by something or the like.

HEARING PERCEPTION MODIFIERS

Situation	Modifier
Doors	
Open a door	+0
Slowly open a door (1 Phase)	-2
Slamming a door	+2
Echoes	
Generally	+3
Locating source of echoes	-3
The environment	
Downwind from noise	+1
Foggy weather	-1
High contrast sound	+1
Noisy area	-3
Quiet area	+3
Upwind from noise	-1
Movement	
Run (12m+)	+1
Fast walk (6m)	+0
Normal walk (4m)	-1
Careful walk (2m)	-2
Time spent listening	
Listen (half Phase)	+1
Listen close (1 Phase, ½DCV)	+2
Vehicles	
Hovercar	+1
Spaceship taking off	+5
Truck	+3
Voices and like noises	
Loud conversation	+1
Shout	+2
Whisper	-3
Whistle	+3
Weapons	
Grenade	+6
Pistol	+3
Rifle	+5
Submachine gun	+4
Miscellaneous	
Body hitting ground	+0
Breaking glass	+1
Car alarm	+3
Parabolic microphone	+4
Punch	+0
Siren	+4
Sneeze	+1

SMELL PERCEPTION MODIFIERS

Although the sense of Smell is technically Ranged (a character can smell something across the room), for humans it isn't as precise as either Sight or Hearing. Moreover, as the distance to the object increases, the chance to smell it decreases dramatically.

Characters can use their sense of Smell in combat, but only with great difficulty. Attempting to Smell an opponent is automatically a -5 to the PER Roll, along with normal penalties for range. (This does not apply if the character has bought Smell as a Targeting Sense.) Here are some additional modifiers:

Situation	Modifier
People	
Person	+0
Smelly person (unbathed or perfumed)	+2
Extremely smelly person	+4
Wind	
Downwind, light breeze	+1
Downwind, strong breeze	-1
Upwind, light breeze	-2
Upwind, strong breeze	-4
Miscellaneous	
Dung	+3
Gasoline	+3
Skunk	+5

Affecting And Using Senses

Here are some additional rules regarding how to use and affect Senses in the game.

ADJUSTMENT POWERS

In some situations, with the GM's permission characters can use Adjustment Powers (and Dispel) to affect Senses, provided those Senses are not Inherent (as most characters' natural Senses are). The effects vary depending upon the Power and the Sense, as described below.

AID AND HEALING

Characters can Aid or Heal Senses. However, they cannot increase a Sense beyond its normal level of effect — to do that, characters have to buy Enhanced Senses.

Aiding a sense “heals” that Sense from being Flashed or Drained. This is referred to as, for example, “Aid versus Flash.” Such a Power normally affects any sort of Flash, but at the GM's option characters may have to buy it versus Flash by Sense Group (such as Aid versus Sight Group Flash). Since Senses are not “Characteristics” or “special effects,” an Adjustment Power that affects all Characteristics or Powers with a related special effect normally should not counteract Flashes.

To use Aid versus Flash, roll the Aid dice and count the Normal Damage BODY. Each “BODY” rolled “heals” 1 Segment of Flash effect for the duration of the Aid. If the “healing” effect equals or exceeds the number of Segments of Flash effect, the Sense is restored. But as always, Aid is not permanent, it only temporarily “boosts” a Sense. If the Aid wears off before the Flash effect does, the remaining Segments of Flash once again affect the character.

Healing versus Flash works the same as Aid versus Flash, with one exception: it's permanent. The Segments of Flash effect it removes are gone forever, thus allowing the victim of the Flash to recover from it more quickly (or instantly).

Example: *In Phase 3 Dr. Destroyer Flashes Nighthawk's Sight Group Senses with a 12 BODY Flash, so Nighthawk will be Flashed for 12 Segments. In Segment 7, The Medic arrives and uses his Healing versus Flash to restore Nighthawk's eyesight. Since 4 Segments passed since the Flash, the Flash only has 8 BODY currently in effect, and The Medic's Healing only has to roll 8 BODY or more to “heal” Nighthawk. If The Medic rolled only 2 BODY, Nighthawk will still be Flashed for 6 Segments. If The Medic had arrived in Segment 3, when the Flash had 12 BODY, he would have had to roll 12 BODY on his Healing dice to restore Nighthawk's eyesight fully.*

Aid and Healing versus Flash also work against Adjustment Powers used to affect a character's Senses. In this case the total rolled on the dice adds to the Sense's point total to counteract the effect of the Adjustment Power. For example, if a villain used Drain Sight Group to remove 15 points from a hero's Sight Group Senses, The Medic could use his Healing versus Flash to counteract the effect. If The Medic rolls 12 on his Healing dice, the hero gets 12 of the Drained points back, so he has only lost 3 points' worth of eyesight — not even enough to suffer a PER Roll penalty (see below).

DISPEL

A character cannot Dispel a character's Inherent Senses — he must use Transform to permanently deprive a character of one of his innate Senses. However, a character could use Dispel to destroy gadgets that provide Senses, such as IR Goggles, or to Dispel non-innate Senses.

DRAIN AND SUPPRESS

With the GM's permission, characters can Drain or Suppress individual Senses (not Sense Groups) using the point costs for them listed in 6E1, provided they aren't Inherent. If the Drain/Suppress doesn't Drain all points in the sense, the Sense becomes less acute — the character suffers -2 to his PER Rolls with that Sense for every full 5 points Drained/Suppressed. If the Drain/Suppress equals or exceeds the points in the Sense, the character loses that Sense until the points are restored. Since this is similar to using Flash or Transform, some GMs may prefer to disallow it.



CHANGE ENVIRONMENT

Some Change Environment abilities can affect one or more Senses. For example, a character may be able to Change Environment to create a thick fog that obstructs Normal Sight. See 6E1 174 for more information.

DARKNESS AND FLASH

Darkness (6E1 186) and Flash (6E1 226) are the two primary Sense-Affecting Powers. The notes that follow detail some aspects of these Powers.

DARKNESS OR FLASH VERSUS CLAIRESENTIENCE

Darkness and Flash may work against Clairsentience in unusual ways, depending upon the special effects of the Clairsentience. For instance, a typical example of Clairsentience in a Fantasy setting is a coven of witches gathered around a cauldron whose waters display a scene several miles away (say, a group of knights on the march). The situation affects how Darkness and Flash work.

First, since the Clairsentience is defined as using the witches' eyesight to view a picture in a pool, if their eyesight is Flashed (or blinded by Darkness) the Clairsentience won't work. The Flash could take place at the cauldron itself (maybe an enemy of the coven snuck up on it and cast a "blinding spell" or something similar), or it could take place at the scene being viewed (if one of the knights sets off a Sight Group Flash for some reason, the witches viewing it may be Flashed, since their perception point is exposed to the Flash).

Second, the *Clairsentience* Power itself could be Flashed or blotted out by Darkness. A Flash versus Clairsentience would have to be launched at the witches themselves, since they're the source of the power — a Flash versus Clairsentience at the scene being viewed won't affect them. However, a Darkness versus Clairsentience used either at the scene of the cauldron or the scene being viewed will prevent the spell from functioning properly, since it "blacks out" the area to Clairsentience.

DARKNESS AND FLASH VERSUS THE MENTAL SENSE GROUP

The Mental Sense Group is affected by Flash and Darkness somewhat differently than most other Sense Groups. This is because Mental Powers can be targeted two ways: through eyesight (or other Targeting Senses) or through Mind Scan.

A Darkness versus the Mental Sense Group prevents any use of Mental Awareness or Mind Scan by affected characters. It also prevents the use of Telepathy and Mind Link, since, like a Darkness versus Hearing, it affects both the "mental hearing" and the "mental voice" aspects of those Powers. However, if the victim has LOS to his target, he can still use Telepathy and Mind Link on that target, since they work either through a Mind Scan "circuit" or through LOS. Mind Scan itself does not work on an LOS basis, so it doesn't matter whether a character in a Mental Sense Group Darkness field can see his target — the Mind Scan is effectively "blacked out."

A Flash versus the Mental Sense Group is another story. It also blocks Mental Awareness and Mind Scan, but it only Flashes the "mental hearing" aspect of Telepathy and Mind Link. The "mental voice" aspect of those Powers still functions (similarly, a character suffering from a Hearing Group Flash can still talk). Since Mind Scan is Flashed, Telepathy and Mind Link can only be targeted through LOS. The character cannot read the thoughts of anyone he can establish LOS on — his "mental hearing" has been "deafened" — but he can send his thoughts to other persons. If he already has a Mind Link established when the Flash goes off, the "mental voice" aspects continue to function, but the "mental hearing" aspects are cut off.

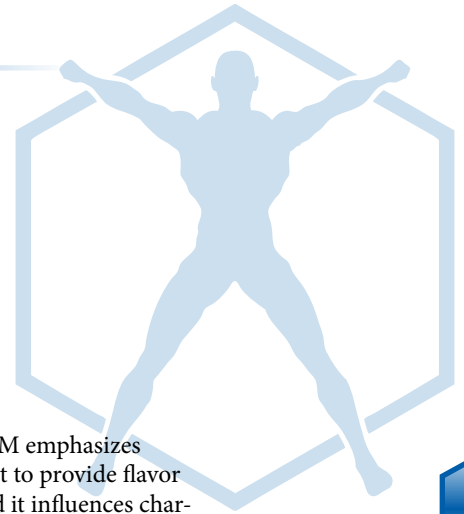
Additionally, characters can affect Mental Powers with Sense-Affecting Powers that affect the Sight Group (or any other Sense Group that contains Targeting Senses used to establish LOS). If a character doesn't have Mind Scan and his Sight is blocked by Darkness or Flash, he is effectively unable to use his Mental Powers. If any mental effects are in existence when the Darkness or Flash is used against him, such as Mental Illusions or Mind Control, his control over those powers is cut off, but they remain in effect at whatever level they were when cut off and deteriorate as per the rules from then on.

SENSES AND ADVANTAGES

Normally characters should not apply Advantages to Senses or Sense Groups. For example, a character should not buy *Indirect* for his Normal Sight so he can see through walls; he should buy Clairsentience or the *Penetrative* Sense Modifier. However, characters can apply some Advantages, such as *MegaScale*, to a character's Senses or Sense Groups with the GM's permission.



ENTERING COMBAT



Once the GM decides to begin combat, such matters as scale and time become very important. Reasonably precise measurement of these things makes game play easier. This section explains how combat scale and time works in the *HERO System*.

DRAMATIC VERSUS REALISTIC COMBAT

The GM, after seeking input from the players, should decide whether he wants the combat in his game to emphasize *realism* or *drama*. The two aren't mutually exclusive, of course, but they do tend to have some strong differences. Some genres favor drama; others, such as some Military Action, often hew more toward "realism."

"Realistic" combat pays attention to realistic details about fighting and makes an effort to simulate them in the game, either to increase verisimilitude or make combat a less attractive option for PCs (sometimes both). Although there's considerable debate (even among learned scholars) as to what is or is not "realistic" when it comes to simulating gunfire, explosions, swordplay, and the like, typically realistic game combat does at least some or all of the following: uses all the optional damage rules (such as Bleeding); discourages most fancy "stunts" and maneuvers by imposing harsh CV penalties for performing them; restricts the effectiveness of most body armor.

"Dramatic" combat, on the other hand, tends to take its cues from novels, action movies, comic books, television shows, and the like. The emphasis is less on a "realistic" depiction of armed combat than on running an enjoyable battle that maximizes the scope of the characters' options and the usefulness of their many abilities. Of course, different levels of "dramatic" can exist; one campaign might allow just about any sort of hair-raising, swashbuckling stunt, while another simply ignores the more time-consuming "realistic" rules to speed game play. In contrast to "realistic" games, dramatic games tend to use fewer optional damage rules (sometimes none except for Hit Locations), encourage stunts and clever maneuvers by granting bonuses (or at least imposing no penalties), and don't worry about making all the equipment function "realistically."

The degree to which the GM emphasizes "realism" or "drama" does a lot to provide flavor and feel for the campaign, and it influences character design as well. In a realistic game, players have to give some thought to how their characters cope with the nature and effects of combat, which may mean buying more CON or BODY to withstand injury, or more END so they can fight longer. In a dramatic game, players often design characters with special fighting styles and other unusual abilities to take advantage of the more "free-form" concept of battle.

The *HERO System* rules already handle the dramatic side of combat pretty well; that's part of the nature of the system. Many of the optional and additional rules in this chapter lean more toward "realism" than drama.

GAME SCALE

HERO System combats are often run without a map or board, using only the GM's and players' imagination to keep track of who is where and how far away they are from prominent objects. This is easy for short combats, or when several characters fight a single opponent.

For larger or more intricate combat situations, the GM may want to use a map, and perhaps some miniatures or other markers for the characters — "mapping" a *HERO System* combat isn't necessary, but you may find it helpful and fun. The GM can lay out exactly where each character is in relation to the surroundings and the other characters. The *HERO System* rules measure things in meters, so you should establish a scale on your map on that basis, such as one inch on the map equalling 1m, or 2m, or whatever else fits the size and scope of the battlefield.

COMBAT TIME

A battle can end quickly if the opponents are unequal, but a fair fight usually lasts much longer. The *HERO System* rules divide combat time into small units so you can easily keep track of what's going on. There are three separate time increments: Turn, Segment, and Phase.

TURN

The basic time frame of combat is called a *Turn*. Each Turn equals 12 seconds of time. Each Turn a character gets a number of Phases equal to his Speed (see below). A Turn is divided into 12 Segments.

SEGMENT

A Turn consists of 12 *Segments*, each 1 second long. Characters who can perform an Action in a Segment (*i.e.*, who have a Phase in that Segment) do so in order of their DEX values. The character with the highest DEX score goes first, the second highest goes next, and so on. Two or more characters with the same DEX who act in the same Segment should each roll 1d6; the one with the highest roll acts first. Ties should roll again.

After every Segment 12, before the next Turn begins, there's a "Post-Segment 12" period that takes no time. At this time most characters automatically get to take a Recovery (see 6E2 129).

PHASE

A Segment on which a character can act is known as one of his *Phases*. Each character has a number of Phases in each Turn equal to his SPD. For instance, a Speed 5 character has five Phases; the character can perform one or more Actions in each Phase. The Speed Chart tells you which Segments a character's Phases are in.

Each time one of a character's Phases comes up, he may perform one or more Actions. Find the character's Speed on the left side of the Speed Chart, and look at the row next to it. Every Segment marked with a ⓧ in that column is a Segment in which the character has a Phase. For instance, a character with a SPD of 4 has Phases in Segments 3, 6, 9, and 12.

A character's Phase begins on his DEX in each of the indicated Segments. For example, if a character has SPD 5, DEX 20, his first Phase in a Turn begins in Segment 3 on DEX 20. Typically the GM begins each Segment by counting down DEXs, from highest to lowest, until there's no one left who has a Phase. *HERO System* gamers typically refer to this as having a character's DEX "come up" or "occur," or as a character "going on" his DEX ("My character goes on DEX 21").

The type of Actions a character performs have no effect on when he acts. A character gets to perform his entire Phase's worth of Actions when his Phase occurs, even if a character with a lower DEX only wants to perform a Zero or Half Phase Action.



1

Example: Steve is running a Dark Champions campaign with Player Characters including Blade (DEX 20) and Knockout (DEX 14). Since the highest DEX in the campaign is 25, Steve always starts his DEX count at 25. “DEX 25, 24, 23, 22, 21, 20... okay, Blade, it’s your Phase, what do you do?”. Blade gets his entire Action now (unless he chooses to Hold).

After Blade’s Phase is resolved, Steve continues the count: “DEX 19, 18, 17, 16, 15, 14... okay, Knockout, it’s your Phase.” Knockout gets her entire action now (unless she chooses to Hold) — even if she only wants to perform a Zero Phase Action, she doesn’t get to act before Blade, because his DEX is higher.

In non-combat situations, everyone is assumed to act at SPD 2 at all times, unless the circumstances require them to use their full SPDs.

In a combat featuring many characters, GMs may wish to ignore the SPD Chart to make combat go more quickly and smoothly. Simply allow each character to act once per “combat round.”

CHANGING SPEED

A character who wants to use a lower SPD can decide to lower his SPD in the Post-Segment 12 period. Normally, lowering SPD in the middle of a Turn requires use of an Adjustment Power such as Drain. Similarly, a character cannot return to his normal SPD after voluntarily reducing it until Post-Segment 12. Characters cannot lower their SPDs to lower than SPD 2 without GM permission.

Example: Nighthawk is thrown into a river in Segment 8 and starts to drown. He decides to reduce his SPD to 2 so he can survive long enough for help to arrive. To do this, he must wait until the end of the Turn (Post-Segment 12). In the next Turn, he will be SPD 2 until he decides to return to his normal SPD (this must happen on a Post-Segment 12 also).

These rules also apply to raising SPD through means other than Adjustment Powers; Adjustment Powers use the optional rule described below.

OPTIONAL SPEED CHANGE

If you want to allow a character to lower or raise his SPD during a Turn, without waiting for Post-Segment 12, use the following optional system. It’s more complex, and potentially unbalancing, but lets characters with Powers like Multi-form use their abilities to the fullest. Furthermore, you should always use this system when SPD is altered with Adjustment Powers.

Under this system, a character can change his SPD in any of his Phases. Changing SPD is a Zero Phase Action. After he has changed his SPD, a character cannot act (though he may Abort; see below) until both SPDs would have had a Phase. As soon as both Segments occur, the character can be to act at his current SPD. If that Segment is a Phase for his current SPD, he gets his Phase that Segment.

Example: Storvak is in his humanoid form (SPD 3). On Segment 4, he has a Phase, and decides to change into his cheetah form (SPD 5). He can now only act after both SPD 3 and 5 would have had a Phase. SPD 5 would get its next Phase in Segment 5, and SPD 3 in Segment 8. Thus, as soon as Segment 8 occurs, Storvak can start acting at SPD 5. Since Segment 8 happens to be a Phase for SPD 5, he gets an Action in Segment 8.

Suppose the cheetah form was SPD 7. After Storvak changes form on his SPD 3 Phase in Segment 4, SPD 7’s next Phase would be in Segment 6. Normally it would also get a Phase in Segment 7, but SPD 3 hasn’t gotten another Phase yet, so Storvak still can’t act. SPD 3 gets its next Phase in Segment 8. Since SPD 7 doesn’t get a Phase in Segment 8, Storvak still can’t act. In Segment 9 SPD 7 gets its next Phase, and that means Storvak can act.



THE SPEED CHART

Character's Speed	Segments											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	-	-	-	-	-	-	☒	-	-	-	-	-
2	-	-	-	-	-	☒	-	-	-	-	-	☒
3	-	-	☒	-	-	-	-	☒	-	-	-	☒
4	-	-	☒	-	-	☒	-	-	☒	-	-	☒
5	-	-	☒	-	☒	-	-	☒	-	☒	-	☒
6	-	☒	-	☒	-	☒	-	☒	-	☒	-	☒
7	-	☒	-	☒	-	☒	☒	-	☒	-	☒	☒
8	-	☒	☒	-	☒	☒	-	☒	☒	-	☒	☒
9	-	☒	☒	☒	-	☒	☒	☒	-	☒	☒	☒
10	-	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	-	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒
11	-	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒
12	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒

SPEED QUICK-REFERENCE TABLE

If Your SPD Is	You Have Phases In Segments
1	7
2	6, 12
3	4, 8, 12
4	3, 6, 9, 12
5	3, 5, 8, 10, 12
6	2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
7	2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12
8	2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12
9	2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12
10	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12
11	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12
12	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12

OPTIONAL TIME INTERVALS

The intervals on the standard Time Chart were chosen for ease of memorization. Each increment is three to seven times the length of the preceding increment, and most are represented by either one or five time periods.

1 If the GM wishes to use a more mathematically regular (but harder to remember) series, each increment is five times the length of the preceding increment, leading to the following time increments: 1 Segment, 1 Phase, 1 Turn, 1 Minute, 5 Minutes, 25 Minutes, 2 Hours, 10 Hours, 2 Days, 10 Days, and so on.

TIME CHART

1 Segment
1 Phase
1 Turn (Post-Segment 12)
1 Minute
5 Minutes
20 Minutes
1 Hour
6 Hours
1 Day
1 Week
1 Month
1 Season (3 months)
1 Year
5 Years
25 Years
1 Century

If you use these rules, a character cannot temporarily choose to act at a lower SPD so he can act again sooner. His choices are to stay with his current SPD, or use the full amount of the SPD he changes to. But the GM may choose to allow a character to act at a lower SPD if he prefers.

Time Chart

Many Powers, Power Modifiers, Skills, and Actions involve greater amounts of time than are used for combat. The Time Chart (see sidebar) indicates the different time increments used both in and out of combat.

BEGINNING COMBAT

Unless the GM rules otherwise, combat always begins on Segment 12. This gives everyone a chance to act and then take a Post-Segment 12 Recovery (see 6E2 129). If combat begins with a Surprise attack, the targets don't get to act on Segment 12 — the attackers get a free Phase.

As in any other Segment, the character with the highest DEX goes first in Segment 12, and the GM then counts down the DEXs until there's no one left who has a Phase.

Actions

As discussed above, a Phase is a Segment in which a character can act, *i.e.*, perform an *Action*. During a Phase, a character may perform one or more Actions, depending upon the nature of those Actions and the order in which he performs them.

There are four basic types of Actions:

FULL PHASE ACTIONS

The first are *Full Phase Actions*. Full Phase Actions take a character's entire Phase; he can do nothing else and take no other Actions that Phase, with two exceptions: he can perform one or more Zero Phase Actions (see below) before performing his Full Phase Action (for example, he could turn on a Power, then make a Full Move); and he can make Presence Attacks or perform any other Actions that take no time. Examples of Full Phase Actions include a character using more than half of his meters of movement (a "Full Move"), taking a Recovery, using the *Multiple Attack Combat Maneuver*, recovering from being Stunned, or changing a Clip.

HALF PHASE ACTIONS

Second are *Half Phase Actions*. These are Actions that only require half a Phase to perform (in other words, a character can perform two Half Phase Actions per Phase). Half Phase Actions include a character using up to half of his meters of movement (a "Half Move"), opening a door, or making most PER Rolls or Skill Rolls (though the time on the latter can vary, depending upon the Skill used and the circumstances).

A character cannot "combine" two Half Phase Actions into one. For example, he can't get to his feet and make a Half Move all as a single Half Phase Action.

ZERO PHASE ACTIONS

Third are *Zero Phase Actions*. A character may perform as many Zero Phase Actions as he wishes at the beginning of a Phase or after performing a Half Phase Action, but not after performing an Attack Action or a Full Phase Action. Shifting Combat Skill Levels, Penalty Skill Levels, or Skill Levels is a Zero Phase Action; the Levels' setting lasts until the character changes them (which he can only do during a Phase, or when Aborting). Other Zero Phase Actions include activating a Power, turning off a Power, shifting the points in a Power Framework, or using a power Casually. Some Zero Phase Actions (such as turning on a specific Power) can only be performed once in a Phase.

A character can turn on (activate) or off (deactivate) a Power or ability at the beginning of his Phase or after he's performed his first Half Phase Action, but not at any other time unless noted otherwise (such as Aborting to activate a defensive Power)

ACTIONS WHICH TAKE NO TIME

Fourth are *Actions which take no time*. As the term implies, these Actions take no time to perform; a character may perform them whenever he wishes and as often as he wishes. For instance, a character could perform an Action that takes no time on a Segment when he doesn't have a Phase, after performing a Full Phase Action, in the middle of attacking, before making an attack, after attacking, or the like. Examples including making a Presence Attack, making a soliloquy, or making a roll at the GM's request.

ATTACK ACTIONS

Attack Actions — Actions that require or involve any kind of Attack Roll, such as using Mind Control, using a Combat Maneuver, projecting a Blast, Dodging, Blocking, or punching — are a special case. Attack Actions only take a Half Phase, but must be the last action the character performs in the Phase. For example, a character can Half Move and then attack, but can't attack and then Half Move. Performing an Attack Action brings a character's Phase to an end — he can perform no other Actions after performing an Attack Action.

If a character performs a Combat Maneuver or other maneuver that modifies his OCV, DCV, damage done, or other factors, any modifiers from the Maneuver remain in effect from when the character performs the Maneuver until the beginning of his next Phase. Thus, a SPD 3 character who Dodges on his Phase in Segment 4 retains the Maneuver's +3 DCV bonus until the beginning of his next Phase in Segment 8.

A character may use as many Attack Powers (or other attacks) in a Phase as he wishes, subject to certain rules — see *Multiple Attack* on 6E2 73.



TOOLKITTING: CHANGING THE START OF COMBAT

HERO System combats start in Segment 12 so that they're more "durable" and fair — otherwise it would be far too easy for some characters to be put at a significant disadvantage right away, or even get taken out of the fight entirely, and have no chance to win. It also gives slower characters a chance to fight right away, since all SPDs except 1 get a Phase in Segment 12.

If you prefer faster combats, or you just find it more intuitive, you can begin combats on Segment 1 instead. This change tends to work better in Superheroic games, where characters tend to have higher SPDs and are better able to withstand attacks.



TOOLKITTING: ACTING AFTER ATTACKING

If the GM wants combats that are particularly fast-paced and action-filled, one possible change to consider is removing the rule that performing an Attack Action ends a character's Phase. In this case an Attack Action is just a Half Phase Action, so a character could attack and then make a Half Move, or even make two attacks. This gives characters more freedom to try unusual maneuvers or take advantage of the battlefield environment.

On the other hand, letting characters act after attacking also creates some game balance concerns. First, it often lets characters attack twice in a Phase, which may make it too easy to Stun or Knock Out a target, or to attack and then Dodge or Block. (Some GMs avoid this problem by ruling that only one of a character's Half Phase Actions in a Phase can be an Attack Action.) Second, it can give characters with powerful Movement Powers a significant advantage — they can attack, then move so far away they're effectively immune to counter-attack. The GM should consider these problems, and how he can address them in-game if necessary, before allowing characters to act after attacking.

Who Goes First?

If there's some question as to the exact timing of Actions (for example, a character is trying to Desolidify when someone's trying to hit him), the GM should resolve the situation by having both characters make DEX Rolls. (At the GM's option, a character with Fast Draw could use that Skill instead of a DEX Roll in appropriate circumstances.) The character who succeeds with his DEX Roll by the most gets to act first; if both characters succeed by the same amount, the Actions go off simultaneously. Sometimes this means a character gets hit just before he manages to use a Defense Power or take a defensive Action, but *c'est la guerre*. A character can Abort to a defensive Action (see below) to guarantee that it takes effect before he gets hit (similarly, a Held defensive Action always takes place before an attack; see below).

Alternately, the GM may dispense with the DEX Roll (perhaps as a way of speeding up combat) and allow one of the characters to go first based on their respective abilities. Three possibilities include: the character with the highest INT acts first (if their INTs are also tied, use PRE); the character with Fast Draw acts first (if both have Fast Draw, the one with the highest roll acts first); or if one character has a Held Action and the other does not, the character with the Held Action gets to act first.

CONSEQUENCES OF LOSING THE DEX ROLL

If two characters use DEX Rolls to determine who acts first, the loser of the roll cannot then choose to Abort to a defensive Action — committing to the roll means the chance to Abort is lost. The character has staked his chances on getting to act first, and having failed to do so, has to live with the consequences. In some cases, the GM may even want the characters to specify what Actions they're attempting, and what powers or attacks they're using, before letting them make their DEX Rolls. The losing character has already stated, in effect, (a) that he's attacking, (b) what attack he's using, and (c) where he's aiming. He can't change just because the winner got lucky, saw it coming, and moved away. However, the losing character can, if hit, declare that he's Rolling With The Punch (if appropriate).

Similarly, if a character loses a DEX Roll Contest to determine who acts first, and the target of his attack moves away from the target point, the character cannot "re-target" his attack to "track" the target and still hit him.

DYNAMIC COMBAT

When characters make DEX Rolls to determine who acts first, keep in mind that the combat rules model a dynamic situation. They break a battle down into discrete steps for game management purposes, but from the point of view of "visualizing" the fight or providing a dramatic explanation for what a die roll signifies, everything's happening at once. It's not as if the combatants line up on the battlefield, then the character with the highest DEX performs all his Actions while his lower-DEX opponent stands there like a statue, then the lower-DEX character takes his Actions while the higher-DEX character stands around. Everything happens simultaneously — it just has to be broken down into discrete, ordered steps for game purposes.



Holding An Action

A character may choose not to act when his DEX indicates that his Phase begins. He may wait until a lower DEX or until some event occurs (“I wait until he strikes”; “I wait until he comes around the corner”). This is known as *Holding an Action* (or delaying or reserving a Phase).

A character may Hold his Action until a later DEX in one of his Phases or until a later Segment. However, he can never use a Held Action to take two Actions in one Segment — he loses any Held Action when the next Segment in which he has a Phase begins, because he can only have one Phase at a time. (The GM may, if he wishes, let a character Hold his Action until his next Phase begins, but if he chooses to use the Held Action before his Phase occurs, it takes the place of his Phase — he cannot have two Phases in the same Segment.) A character who waits a whole Turn without taking an Action still has only one Phase saved.

A character may perform a Half Phase Action and then Hold a Half Phase. The character is considered “ready” and may perform the Held Half Phase Action later.

Typically, a character must either Hold his Action until a specified lower DEX, or to wait for a specified event (such as “I’ll wait until he looks at me” or “I’ll Dodge if anyone attacks me”). In the latter case, once the specified event occurs, the character may choose not to use his Held Action, and keep Holding it. With the GM’s permission, a character can Hold his Action “generically,” without declaring any sort of precondition for acting, and then may perform whatever Action he wants to whenever he wants to.

A character can usually use a Held Action (or Half Phase Action) at any time, unless the specified precondition for acting would prevent this. If two characters want to perform an Action at the same time, each character should make a DEX Roll (or EGO Roll, if using a Mental Power); the character whose DEX Roll succeeds by the most gets to act first. If both characters make the roll by the same amount, their Held Actions occur simultaneously. Regardless of the roll, defensive Actions (any the character could Abort to; see below) occur first; the need to make a DEX Roll only applies to attacks, movement Actions, and the like.

A character who Holds his Action on Segment 12 still gets his Post-Segment 12 Recovery (see 6E2 129), and may use his Held Action in the next Turn on any Segment until a Segment in which he has another Phase.

Example: *Defender (SPD 5) and Ogre (SPD 5) are in HTH Combat. It’s Segment 12. On DEX 23, Defender Holds his Action. On DEX 18, Ogre charges Defender. Defender decides to fire his Blast. Since both characters want to act at the same time, each must make a DEX Roll. Defender rolls a 7, making his roll by 7. Ogre rolls a 12, making his roll by 1. Defender’s roll succeeded by more, so he acts first. If Ogre is still standing afterward, he can then take his Action. If the rolls had been made by equal amounts, the two characters would have taken their Actions simultaneously.*

If Witchcraft had used an attack in Segment 12 to Knock Ogre Out before he could attack Defender, Defender could continue Holding his Action and use it in Segment 1 or 2 of the next Turn. This would not prevent him from taking a Post-Segment 12 Recovery. He could not Hold his Action into Segment 3, however, because that’s his next Phase. When Segment 3 begins, if he hasn’t used his Held Action, he loses it. He can’t even use it in Segment 3 before DEX 23 comes up — he loses it as soon as Segment 3 begins.

Generally, Holding an Action does not affect a character’s Combat Value. If a character Blocks, or uses some other Combat Maneuver that affects his CV, in a Phase, and in his next Phase declares a Held Action, at that point he loses the CV modifiers from the Maneuver. Just because he chooses to delay his Action doesn’t mean his Phase hasn’t occurred, and that ends the effect of a Combat Maneuver. However, his Combat Skill Levels, if any, remain allocated as they were until he changes them.

THE “NULL ZONE”

As the text indicates, a Held Action is lost at the beginning of the Segment on which the character’s next Phase occurs. Thus, there’s a “null zone” between the start of that Segment and the start of the character’s Phase (which begins on his DEX in that Segment). This may create some difficulties if a character wants to Hold his Action in anticipation of something his foe will do when the foe has a higher DEX.

In this situation, the GM should apply some common sense and dramatic sense. If a character wants to Hold his Action in anticipation of a foe’s conduct, the GM could use the Held Action to, in essence, move the character “up” in the initiative order for the Phase, so he can “go first” before his foe *only for the purposes of starting another Held Action*. But if players start abusing this privilege, or it causes problems, the GM should stop allowing this and revert to the strict letter of the rules.



Aborting An Action

Sometimes a character can act first to protect himself, regardless of relative DEX or the fact that he doesn't have a Phase. This is done by *Aborting* an Action (sometimes called "Cancelling a Move").

DEFENSIVE ACTIONS ONLY

A character can only Abort his next Action to perform a *defensive Action*. The accompanying sidebar lists some examples of what constitute "defensive Actions."

A character cannot normally Abort to a movement Action, such as to run, fly, or Teleport out of danger's way. Dive For Cover and decelerating or turning are exceptions to this — although they do involve some movement, characters can Abort to them. At the GM's option, characters may be allowed to Abort to other forms of movement in appropriate circumstances.

A character can never Abort to make an attack (including to use a Damage Shield, which is not a defensive power). However, if a character has an attack of some kind Linked to a Defense Power (for example, a Damage Shield Linked to his Resistant Protection), he may activate the attack when he Aborts to activate the Defense Power.

Ordinarily a character can only Abort to protect himself. However, with the GM's permission, a character can Abort to protect others (for example, to step in front of an attack intended to hit another character, or to use Deflection to save someone from a bullet).

A character may perform more than one defensive Action while Aborting — such as Aborting to Dodge and simultaneously activating a Defense Power — provided they're not mutually exclusive. For example, a character cannot Abort to Dodge and Block; both are Combat Maneuvers and cannot be performed together.

Whether a character can Abort, and to what Actions, is always subject to the GM's discretion. The GM may limit a character's capacity to Abort based on the circumstances, the special effects of powers, Limitations taken on particular powers, and so forth.

Example: *Willy Watson can turn into Muscleman by uttering a secret word. In his Muscleman form he has significantly greater defenses (and a higher DCV to boot). Therefore the GM normally should allow him to Abort to activate his Muscleman powers and switch identities (he might not allow this if Watson couldn't speak for some reason). On the other hand, James Harmon, the superhero Defender, has bought all of his powers (including Defense Powers) through a powered armor suit, which he simulates with the Limitation Only In Alternate Identity. When he's not wearing the armor, he carries it around in his briefcase. The GM rules that, since it takes him at least a full Phase or longer to get the suit out of the case and put it on, Defender cannot Abort to any of the Defense Powers he bought through the suit.*

GM'S PERMISSION ACTIONS

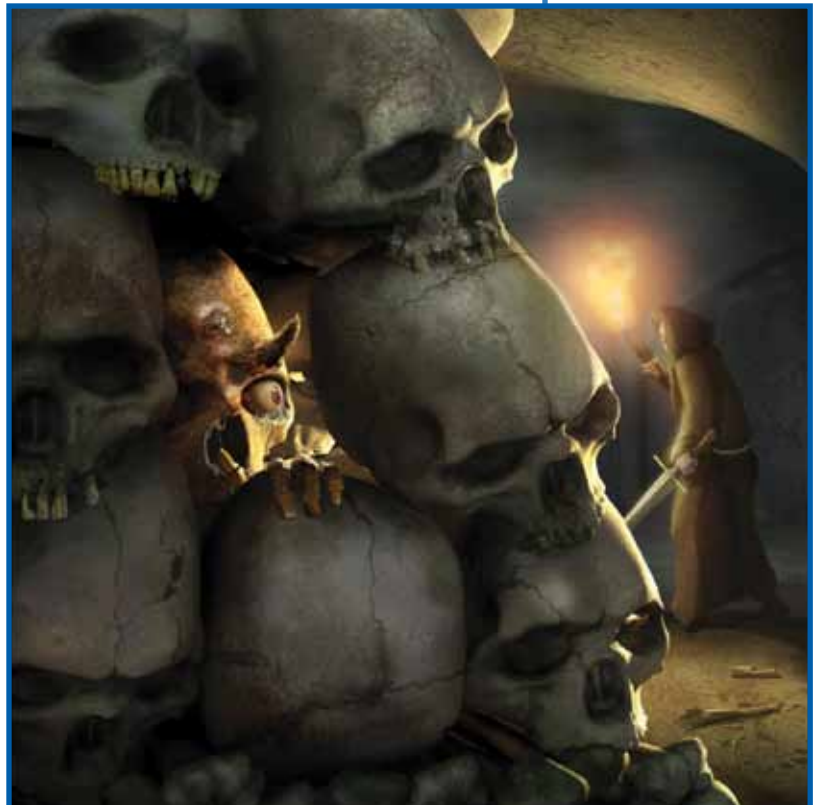
Generally, a character cannot Abort to shield his eyes, or otherwise protect himself from, the effects of a Flash. The rules note that a character has to be "prepared" to do that, and Aborting typically implies a lack of preparation. However, the GM could allow a character to "Abort to cover my eyes" if he wanted to.

Characters can only Abort to "right one's self" or "get to one's feet" after suffering Knockback with the GM's permission.

Characters can only Abort to create a Barrier with the GM's permission. Before granting permission, the GM should decide that creating a Barrier constitutes a "defensive Action," rather than an attempt to separate two areas, block someone's escape, or the like.

A character cannot Abort to using his full STR the very same moment he's Grabbed unless the GM specifically permits this on the grounds that it's "defensive" because being free from a Grab prevents the character from suffering the usual DCV penalty for being Grabbed.

When determining the validity of a proposed Abort, the GM should be sure to allow characters the benefits of the rule *provided* they don't attempt to unfairly exploit it. For example, if a character uses Noncombat Movement to make a Half Move, Holds his remaining Half Phase Action, and then wants to Abort his Half Phase to Dodge, the GM probably shouldn't let him do it. Ordinarily Aborting a Half Phase is perfectly fine, but in this case the character deliberately subjected himself to a ½ DCV penalty for Noncombat Movement so he could move further than usual. Having made that decision he has to live with the consequences of his actions and can't Abort to avoid them. He could Abort to, for example, activate his Resistant Protection, but not to "reset" his DCV.



HOW TO ABORT AN ACTION

Typically a character must declare an Abort when an attacker announces he's attacking that character, but before any rolls are made. A character can't wait to see whether an Attack Roll misses, and if it hits, *then* declare an Abort (unless, of course, the GM permits this for the sake of drama).

Aborting an Action requires the character's next full Phase to perform — in essence, the character uses his next Phase “early” to protect himself. If he's Holding a Phase or Half Phase, he may Abort to use his Held Action to perform a defensive Action; in that case he doesn't lose any more Phases. If a character Aborts his next Phase, he can't act until the Phase after that.

Example: *Lazer (SPD 5) is attacked in Segment 6 and decides to Abort to Dodge. Doing so uses up his Phase in Segment 8 — when Segment 8 rolls around, Lazer can do nothing (but at least he'll still have the benefit of the extra DCV from the Dodge); he won't get to act again until his Phase in Segment 10. If Lazer was attacked in Segment 5 before his DEX came up, he would instead have lost his Action in Segment 5 when he Aborted to Dodge — since he had not yet had the chance to take an Action, he still had his full Phase left in Segment 5 and could use it to Abort to Dodge. If Lazer was attacked in Segment 5 after he made a Half Move and was Holding his remaining Half Phase Action, he could Abort to Dodge and sacrifice his Held Half Phase; he would not have to use up a full Phase in that instance.*

Example: *A character has DEX 20, SPD 4, which means he normally has a Phase on Segments 3, 6, 9, and 12. In Segment 2, he Aborts his Phase in Segment 3 to Block. Since he's used his Phase on Segment 3, he can't do anything then (though he can keep Blocking if he's attacked again, using the standard rules for that). When his next Phase rolls around, in Segment 6, he can then attack.*

If this same character Aborted in Segment 3, but before his Phase occurs (for example, to Dodge an attack from a character with DEX 25), he could Abort again on Segment 4 if necessary. The Phase he lost was the one he would normally have in Segment 3.

Once a character has performed an Attack Action or otherwise used his full Phase in a particular Segment, he cannot Abort to any Action until the next Segment. For example, if Lazer's DEX came up in Segment 5 and he used his Phase to attack Defender, and Defender then attacked him back, Lazer could not Abort — he's already acted in Segment 5. He must wait until Segment 6 before he can Abort his next Phase.

Once a character Aborts, he cannot Abort again or take any other Actions until after the Phase he Aborted has passed. For example, suppose a SPD 4 character (Phases in 3, 6, 9, and 12) Aborts his Segment 6 Phase in Segment 4 to Dodge an attack. He cannot Abort again, or take any other Actions, in Segments 4, 5, or 6.

After Segment 6 passes (*i.e.*, in Segment 7 or later), he can Abort again (for example, in Segment 7 or 8 he could Abort his Phase in Segment 9).

If a character Aborts his Phase, he's taking his Phase “early,” so it doesn't occur in the Segment when it normally would. The modifiers he gets from Aborting last until his next Phase after that, or until he Aborts to do something else or some other circumstance changes the situation. For example, if a SPD 3 character is in Segment 2 and Aborts his Phase in Segment 4 to Dodge, the +3 DCV from Dodge lasts until his next Phase, which is in Segment 8.

If a character Aborts his Phase in Segment 12 in an earlier Segment (say, Segment 11), in Segment 12 he cannot Abort his first Phase in the next Turn — standard rules for Aborting apply. The character can't Abort again until after the Segment in which he'd have the Phase he Aborted has passed.

Characters who are Surprised normally cannot Abort their next Phase; they have, after all, been taken unawares (see *Surprised*, 6E2 50). However, the GM may, in his discretion, allow them to Abort.

An Action a character Aborts to always “goes first,” even if an opponent is already attacking or has a higher DEX. For example, if a character Aborts to activate his Resistant Protection, he automatically gets the Resistant Protection turned on before any opponent can attack him or complete an Action.

A character can Abort to a power that takes a Full Phase, Delayed Phase, or Extra Segment. He can Abort to a power that takes an Extra Phase, but if so he loses his next two Phases. He cannot Abort to powers that take more Extra Time than an Extra Phase unless the GM permits him to.

ABORTING, CONSTANT POWERS, AND ENDURANCE

A character who Aborts to activate a Constant Power pays END in the Segment when he activates the power (*i.e.*, when he Aborts). He must pay END to maintain the power in the usual fashion, but he does not have to pay END again until the next Phase in which he can act (in other words, not the Phase he Aborted, but the next one after that).

If a Constant Power is already in effect when a character Aborts one of his Phases, he pays the END to maintain the Power in the Segment in which he Aborts (regardless of the type of Power). For bookkeeping purposes, since he's effectively taking his Phase then, it's easiest just to have him pay the END then, too. He doesn't pay any additional END in the Segment in which he'd normally have the Phase he Aborted; thereafter he pays END on his Phases as usual.

DEFENSIVE ACTIONS

Some valid defensive Actions for Aborting include:

- Block (including any Martial Maneuvers with the *Block* Element).
- Dodge (including any Martial Maneuvers with the *Dodge* Element).
- Dive For Cover (see text).
- Any Combat or Martial Maneuver with the *Abort* Element.
- Activating a Defense Power (this includes shifting the allocation of points in a Power Framework to use a Defense Power; shifting the allocation of Combat Skill Levels that can improve DCV; Triggering a Defense Power; and switching forms, shapes, or identities to obtain more defense or protection).
- Activating any Power that provides a character with more points of defense (for example, Density Increase, Growth Linked to Resistant Protection) or some other significant form of protection (such as Desolidification).
- Decelerating or turning while moving, operating a vehicle, or riding a mount.
- Resisting Knockback with STR or Flight.
- Use of any other Maneuver, activation/use of any other Power, or performing any other Action deemed by the GM to be primarily for purposes of defending or protecting the character.

The Actions Table

The Actions Table lists some examples of the Actions a character can perform in a Phase. The GM must decide how long an Action not listed on the Action Table takes, using the listed examples as guidelines.

Example: *Wendell wants his character to run to a pedestal and grab a mind-control helmet. The GM might call that a Half Move and a Grab maneuver.*

ACTIONS TABLE

Action	Time Required	Move Required
Brace	0 Phase	—
Grab	½ Phase \$*	—
Haymaker	½ Phase #*	—
Move By	½ Phase *†	2m
Move Through	½ Phase *†	2m
Multiple Attack	1 Phase	—
Set	1 Phase	—
Set and Brace	1 Phase	—
Strafe	½ Phase *†	2m
Other Combat Maneuvers		
Any action that requires an Attack Roll	½ Phase *	—
Accelerating/decelerating	0 Phase	—
Change clothes	1 Phase	—
Draw a weapon	½ Phase	—
Get to one's feet	½ Phase	—
Make a PER Roll with a Nontargeting Sense to perceive an enemy	½ Phase	—
Make a Presence Attack	No Time	—
Make a roll at the GM's request	No Time	—
Make a Skill Roll	Variable	—
Open a door	½ Phase	—
Pick up Disarmed weapon	½ Phase	—
Recover from being Stunned	1 Phase	—
Shift a Multipower	0 Phase &	—
Shift Skill Levels	0 Phase &	—
Speaking (conversation)	Variable	—
Speaking (soliloquy)	No Time	—
Start a vehicle	½ Phase	—
Take a Recovery	1 Phase	—
Turn on a Power	0 Phase &	—
Turn off a Power	0 Phase	—
Use STR or a power Casually	0 Phase	—
Use more than half of your meters of movement	1 Phase	Full Move
Use up to half of your meters of movement	½ Phase	Half Move

Action takes place at the very end of the next Segment

\$ A character who has made a successful Grab can squeeze the target for his normal STR damage or Throw him.

* Attack Action — the character may not perform another Action after these Actions, but may perform a Half Phase Action before these Actions.

† Move By/Through and Strafe are usually performed at the end of a Full Move, and thus take a Full Phase. However, a character could perform one after taking a Half Phase Action (such as opening a door), so they're listed as Half Phase Actions.

& Even though they are Zero Phase Actions, a character can only perform these Actions once per Segment. In the case of turning on a Power, this applies *per Power*, not to the character's Powers as a whole.



MOVEMENT

All characters have some sort of movement ability, be it ordinary movement (such as walking or swimming) or more exotic abilities like Flight or Teleportation.

FULL MOVES AND HALF MOVES

Each Phase a character may move any portion of his meters of movement with a particular mode of movement. A *Full Move* is defined as moving more than half of a character's movement distance with a particular mode of movement. It takes a Full Phase Action to make a Full Move; a character who has made a Full Move can't perform any other Action in that Phase.

A *Half Move* is defined as moving up to half of a character's movement distance with a particular mode of movement. A character who's made a Half Move can perform another Half Phase Action in that Phase (including making a Half Move with some other mode of movement, if desired).

Example: *Kinetik has Running 40m. That means he can perform Half Moves of 1-20m. If he moves 21m or more in a Phase, that's a Full Move.*

COMBAT AND NONCOMBAT MOVEMENT

The *HERO System* rules divide movement into two categories: Combat Movement and Noncombat Movement.

Combat Movement equals the number of meters of a given mode of movement he's purchased or can use naturally. A character using Combat Movement moves as quickly as possible while still looking out for incoming attacks. A character using Combat Movement has his full DCV and OCV and can move up to his full movement rate.

A character using *Noncombat Movement* moves as quickly as he can — he isn't looking out for incoming attacks. A character's usual rate of Noncombat Movement is double his Combat Movement rate; he can increase this rate without increasing his Combat Movement (see *Movement Powers*, 6E1 155). While moving at Noncombat Movement velocity, a character is at ½ DCV and 0 OCV (and ½ DMCV and 0 OMCV, if appropriate). (If the character wants to make an attack, the 0 OCV counts as his base OCV, and can be modified from that point.) If the GM wants additional "realism," he can use Velocity-Based DCV (see below) to determine the character's DCV, but the OCV of a character using Noncombat Movement is always 0. Thus, a character using Noncombat Movement can still fight, but at the lowered values. Of course, to attack, the character must limit himself to only making a Half Move with his Noncombat Movement.

Example: *Kinetik has Running 40m with x16 Noncombat Movement. His Combat Movement is 40m. When Running at speeds of 40m per Phase or less, he retains his full OCV and DCV. His Noncombat Movement velocity can be as high as (40 x 16 =) 640m per Phase. If he moves from 41-640m per Phase, he's using Noncombat Movement, which means he's at half DCV, 0 OCV.*

If Kinetik hadn't purchased Increased Noncombat Movement, he'd have the normal Noncombat Movement rate of double his Combat Movement, or 80m. In that case, if he ran at velocities of 41-80m per Phase, he'd be using Noncombat Movement and suffer the standard CV penalty.

VELOCITY-BASED DCV

To use this optional rule, the player should determine the total number of meters his character would travel in an entire Turn while using a particular mode of movement at a particular rate (this allows a character's SPD to factor into the calculation). The simple formula for this is:

$$\text{Velocity per Phase} \times \text{SPD} = \text{Meters per Turn}$$

Once the character knows his velocity per Turn, the Velocity-Based DCV Table tells him his DCV.

Velocity-Based DCV is *relative*; two characters or vehicles moving at the same high speed in the same direction have their normal DCVs — relative to each other, they're not moving fast at all. As a good rule of thumb, if characters are moving in the same direction, subtract the attacker's velocity from the target's velocity (see 6E2 71). If the result is 0 or less, the target gets its normal DCV; if the result is greater than 0, use that figure to determine its Velocity-Based DCV. On the other hand, if the characters are heading directly towards each other, add their velocities together to determine each one's Velocity-Based DCV relative to the other.

VELOCITY-BASED DCV TABLE

Velocity in Meters per Turn	Base DCV
1-64	1
65-125	3
126-250	5
251-500	7
501-1,000	9
1,001-2,000	11
2,001-4,000	13
4,001-8,000	15
8,001-16,000	17
16,001-32,000	19
...and so forth	

REAL-WORLD SPEEDS

Characters who want to know how fast they're moving in real-world terms (such as miles per hour) can find out using this formula:

1. **First, figure out how many total meters the character moves in a Turn.** (In other words, multiply his maximum Noncombat Movement velocity by his SPD.)
2. **Multiply that by 5 to determine the character's meters of movement per minute.**
3. **Multiply that result by 60 to find out the character's meters of movement per hour.**
4. **There are 1,609 meters in a mile and 1,000 meters in a kilometer.** Divide a character's meters of movement per hour by those figures to determine his speed in miles or kilometers per hour.

For example, Kinetik has Running 40m, x16 Noncombat, and SPD 7. That means he moves ($40 \times 16 =$) 640m per Phase at his maximum velocity, or ($640 \times 7 =$) 4,480m per Turn. That's a velocity of ($4,480 \times 5 =$) 22,400m per Minute, or 1,344,000m per Hour; $1,344,000\text{m}/1,609 =$ 835 miles per hour!

ACCELERATION, DECELERATION, AND GRAVITY

When using his movement, a character can accelerate at a rate of 5m per meter, up to his maximum normal Combat Movement in meters per Phase. Thus a character with 50m of Flight would be moving at a velocity of 5m after traveling one meter, 10m after traveling two meters, 15m after traveling three meters, and so on, up to his Combat Movement velocity. Adding or removing velocity is a Zero Phase Action, but characters can do it only once per Phase, unless the GM rules otherwise. (The GM typically does this if a character simply wants to move to a location within his meters of movement — the character accelerates while moving there, then slows down and stops when he reaches his destination.)

A character can decelerate at the same rate, up to his normal Combat Movement velocity. Since the total acceleration or deceleration in a Phase is limited to the character's Combat Movement velocity, a character with a high Noncombat Movement may need several Phases to reach maximum velocity or to slow down at the end of his journey. Characters can buy Advantages for their Movement Powers that allow them to accelerate and decelerate more quickly. See *Movement Powers*, 6E1 155.

A character cannot instantly decelerate to 0m by turning off a Movement Power, or by switching to another slot in a Power Framework (if that's how he bought the Power). He may not deactivate the Movement Power until he decelerates to 0m normally or through some outside means (such as being hit with an attack that would stop him from moving), or the GM specifically allows him to.

Flight, Running, Swimming, and Swinging are also affected by gravity (other Movement Powers are not so affected). When moving in a direction consistent with gravity (for example, diving with Flight, or Running down a steep hill), the character may add +1m of movement for every 1m of movement he uses. For instance, a character using 30m of Flight in a dive would add +30m for a total of 60m of Flight per Phase. Since this doesn't improve the character's ability to decelerate, going too fast can lead to spectacular crashes. When working against gravity (Flying straight up or at a steep angle, Running up steep stairs), the character must use 2m of movement to move 1m (effectively halving his movement rate).

Gravity's effect on a character's velocity affects the damage a character does with Move By, Move Through, and similar Combat Maneuvers. For example, a Move Through performed by using Flight 40m to dive straight down toward the target does ($80/6 =$) +13d6 damage from velocity.

ENDURANCE

Unless noted otherwise in a Movement Power's description, all movement costs END at the rate of 1 END per 10 Active Points in the Movement Power. (This includes movement the character receives for "free," such as the standard Running 12m and Leaping 4m.) If a character moves at Noncombat velocities, the END cost equals the END he uses to move at Combat velocities — a character with Flight 30m and a x8 Noncombat Movement multiple (40 Active Points; and a total of Flight 240m) only spends 4 END per Phase.

MOVEMENT AND STRENGTH

As an optional rule, the GM can allow characters to use their Flight or Leaping to enhance their ability to lift or push. (He can allow them to use other forms of movement in appropriate circumstances; for example, a character who's underwater might be able to augment his STR with Swimming.) Every 4m of Combat Movement becomes +1 point of STR. Any movement "velocity" used in this way cannot be used for movement, nor can characters apply it to increase the damage done by Combat Maneuvers and similar attacks that use the character's STR to do damage.

Example: *Defender sees a building about to fall on a crowd of innocent civilians. He flies under the building, but his 55 STR is not enough to hold it up. Thinking quickly, he points his bootjets straight down. He decides to use all of his 20m of Flight to increase his STR; his STR (only for purposes of holding the building up) is now $55 + (20/4) = 60$.*



STOPPING MOVING OBJECTS

Characters can also use STR to oppose another character's or object's movement — to stop a speeding car or runaway horse, for example. To do this, the character must make an Attack Roll to Grab the character or object and obtain a firm hold; the object may make a STR Roll (with additions to STR from movement) every Phase to break free from the character's grip (this is a Zero Phase Action, but may only be done once per Phase). For every 5 points of STR a character has (including STR added from movement), he may subtract 2m of movement per Phase. Thus, a character with 50 STR subtracts 20m of movement the first Phase he tries to stop a moving object, another 20m the next Phase (reducing the character's or object's movement by a total of 40m), and so on until the object gets away from him or is brought to 0m of movement.

If the character fails to stop the moving character or object completely with his STR the first Phase he tries to do so, but it does not break free from his grip, he's dragged along by the moving character or object unless he lets go. If he's dragged, his weight may cause the moving character or object to slow down even further. Consult the rules for Encumbrance (6E2 45) to determine what effect, if any, the extra weight has, based on the character's or vehicle's STR (if the object isn't a vehicle, the GM should assign it a STR for this purpose).

Example: *Defender (STR 55, Flight 20m, weighs 200 kg) tries to stop a runaway bus (STR 40, Ground Movement 30m, moving at 90m per Phase with Noncombat Movement). He makes an Attack Roll and Grabs the vehicle. The vehicle immediately gets to try to break free from his Grab. It rolls 9½d6 (for 40 STR + 8 STR from Combat Movement) and gets 8 BODY; Defender rolls 12d6 (for 55 STR + 5 STR from Combat Movement) and gets 12 BODY, so he maintains his Grab. Defender's STR slows the bus down by 24m; it's now moving at 66m per Phase. Because Defender did not stop it and it did not break his grip, he's being dragged (or pushed) along by the vehicle; his weight isn't enough to slow it down any further. He keeps subtracting 24m per Phase from its movement until it comes to a stop or breaks free.*

EXPANDED RULES FOR STOPPING MOVING OBJECTS

Some GMs also need rules for much bigger moving objects — avalanches and landslides, meteors and comets, and the like.

Any object that applies constant force in its forward progress is referred to as a “resisting object.” This category includes vehicles operating under their own power, objects moved by gravity powers or Telekinesis, and the like.

All these objects have two significant characteristics: their movement rate and their Strength. For objects moved by gravity or Telekinesis, calculate the strength of the gravity/Telekinesis rather than that of the object. Gravity has a STR value equal to the amount of STR necessary to pick up the entire resisting object in the first place — if it's a normal-sized man, gravity acts on it with STR 10; if it's a 100-ton space shuttle, gravity has STR 60. If the object doesn't have its own STR Characteristic naturally, and isn't being affected by gravity, the GM should assign it a STR based on its size, mass, and any other factor he deems relevant.

A character trying to stop a moving resisting object must first put himself in a position to apply movement (opposite to its current direction) to some portion of it (preferably its most forward point — that tends to be most efficient, and is the most visually appealing). This usually means the character must use his own movement abilities to get to that point, normally without making a Move Through or Move By attack against the resisting object. Once he's in position, use the basic “stopping moving objects” rules, above, to determine if he can get a hold on the object and start to slow it down. Typically, a character needs to have an appropriate Movement Power to stop a resisting object — a superhero who lacks Flight usually can't Grab a flying object and use his STR to slow it down, since he has no way to counter its forward momentum. The GM may waive this rule in appropriate circumstances.

Generally, a character can only stop a resisting object if he has enough STR to lift that object when it's not in motion. Weaker characters who try to stop a resisting object simply suffer a Move Through from the object and get knocked out of the way or dragged along. Characters may also find it more difficult (or impossible) to properly Grab and stop some types of objects, such as tidal waves or avalanches; they may need to have a Barrier, or a large, flat object, to use as a tool in this situation.

The simple, easy to use rule described above allows a character to subtract meters of movement from the resisting object's velocity each Phase automatically, based on his STR. To make the situation more dangerous, difficult, and dramatic, the GM may want to change this a little to render the outcome less certain: the character must make a STR Versus STR Roll against the resisting object each Phase; if he loses, he doesn't get to subtract any meters of movement from it that Phase. (At the GM's option, if he wins the roll by a significant margin, he may subtract more movement than normal for that Phase.)

If a character fails to stop a moving object that he's Grabbed, in later Phases he can choose to Squeeze it and damage it instead of using his STR to subtract meters of movement. He cannot Throw it or use any other option for Grab; all he can do is Squeeze. Assuming he does enough damage, he may destroy the object, bring it to a halt, cause it to crash, or the like.

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FACING

Generally speaking, the *HERO System* doesn't have any rules for facing (*i.e.*, which direction a character's looking toward). The only specific rules in the system for changing facing are for Teleportation (6E1 300). If an issue pertaining to facing comes up in the game, changing facing while Running, Leaping, Swimming, Swinging, or Tunneling is a Zero Phase Action in most circumstances. That means a character can't do it after performing a Full Phase Action, but the GM can rule otherwise based on the situation, the abilities involved, common and dramatic sense, and other relevant factors. Changing facing with Flight or Teleportation depends on Turn Modes and/or the use of the *Position Shift Adder*.

See also *Surprised And Facing*, 6E2 50.



EXAMPLE RESISTING OBJECTS

The following are suggested STR and movement values for various resisting objects characters might encounter:

Asteroid/meteor, small*: STR 40-60, movement 1,000m

Asteroid/meteor, medium*: STR 60-100, movement 1,000m

Asteroid/meteor, large*: STR 100-150, movement 1,000m

Avalanche, small*: STR 30-40, movement 40m

Avalanche, medium*: STR 40-50, movement 40m

Avalanche, large*: STR 50-60, movement 40m

Bus/truck: STR 40-55, movement up to 200m
Noncombat

Car: STR 30-40, movement up to 250m
Noncombat

Tidal wave, small*: STR 30-40, movement 160-240m

Tidal wave, medium*: STR 40-50, movement 160-240m

Tidal wave, large*: STR 50-60, movement 160-240m

Train/subway: STR 55-65, movement 80-160m
Noncombat (or up to 672m for bullet trains)

*: Character may need a Barrier or large, flat object to “Grab” this “object.”

OBSTACLES

If a character comes to an obstacle while moving, he has several options. First, he can stop his movement, assuming he has sufficient room to slow down. Second, he can perform a Move Through on the object, thereby smashing through it (if successful) or running into it and hurting himself (if not). Third, he can try to shrug it aside by using his Casual Strength (see 6E1 131).

Example: *Baran the warrior (STR 25) is fleeing from a fire demon when he comes to a thin wooden door. Not wanting to slow down, Baran uses his Casual STR — 13 STR — to try to push the door open. The GM looks at the Strength Table to find that 13 STR would lift 150 kg, so he rules that’s more than enough to push aside the door. Baran flings the door wide and continues his escape without wasting a step.*

SEGMENTED MOVEMENT

Some types of movement don’t work realistically by uneven Phases. In this case, you can split the movement into Segment by Segment movement. This helps to simulate falls and similar situations where the character’s SPD doesn’t directly affect his velocity. If a character uses Segmented Movement, he should move on every *Segment*, instead of every Phase. The GM can multiply his velocity per Phase x SPD to determine his velocity per Turn, and then divide that by 12 to determine how fast he moves per Segment.

Normal Movement

“Normal” movement means those modes of movement all characters possess — Running, Leaping, and Swimming.

RUNNING

Running is the standard form of movement for most characters. All characters start with 12m of Running; they can increase this by +1m for every 1 Character Point. In campaigns that use the Movement Maxima rules (6E1 50), the cost-doubling breakpoint for Running is 20m per Phase. Running has no Turn Mode (see *Flight*, below); a character can turn as often as he wants when Running. The GM may require characters to use a Turn Mode if the footing is especially treacherous.

LEAPING

All characters have a base forward leap of 4m and a base upward leap of 2m (half the forward leap). A character can increase his forward leap by +2m for every 1 Character Point. In campaigns that use the Movement Maxima rules (6E1 50), the cost-doubling breakpoint for Leaping is 10m.

It's impossible to change direction once a leap has started — there's no way to leap around a corner, for example. It's possible to perform a leap of up to half the character's meters as a Half Move. For some leaps, characters may have to make Attack Rolls to land on the target point (see *Leaping*, 6E1 243). When a character lands from a leap, he doesn't hurt himself, and generally causes no damage to whatever he lands on unless he's performing a Move Through or the GM rules otherwise.

RUNNING AND STANDING LEAPS

A leap is considered to include a short run to get some velocity. If he can't or doesn't run (*i.e.*, he makes a “standing leap”), a character can only leap half as far.

SWIMMING

All characters can swim a base distance of 4m per Phase. A character can increase his Swimming rate by +2m for every 1 Character Point. In campaigns that use the Movement Maxima rules (6E1 50), the cost-doubling breakpoint for Swimming is 10m. Swimming has no Turn Mode; a character can make as many turns as he wants when Swimming.

Based on their conception, some characters won't know how to swim. For example, Dwajmi the desert nomad has never seen water except in a well or a shallow oasis, so he's never learned to swim. Characters such as Dwajmi may sell back their natural 4m of Swimming, gaining 2 Character Points to spend on something else. If they later decide to learn how to swim, they must buy Swimming at the standard cost. Unless a character has at least 2m of Swimming, he cannot even stay afloat. The GM may rule that some characters (for example, Heavyworlders in a Science Fiction campaign) can never learn how to swim.

Powered Movement

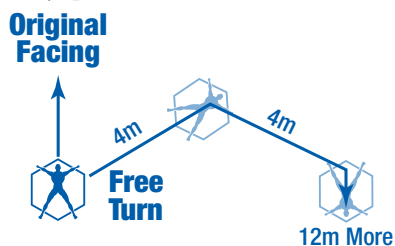
“Powered” movement means those modes of movement characters have to pay Character Points for: Flight; Swinging; Teleportation; and Tunneling. (It also includes Extra-Dimensional Movement and FTL Travel, but those aren't covered here.)

FLIGHT

A character's Flight speed depends on how many Character Points he spent on Flight. A character who flies isn't as maneuverable as someone on the ground — he has a *Turn Mode* that defines how often he may make a 60-degree turn. The Turn Mode is defined by the formula:

$$\text{Current Turn Mode} = \frac{\text{Total Distance Traveled This Phase}}{5}$$

A character can make his first 60-degree turn any time after the start of his move; this turn is “free.” Once he's turned, he cannot turn again until he moves his Turn Mode in meters forward. As a simple rule, a character using Combat Movement cannot make more than five evenly spaced turns during a move. If the character moves at Noncombat velocities, he can make no more than two evenly spaced turns.



Example: *Lazer flies at 20m per Phase. Using the formula, he has a Turn Mode of $20/5 = 4m$. Lazer wants to turn around, so he turns 60 degrees, moves 4m, turns 60 degrees, moves 4m, turns a final 60 degrees and completes his move by flying 12m (see illustration).*

As discussed on 6E2 25, gravity affects Flight. A flying character must use 2m of Flight distance to gain 1m of altitude (*i.e.*, to fly upward, against gravity). If he dives, he gains +1m of velocity for every 1m of Flight distance he has (*i.e.*, flying downward, with gravity, increases his speed). To pull out of such a dive, the character should dive his Turn Mode in meters. If he's diving straight down (his Flight distance in meters free, plus his Flight distance down) then he must dive twice his Turn Mode. When a character has pulled out of a dive, he's considered to be flying level (at his regular velocity) and can continue flying whatever direction he wants.

GLIDING

The GM should regulate how rapidly a gliding character can climb. Climbing is relatively easy when there are thermals or good winds; a glider can generally gain 2d6 meters of altitude per Phase (halved for working against gravity, as normal). At other times a character's ability to gain altitude may be limited or nonexistent. The Turn Mode and dive rate of a gliding character are the same as for regular Flight. Characters can only gain velocity while Gliding by losing altitude (see 6E1 228).

SWINGING

A character's Swinging speed depends on how many Character Points he spent on Swinging. The GM determines the direction of a swing based on the situation, the point to which the character attaches his swingline, and other factors. Typically a swing takes place in a straight line, and the character cannot change direction once he begins the swing (he cannot, for example, swing around corners, though the GM might allow minor shifts in direction based on body motion and the like). However, the GM may allow characters to swing in arcs in some circumstances. For example, if a character attaches his swingline to the corner of a building, he might be able to swing in an arc around the corner of the building. In this case, Swinging has the standard Turn Mode (see above), unless the GM rules otherwise. The character should describe the arc of his swing to the GM before making it so the GM can approve it, and cannot change it once he begins the swing unless the GM permits him to.

TELEPORTATION

Many aspects of and rules for Teleporting are covered under *Teleportation*, 6E1 300.

TELEPORTING BLIND

When a character cannot see his target location and doesn't have it memorized, any attempt to Teleport is considered "blind." The character makes an Attack Roll to hit the target point (DCV 3), with a normal Range Modifier. If the roll misses, he ends up at a different point (use the standard rules for attacks that miss a target point to determine where he goes). If the target point is occupied, the character takes damage.

TELEPORTING INTO A SOLID OBJECT

If a character is unlucky enough to Teleport into a solid object (for whatever reason), his natural safety system kicks in, getting him to the closest space from the target point where he fits. The system shock is terrible, and may be fatal. To determine damage, use the accompanying table. The Teleporting character gets no defenses of any kind against this damage; even if he's Desolidified he still takes full damage.

It's impossible for a character to deliberately Teleport another character into a solid object, even if the Teleportation is bought *Usable As Attack*.

Example: *Cheshire Cat (Teleportation 60m) is in a cell. Although he can't see out, he decides to try to escape by Teleporting straight up. He declares his target point and makes a successful Attack Roll (even after applying the Range Modifier). Unfortunately, the cell is buried 200m underground, so the nearest safe location is the cell. His Teleportation shifts him back to the cell automatically. The GM rolls 2d6 for the effect; he rolls a 9, which means Cheshire Cat takes 2d6 of d6 of Normal Damage. The roll is an 8, so the Cat takes 8d6 Normal Damage with no defense.*

TELEPORTATION DAMAGE TABLE

2d6 Roll	Effect
2-7	3d6 of d6 STUN Only Damage
8-11	2d6 of d6 Normal Damage
12	1d6 of d6 Killing Damage

If the nearest safe place is further than the character's Combat Movement with Teleportation, add 2 to the effect roll. If the nearest safe place is more than double his Combat Movement with Teleportation, add 4 to the effect roll.

TUNNELING

Tunneling has no Turn Mode. A character cannot automatically perceive where he's going when he's Tunneling unless he has Sensory Powers that let him perceive through the medium he's Tunneling through. See 6E1 309 for more information.



1



Vehicle Movement

Vehicles move just like characters: they have a SPD, Combat Movement velocity, and Noncombat Movement velocity. However, all vehicles have a Turn Mode with *all* forms of movement (see *Flight*, above), including Ground Movement (Running).

For further information on vehicle movement in combat situations, see *Vehicle Combat*, 6E2 194.

Mounted Movement

In some games, such as Fantasy campaigns, a lot of movement takes place while the characters are riding horses or other mounts. This often provides a character with greatly enhanced movement capability, but at the cost of restricting his ability to perform certain Actions in combat.

A mount essentially functions as a Vehicle. Its meters of Running (or other form of movement) substitute for the character's. However, when it moves, and what Actions it can take, depend upon its SPD and DEX and the rider's SPD and DEX.

RELATIVE SPEED AND DEXTERITY

If the rider's SPD exceeds the mount's, the rider can only make the mount move on its own Phases. The rider either has to (a) Hold his Action so he can act on his mount's Phases (thus, they act together); (b) make the mount Hold its Actions so that it takes its Phases in Segments in which the rider also has a Phase; or (c) limit himself to performing Actions other than moving (such as attacking or defending himself) in Segments in which he has a Phase but the mount does not.

If the mount's SPD exceeds the rider's, or the mount has Phases in Segments in which the rider does not, the rider can make the mount Hold its Action so their Phases coincide, thus allowing him more control over the mount (or the rider may, if he chooses, Hold his own Actions for the same purpose). However, the rider may choose to let the mount move on its own, with only minimal control from him. To do so, he makes a Riding roll (this takes no time). If he succeeds, the mount makes a Half Move or Full Move in whatever direction the rider desires; if it makes only a Half Move, it may perform another Half Phase Action (such as an attack, if it's trained to fight). If he fails, the mount does not move, or may move in an undesired direction. In either case, the rider is considered to be moving at Noncombat Movement velocity (and thus to be at $\frac{1}{2}$ DCV), regardless of his actual velocity. (This penalty only applies in this specific situation; riding a mount does not always halve DCV, see *Combat Values And Fighting*, below.)

Regardless of their relative SPDs, both rider and mount can only act on their own DEXs in their Phases. Thus, if a high-DEX character rides a low-DEX mount, he has to wait until the mount's DEX comes up during the Phase before the mount (and thus he) can move. The rider can take his Action (such as attacking a nearby foe) on his own DEX — but if he does so, he'll be unable to control the mount properly if it moves on its own DEX (just as if the mount moves in a Segment in which it has a Phase but the rider does not).

COMBAT TRAINING FOR MOUNTS

In combat, the rider's ability to function effectively as a mounted warrior depends on whether his mount is trained for battle or not. A mount is considered trained for combat if it has a Presence of 15 or greater or it knows the *Riding Skill* itself (in this case, the Skill simulates the mount's self-control and knowledge of how to move to help its rider fight). If a mount isn't trained for combat, the rider must spend a Half Phase and make a Riding roll every one of his Phases; this helps him keep the mount under control and make it act as he wishes (though he cannot make it attack). Furthermore, even if the rider makes his Riding roll, he is at ½ OCV (his DCV remains normal). If the rider fails his Riding roll, he must make a second Riding roll to keep from being thrown; he can do nothing that Phase but hang on to the mount and make a Half Move directly away from the thick of battle.

If the mount is trained for combat, the rider may make the mount move without making a Riding roll; furthermore, the rider is at normal OCV (but suffers a -2 penalty; see below). If rider and mount both have a Phase in the same Segment, both may attack. They make up to a Half Move, and then the rider makes a Riding roll (this takes no time). If the roll succeeds, the rider may make his attack, and the mount may also make an attack. Alternately, the mount can make a Full Move (thus preventing it from making an attack) and the rider has a Half Phase Action in which to attack or defend himself. If the roll fails, the rider may use his remaining Half Phase to attack, but the mount may not attack or move any further.

COMBAT VALUES AND FIGHTING

In combat, the mount and the rider each have their own CVs. However, the rider is always at -2 OCV because, even with a trained combat mount, he must spend some energy and concentration keeping his seat and controlling his mount. At the GM's option, any negative modifiers applied to the Riding roll in a Phase may also apply to the rider's (or the mount's) OCV, reflecting the difficulty of keeping the mount controlled in such conditions. If the rider attacks targets on foot, and the campaign uses Hit Locations, the Hit Location should be rolled as a High Shot (see 6E2 108).

If a mount is injured, its rider may, at the GM's option, have to make another Riding roll to control it (this takes no time). If he fails the roll, the mount moves away from combat as fast as it can in its next Phase. Mounts trained for combat usually won't do this unless badly injured (*i.e.*, they take 5 or more BODY from a single attack).

If the mount takes Knockback from an attack, it usually loses its balance and falls. The rider must make a Riding roll to leap off the mount or otherwise prevent himself from being caught in the fall and taking the same damage as the mount takes from the Knockback (this takes no time). If the rider takes Knockback from an attack, he must make a Riding roll at -1 for every 4m (or fraction thereof) of Knockback taken or fall off

the mount; if the roll succeeds, the rider takes no Knockback and retains his seat (otherwise he's knocked off the mount). If the mount is Knocked Out, it will fall, requiring the rider to make a roll as described above.

If either the mount or the rider performs a defensive Combat Maneuver such as Dodge or Block, the benefits of that Maneuver apply only to the character making them. A rider does not, for example, gain bonuses to his DCV because his mount Dodges.

If a mount moves at Noncombat velocity, the rider himself does not suffer Noncombat Movement penalties to CV.

The GM may apply modifiers of -1 to -5 to any Riding roll to reflect combat conditions, monsters, damage the mount has suffered, and anything else that might scare a mount.

Example: *Sir Gareth (DEX 18, SPD 4, 12m Running) rides his trusty steed Destrier (DEX 15, SPD 3, 24m Running) into battle. Destrier is a trained warhorse (PRE 15).*

In Segment 3, Sir Gareth has a Phase, but Destrier does not. Sir Gareth could attack someone if he wanted to, but he cannot move, because Destrier doesn't have a Phase. Sir Gareth opts to Hold his Action until Destrier can move. In Segment 4, on DEX 15, Destrier moves forward 24m, carrying Sir Gareth with him. Because Destrier is a trained warhorse and is not making an attack, Sir Gareth need not make a Riding roll to get Destrier to go where he (Sir Gareth) wants, and he has his full OCV (-2 for riding a mount) when he attacks this Phase. Sir Gareth swings his sword at a foe, using his OCV 4 (6-2) to hit the enemy and wound him.

In Segment 6, Sir Gareth has a Phase, but Destrier does not. Because there is another enemy within HTH range nearby, Sir Gareth decides to use his Phase to attack. He rolls again with OCV 4 and hits and kills his target.

In Segment 8, Destrier has a Phase, but Sir Gareth does not. Sir Gareth has Destrier Hold his Action so they can act together in Segment 9. Had Sir Gareth chosen to have Destrier run forward, he could have made a Riding roll to get Destrier to go where he (Sir Gareth) wanted him to, but he would have been at ½ DCV until his next Phase.

In Segment 9, on DEX 15, Sir Gareth urges Destrier to charge towards an enemy knight. However, an enemy wizard has cast a fear spell over the battlefield, frightening Destrier, so Sir Gareth must make a Riding roll at -2 to get him to act. Sir Gareth succeeds, so Destrier makes a 12m Half Move towards the foe. Sir Gareth decides they will both attack. He makes another Riding roll, so Destrier can use his remaining Half Phase to attack. As Sir Gareth hacks at the enemy knight and misses (the GM imposed the -2 for the initial Riding roll on his OCV, to simulate the difficulty he's had controlling Destrier this Phase), Destrier tries to bite (HKA 1 point) the enemy knight's horse. Destrier rolls a 6 with his OCV 4, and hits! The enemy horse takes a minor

wound; the GM has the enemy knight make a Riding roll to keep his horse under control (he succeeds easily).

In Segment 12, both Sir Gareth and Destrier have a Phase. Sir Gareth decides they will attempt to Coordinate their attack. He Holds his Action until DEX 15. The GM allows them to Coordinate if both make 8- rolls; they succeed! As Destrier rears up and comes crashing down on the enemy knight, Sir Gareth uses the momentum of the maneuver to increase the force of his sword-blow (the GM grants him +1 Damage Class to simulate this); both hit, and the enemy knight falls lifeless to the ground.

Aerial Mounted Combat

In some campaigns, particularly High Fantasy games, mounted combat may take place in the air, pitting characters riding pegasi, dragons, hippogriffs, manticores, griffins, rocs, and other flying mounts against each other. The rules for mounted combat generally apply to aerial mounted combat without any changes, but GMs and players should keep several things in mind.

First, mounts using Flight have a Turn Mode, making them less maneuverable than horses. They can also fight in three dimensions, which may make it a little difficult to keep track of the combat or prepare for every enemy tactic.

Second, aerial mounted combat is more likely than ground mounted combat to involve Ranged attacks. If an aerial battle takes place wholly at Range, the GM may want to adapt the rules for Dogfight Combat (see *The HERO System Advanced Player's Guide*). If two or more aerial combatants close to HTH Combat range, resolve their fight normally.

Third, due to the danger of falling from high in the air, saddles for aerial mounts are usually sturdier and strap the rider in more strongly. This provides a +2 bonus to any Riding rolls to avoid being “unhorsed” by an attack (or a -2 OCV on attackers' Unhorse maneuvers), and acts as -4m Knockback Resistance in the event the campaign uses the Knockback rules. However, the saddle's firm grip should also hinder the character. The GM determines the exact drawback, but typical ones include: increasing the damage of attacks by +1-2 DCs, since characters can't “roll with” the blow to any degree; imposing a small penalty on DEX; or imposing a -1 to -2 penalty on CV.

Movement Skill Levels

If the character has any Skill Levels that apply to a particular type of movement, they have several uses:

First, he can use each Level to lower his Turn Mode by 1 (minimum of 0m).

Second, each Skill Level provides a +1 to any roll required to land in, or otherwise move to, a particular target point.

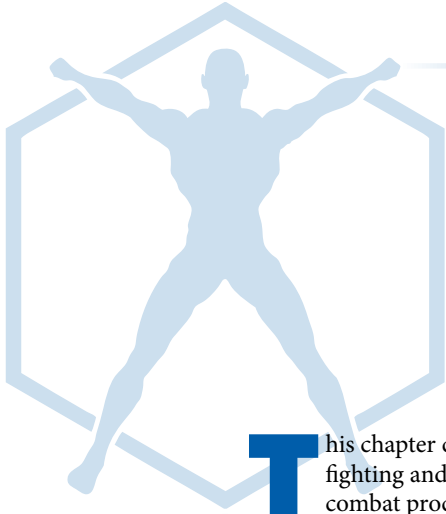
Third, at the GM's option, the character can use each Skill Level to increase his acceleration or deceleration with his modes of movement (not with vehicles) by 1m per meter per Skill Level applied.

Fourth, at the GM's option, a character can use Levels with movement to improve his DCV if he Dodges or uses a Combat or Martial Maneuver that provides bonuses to DCV while moving.

Skill Levels with one mode of movement cost 2 Character Points per Level. Skill Levels that apply to any of a character's modes of movement cost 3 Character Points per Level.



CHAPTER TWO
FIGHTING



FIGHTING

This chapter covers the primary aspects of fighting and combat. It summarizes the combat process; discusses how characters hit their targets and how targets try to avoid being hit; and describes modifiers to combat, including various environmental conditions. Later chapters of 6E2 describe Combat Maneuvers, how to determine damage (and take it), the effects of taking damage, the Endurance cost for fighting, and many related subjects.

The *HERO System* includes many optional combat rules. Although they add depth and flavor to combat, they can also complicate it and slow it down considerably. It's often best for GMs and players who are learning the game to ignore the options and just concentrate on the basic rules. Also, the GM should consider using fewer optional rules when he has a lot of

players in a game, since combat goes faster without the options.

How Combat Works

Although combat in the *HERO System* involves a lot of rules and options, it's really quite simple. Once you read the rules and try them out, you shouldn't have any trouble running all sorts of battles. Here's the basic procedure:

1. **The player decides what Action his character will perform in the character's Phase.**
2. **If the character attacks a target**, he must make an Attack Roll to hit it.
 - a. **If the Attack Roll fails**, the attack misses and the character's Phase ends; the GM moves on to the next character who has a Phase in that Segment.
 - b. **If the Attack Roll succeeds**, the character must determine how much damage the attack does and/or what other effect it has. The character's Phase then ends, and the GM goes on to the next character who has a Phase in that Segment.

All combat can be divided into two types: *Hand-To-Hand Combat* (HTH) and *Ranged Combat*. HTH Combat is combat between characters who are within Reach of one another (*i.e.*, usually within 1m — or put more simply, when they're next to one another). Most HTH Combat involves punching or melee weapons such as swords, not attacks like guns or energy bolts that can affect targets at a distance. Ranged Combat is any combat between characters who aren't within Reach; it requires weapons such as guns or bows, or Ranged attacks like Blasts or RKAs. Assuming special effects, common sense, and/or dramatic sense don't forbid it, a character can use a Ranged attack against a character who's within Reach.

Here's a checklist of the sequence of combat. If a character attacks someone, these steps take place. The following sections of the rulebook explain the steps.

COMBAT SEQUENCE CHECKLIST

1. **Determine the attacker's Offensive Combat Value (OCV).**
2. **Determine the target's Defensive Combat Value (DCV).** For characters, use the *DCV* Characteristic; an object's *DCV* depends on its size.
3. **Attacker makes an Attack Roll (3d6).** He adds 11 to his *OCV*, then subtracts the roll from that total. That tells him the *DCV* he can hit.
4. **If the Attack Roll fails (because the target's *DCV* is higher than the *DCV* the attacker can hit)**, the attack misses, and the attacker's Phase ends. The GM moves on to the next character who has a Phase in that Segment.
5. **If the Attack Roll succeeds (because the target's *DCV* is equal to or lower than the *DCV* the attacker can hit)**, the attacker hits; determine the damage and any effects of damage. The attacker's Phase ends; the GM moves on to the next character who has a Phase in that Segment.

Optional rules add more steps to the Combat Sequence. The GM may use any or all of the optional rules. If the GM uses all of them, combat goes much slower, but is much more realistic. Normally, the GM would only want to do this for very special battles — like a “trial by combat” or a one-on-one battle.

2

HOW YOU WANT TO ROLL DICE IN COMBAT

Here's a quick summary of the core resolution mechanics in *HERO System* combat — in other words, how you want to roll the dice when fighting.

Skill Rolls, Characteristic Rolls, and Perception Rolls:

You want to roll *low* on 3d6; the lower the roll, the more likely you are to succeed.

Attack Rolls: You want to roll *low* on 3d6 to hit; the lower you roll, the more likely you are to hit your target. This applies to physical combat, mental combat, and any other type of combat.

Damage/Effect Rolls: When you're rolling the dice of damage or effect for your attack, you want to roll *high*. The higher you roll, the more damage you do to the target, or the greater the effect your attack has.

OPTIONAL COMBAT SEQUENCE CHECKLIST

1. Determine the attacker's OCV (see *Calculating OCV And DCV*).
2. Determine the target's DCV (see *Calculating OCV And DCV*).
3. **Attacker makes an Attack Roll (3d6).** He adds 11 to his OCV, then subtracts the roll from that total. That tells him the DCV he can hit.
4. Pay the END cost for the attack.
5. **If the Attack Roll fails (because the target's DCV is higher than the DCV the attacker can hit),** the attack misses, and the attacker's Phase ends. The GM moves on to the next character who has a Phase in that Segment.
6. **If the Attack Roll succeeds (because the target's DCV is equal to or lower than the DCV the attacker can hit),** the attacker hits; determine the damage and any effects of damage. To determine the additional effects of the damage:
 - a. **Roll on the Hit Location table to find where the attack hit (this affects the damage result).**
 - b. **Check for Knockback;** target may be Knocked Back or Down.
 - c. **Check for a Wounded result;** target makes EGO Roll to keep fighting next Phase.
 - d. **Target may be Bleeding;** keep track of blood loss.
 - e. **Check for severity of wound;** target may be Impaired or Disabled.
7. **The attacker's Phase ends;** the GM moves on to the next character who has a Phase in that Segment.

ATTACK ROLLS AND COMBAT VALUE

The first step in combat is to determine whether an attack hits its intended target. To do that, you need to know the attacker's OCV, the target's DCV, and the results of the attacker's Attack Roll.

The Basic Attack Roll

Whether an attack hits a target is determined by an Attack Roll made with 3d6. All Attack Rolls, regardless of the form of the attack, are determined as follows:

Attack Roll:
Attacker's OCV + 11 - 3d6 roll =
the DCV the attacker can hit

Example: *If the attacker's OCV is 8, add 11 to that to get 19. Then roll 3d6 and subtract that from 19; this tells you the DCV the attack can hit. For example, if the roll is 11, the attacker can hit (8 + 11 - 11 =) DCV 8 or less. If the target has DCV 8 or lower, he's hit; if his DCV is 9 or higher, the attack misses.*

If the attacker has OCV 7 and rolls a 9, he can hit (7 + 11 - 9 =) DCV 9 or lower.

To put it another way, if the attacker's OCV and target's DCV are the same, the Attack Roll succeeds on an 11-. For each point by which the attacker's OCV exceeds the target's DCV, increase that roll by 1; for each point by which the target's DCV exceeds the attacker's OCV, decrease it by 1.

ATTACK ROLL CALCULATION CHART

To speed play, players and GMs can use the accompanying chart to determine what number they need to roll to hit a target. Cross-reference the attacker's OCV (left-most column) with the target's DCV (topmost row); the number indicated is the number the attacker must roll less than or equal to hit the target. Remember — a roll of 3 always hits and a roll of 18 always misses, regardless of relative CVs.



ATTACK ROLL QUICK-REFERENCE TABLE

		Target's DCV														
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Attacker's OCV	1	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	2	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	3	3	3	3	3
	3	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	3	3	3	3
	4	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	3	3	3
	5	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	3	3
	6	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	3
	7	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3
	8	17	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4
	9	17	17	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5
	10	17	17	17	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6
	11	17	17	17	17	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7
	12	17	17	17	17	17	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8
	13	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9
	14	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10
	15	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	16	15	14	13	12	11



If the character knows the DCV of his target, you can also make the Attack Roll this way:
 $11 + \text{OCV} - \text{DCV} = \text{number the character needs to roll to hit.}$

A result of 3 on an Attack Roll always succeeds, and may entitle the character to some extra benefit or advantage (perhaps some extra dice of damage, or an Armor Piercing effect). A result of 18 always fails, and may cause the character to incur some disadvantage (perhaps reducing his DCV for a Segment or two).

Calculating OCV and DCV

Obviously, the key factors in figuring out whether a particular Attack Roll succeeds and an attack hits its target are the OCV and DCV involved. A character's base OCV and DCV are Characteristics (see 6E1 45). It's called *base* OCV and DCV because OCV and DCV can be modified by Combat Skill Levels, the Range Modifier, Combat Modifiers, Combat Maneuvers, and other factors.

COMBAT VALUE (CV)

Sometimes the rules use the general term *Combat Value*, or CV. The term CV may be used to discuss modifiers to both OCV and DCV.

The following checklists describe the steps for determining a character's OCV and DCV. It may look complex, but figuring OCV and DCV is actually quite easy.

OCV CHECKLIST

1. Determine base OCV (character's *OCV* Characteristic).
2. Add any applicable Combat Skill Levels the character wishes to use to increase his OCV.
3. Apply any modifiers for the particular weapon or armor the character uses.
4. Apply any modifiers for the particular Combat Maneuver or Martial Maneuver the character uses.
5. Apply any Combat Modifiers.
6. Apply the Range Modifier (if applicable).
7. Apply any other modifiers.
8. Apply any modifiers that halve OCV (or otherwise reduce it by a fraction or percentage). A character's OCV can only be halved once, regardless of how many "halving" modifiers he's subject to.

DCV CHECKLIST

1. Determine base DCV (character's *DCV Characteristic*).
2. Add any applicable **Combat Skill Levels** the character wishes to use to increase his DCV.
3. Apply any modifiers for the particular weapon, armor, or shield the character uses.
4. Apply any modifiers for the particular **Combat Maneuver** or **Martial Maneuver** the character uses.
5. Apply any **Combat Modifiers**.
6. Apply any other modifiers.
7. Apply any modifiers that halve DCV (or otherwise reduce it by a fraction or percentage). A character's DCV can only be halved once, regardless of how many "halving" modifiers he's subject to.

The DCV Modifiers Table lists some common situations that halve or otherwise affect a character's DCV, including the effect on Hit Location modifiers (if any).

Generally, penalties to DCV should not effect DMCV. However, the GM may, in his discretion, apply some or all of them if it seems appropriate to do so. In some cases, such as with Haymaker and Multiple Attack involving a Mental Power, the GM may want to switch DCV penalties for DMCV penalties.

REDUCING COMBAT VALUE TO ZERO

A character's DCV cannot be reduced below 0, regardless of how many modifiers are applied.

A character can lower his DCV to 0 whenever he wants as an Action that takes no time. His DCV remains 0 until he's able to take a Zero Phase Action and declares that he wants to return it to normal. If prior to that time he Aborts to a defensive action, that immediately returns his DCV to normal (and of course the action may increase it above that).

A character's OCV can be reduced below 0 — just apply the negative value of the OCV to increase the target's DCV and make the Attack Roll as if the attacker has OCV 0. For example, a character with OCV -3 can still attack — but his target is at +3 DCV, and he uses OCV 0 to make his Attack Roll, so his odds of hitting are mighty slim.

If a character already has a negative OCV and suffers a further penalty that would halve his OCV, halve the negative OCV and apply that half amount to reduce the OCV further; normal rounding rules apply. For example, if a character has OCV -4, halving reduces it to -6 (-4 plus half of -4, or -2). If he has OCV -3, halving reduces it to -4.

A reduction of OCV or DCV to 0 should generally be considered as "reducing CV by a percentage," and thus be applied as the very last step in the OCV or DCV calculation. However, the GM may change this if he wishes (for example, he might consider the 0 to be the character's base CV), and the rules may note other exceptions.

DCV MODIFIERS TABLE

Character Is	DCV	Hit Locations
Affected by EGO +30 Mental Illusion	½	½
Affected by PRE +20 Presence Attack	½	Normal
Affected by PRE +30 Presence Attack	-0	½
Affected by Flash/Darkness/Invisibility		
Ranged, makes Nontargeting PER Roll	Normal	Normal
HTH, makes Nontargeting PER Roll	-1	Normal
Ranged, fails Nontargeting PER Roll	½	Normal
HTH, fails Nontargeting PER Roll	½	Normal
Attacked from behind (Surprised) out of combat	½	½
Attacked from behind (Surprised) in combat	½	Normal
Braced	½	½
Bulky Focus, character is carrying	½	Normal
Climbing	½ to -0	Normal
Encumbered (depending on degree)	-0 to -5	Normal
Entangled	-0	½
Fighting in a cluttered or cramped area	-2	Normal
Grabbed by another character	½	Normal
Grabbing another character	½	Normal
In the water	-2	Normal
Intoxicated	-2	Normal
In zero gravity	½	Normal
Knocked Out	-0	½
On a narrow surface (tightrope, ledge)	-2	Normal
On ice, mud, or other slippery surfaces	-1	Normal
Prone	½	Normal
Recovering from being Stunned	½	½
Resisting Knockback with STR	½	Normal
Sleeping	-0	½
STR 0	½	Normal
Stunned	½	½
Subject to Multiple Attackers Bonus	-1 to ½	Normal
Surprised (in combat)	½	Normal
Surprised (out of combat)	½	½
Taking a Recovery	½	½
Underwater	-2	Normal
Using Autofire Skills	½	Normal
Using a Bulky Focus	½	Normal
Using Noncombat Movement	½	Normal
Using a Power with Concentration	½	Normal
Using Multiple Attack	½	Normal

THE DURATION OF COMBAT VALUE MODIFIERS

Modifiers that alter a character's CV remain in effect from when they take effect until the beginning of the character's next Phase. For example, a SPD 3 character who takes a Recovery on his Phase in Segment 4 remains at ½ DCV until the beginning of his next Phase in Segment 8.

COMBAT SKILL LEVELS

Combat Skill Levels (CSLs), a Skill bought with Character Points, can modify the character's OCV, DCV or both. They're described on 6E1 69.

Depending on the type of Combat Skill Level, a character may use CSLs to increase his OCV, DCV, and/or the damage done by an attack. A character must state how he's applying his Combat Skill Levels before he makes his Attack Roll. Usually, one CSL adds +1 to a character's OCV. Some CSLs can be used to add +1 to a character's DCV. Characters may also use some Combat Levels to increase damage: 2 CSLs add +1 Damage Class to an attack (see 6E2 99).

RANGE MODIFIER

When a character attacks a target at Range, the attack is subject to the *Range Modifier*. This reflects the fact that it's harder to hit a target who's far away than one who's nearby. Among other reasons, this is because the target appears smaller at range — there is “less” of it to hit. Thus, a target who's half man-sized is just as hard to hit as one who's man-sized but twice as far away.

There's no Range Modifier out to 8m — it's as easy to hit any target up to 8m away as one who's within the Reach of the attacker. After 8m, any attack suffers a -2 OCV modifier. There's an additional -2 OCV Modifier for each doubling of the range thereafter: -4 OCV at 17-32m, -6 OCV at 33-64m, and so on. If the GM wants additional detail, he can use the Optional Range Modifier Table, which breaks the modifier down into smaller incremental steps.

Skill Levels with a Ranged attack (like a pistol) can add directly to OCV (see *Combat Skill Levels*) to help offset the Range Modifier. Ranged Skill Levels, a type of Penalty Skill Level, can only be used to offset the Range Modifier. RSLs are also used for weapons that have especially good or bad performance over range. These bonuses or penalties have no effect on targets within 8m, since there's no Range Modifier to hit them.

Example: A .38 derringer (6E2 208) has an inherent -2 Range Modifier, meaning it's not very accurate for shots at long ranges. When Randall fires his derringer at an opponent 24m away, the total Range Modifier is -4 for Range, plus -2 for the derringer, for a total modifier of -6. If Randall used a rifle (Range Modifier +2) instead, the total OCV modifier would be -4 for range, +2 for the gun, giving a total of -2. Neither gun provides any bonus or penalty when used against adjacent targets, and RSLs never add to a character's OCV — they just offset the Range Modifier.

COMBAT SKILLS

BUILDING COMBAT-CAPABLE CHARACTERS

Because the *HERO System* offers so many options for character creation, it's sometimes difficult for a new player to figure out exactly how to build a character who can do what he has in mind. This is important when it comes to combat, where rules and numbers are the most prominent. So, here's a quick guide to the Skills and other abilities a character needs to be competent in combat.

Using Weapons: If a character has paid Character Points for a weapon or attack, no Skill is required for him to use it; he can use it automatically. In Heroic campaigns and other games where characters get weapons and equipment for “free” (i.e., without paying Character Points for them), characters must buy *Weapon Familiarity* Skills to know how to use particular types of weapons.

Shields: Characters don't need any special Skill to use a shield.

Building And Repairing Weapons: A character who wants to make and fix his own weapons should buy the *Weaponsmith* Skill. For information on how to create weapons using the *HERO System* rules, see Chapter Seven of 6E2.

Martial Arts: A character who has received special training in unarmed or armed combat styles can buy *Martial Arts*. Martial Maneuvers modify a character's CV and damage, and sometimes provide abilities ordinary Combat Maneuvers do not. (See Chapter Three of 6E2.)

Two-Weapon Fighting: A character who wants to fight with a weapon in each hand has several options. Making multiple attacks in a Phase, either against one targets or multiple targets, involves the *Multiple Attack* Combat Maneuver (6E2 73). Characters who are skilled at that type of fighting often buy the *Rapid Attack* and *Two-Weapon Fighting* Skills, and sometimes the *Ambidexterity* or *Off-Hand Defense* Talents as well (see Chapter Three and Four of 6E1). In some cases characters use the *Reduced Penetration* Limitation to simulate a two-weapon attack.

Combat Skill Levels: A character who's especially good at fighting may want to buy one or more Combat Skill Levels for some or all of his attacks. CSLs can improve OCV, DCV, or the amount of damage done, and may have other effects. (See 6E1 69.)

Accuracy At Range: A character who wants to be particularly accurate with Ranged attacks should consider buying Range Skill Levels (a type of Penalty Skill Level). RSLs counteract the Range Modifier (thus making it easier for a character to hit a target at a long distance). (See 6E1 84.)

2

RANGE MODIFIER TABLE

Range	Modifier
Within Reach (1m)	-0
2-8m	-0
9-16m	-2
17-32m	-4
33-64m	-6
65-125m	-8
126-250m	-10
and so forth	

OPTIONAL RANGE MODIFIERS

Range	Modifier
Within Reach (1m)	-0
2-8m	-0
9-12m	-1
13-16m	-2
17-24m	-3
25-32m	-4
33-48m	-5
and so forth	

Mental Combat

Most attacks use the ordinary Attack Rolls and CV already described. However, Mental Powers use *Mental Combat Value* (MCV) instead of the normal Combat Value. MCV can be divided into Offensive MCV (OMCV) and Defensive MCV (DMCV), just like CV. The Powers that use MCV are Mental Blast, Mental Illusions, Mind Control, Mind Link, Mind Scan, Telepathy, and certain powers bought with the Advantage *Alternate Combat Value*. A character's base OMCV and DMCV are Characteristics.

Substituting MCV for CV, Mental Combat works just the same as normal combat. The Attack Roll is (OMCV + 11 - 3d6 roll = DMCV the character can hit). Apply any modifiers for Combat Skill Levels, just as normal. However, Mental Combat works on a Line Of Sight basis; if an attacker can see the target, he can attack him without suffering the Range Modifier. Typically, none of the Combat Modifiers apply either.

A character using a Mental Power uses EGO instead of DEX to determine when he acts in the Phase. (However, his SPD still derives from his DEX.) If he wants to take any physical actions (such as making a Half Move) first, he must wait until his DEX comes up, move, and then use his Mental Power.

See *Mental Powers*, 6E1 148, for more details regarding Mental Powers and Line Of Sight.

ENDURANCE COSTS IN COMBAT

Here's a quick reference to help you remember Endurance (END) costs during combat.

Strength (STR): STR costs 1 END per 10 points used (or 1 END per 5 STR in some Heroic games). For example, a superhero who uses STR 50 to punch spends 5 END to do so.

Powers: Most Powers cost 1 END per 10 Active Points in them. For example, a Blast 8d6 (40 Active Points) costs 4 END each time it's used; a Blast 8d6, Penetrating (60 Active Points) costs 6 END per use.

Some Powers, like Resistant Protection, Clinging, and Mind Link, do not cost END at all. See the individual Power descriptions for information (or the reference table on 6E1 162).

Powers that normally cost END may have the Advantage *Reduced Endurance* (which reduces the END cost to half or zero) or the Limitation *Increased Endurance Cost* (which makes them cost more END than normal).

Powers that don't normally cost END may have the Limitation *Costs Endurance*, which makes them cost END at the standard rate, and/or the Limitation *Increased Endurance Cost*, which makes them cost more END than normal.

EVENING THE ODDS: FIVE WAYS TO AFFECT YOUR FOES

When their characters face opponents who seem to take little or no damage from their attacks, players often get frustrated or upset. After all, it's not much fun to feel completely useless in combat. But don't get frustrated, get creative! Here are some ways to affect enemies who seem invulnerable or undefeatable:

1. Pushing: Assuming it's appropriate (see 6E2 133), the character can Push his attack to do more damage than normal.

2. Surprise Move: A clever Surprise Move (6E2 51) often leads to an OCV bonus awarded by the GM. Use that bonus to hit the enemy in a vulnerable spot the character would otherwise have difficulty hitting.

3. Try Something Different: Instead of relying on his most powerful attack, the character should try one of his more obscure, but less powerful, abilities. Maybe the dragon can shrug off your Fireball spell, but you can blind him with a properly-placed application of your Create Light spell.

4. Use Your Environment: The battlefield can provide all sorts of interesting tactical options, ranging from things the character can throw at his enemies (or hit them with) to dangerous areas he can trick them into entering. For example, maybe a character could trip, trick, or throw a heavily armed and armored warrior into water or quicksand, effectively immobilizing him.

5. Use Your Skills: Rather than relying on raw power, perhaps the character can cleverly apply his skills to create a way to affect his foe. For example, when fighting a robot so heavily armored that it cannot be affected by gunfire, maybe a character could get close enough to use Lockpicking to open up a panel on the robot, creating a vulnerable spot.

COMBAT MODIFIERS

Where and how combat takes place can affect characters' Attack Rolls. *Combat Modifiers* describe environmental conditions, character actions other than Combat Maneuvers that affect combat, certain Power Advantages, and other such factors that help or hinder a character in battle. Examples include a character attacking someone by surprise or ducking behind cover. The accompanying Combat Modifiers Table provides summary descriptions of the standard Combat Modifiers.

During game play, situations may occur that aren't covered in the Combat Modifiers — like firing upside down from a helicopter at midnight during a thunderstorm. In such cases, the GM should apply a modifier that seems reasonable, using the modifiers listed in the Combat Modifiers Table as guidelines. But remember, *HERO System* games simulate dramatic fiction, not “real life,” so characters should often be able to accomplish incredible feats. In fact, the GM might want to give players a bonus for especially creative and exciting maneuvers, since they make things more fun for everybody.

Any DCV modifiers from Combat Modifiers modify a character's DCV versus all attacks, both HTH and Ranged.

EXPLANATION OF COMBAT MODIFIERS

The text below describes how the Combat Modifiers work.

In general, unless the text says that a Combat Modifier affects MCV, it does not. However, the GM should make exceptions whenever he feels it's appropriate to do so.

Area Of Effect Attack

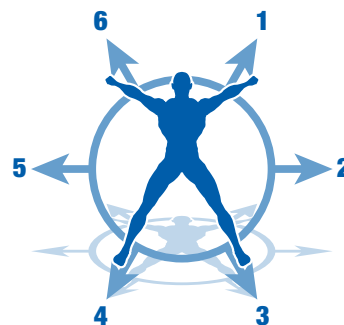
The rules in this section cover not only Area Of Effect attacks, but any attack directed against a target point on the ground rather than a person or an upright object. A character can also use an Area Of Effect attack to target a point in the air, underwater, or the like (for example, to attack a parachutist or a submarine) — he's not limited to targeting areas on the ground.

A character may make an Area Of Effect attack against either a target point or the target's normal DCV. Generally, it's easier to hit the target point the target's standing on, because the DCV of a target point is 3, or 0 if the target point is adjacent to the attacker (*i.e.*, within 2m). Attacks aimed at a target point suffer the normal Range Modifier.

To use an Area Of Effect attack, a character picks the target point he's aiming for. This becomes the center of his Area Of Effect (or the first point of an Area Of Effect [Cone] or [Line]). If he fails his Attack Roll, the center of the Area Of Effect misses the target point by 2m for every 1 point which the Attack Roll fails by; the maximum miss distance is half the distance to the target. To determine the direction of the miss, the character should roll 1d6 and consult the accompanying diagram.

Usually, an Area Of Effect attack affects everything in the area — the character doesn't have to make a separate Attack Roll on each target (unless he's bought a version of the *Area Of Effect* Advantage that requires this). Even if the center of the Area Of Effect misses the target point, the attacker may still catch his target within the Area Of Effect, depending on how far the Area Of Effect misses by and in what direction.

Character Facing



COMBAT MODIFIERS TABLE

Modifier	Notes	OCV	DCV
Area Of Effect Attack	Must hit target point's DCV (3; 0 if adjacent)	—	—
Autofire	More than one shot; 1 hit per 2 points roll succeeds by	+0	-0
Bouncing An Attack	Requires 1 Combat Skill Level per bounce	+1 to +3	—
Behind Cover	By Hit Location Table or:		
	1-10% (nearly all of the body showing)	-0	—
	11-24% (two-thirds of the body showing)	-1	—
	25-50% (half the body showing)	-2	—
	51-74% (one-third of the body showing)	-3	—
	75-90% (head and shoulders showing)	-4	—
	91-100% (head showing)	-8	—
Coordinated Attacks	Combine damage for purpose of Stunning	—	—
Encumbrance	Character is weighed down	—	-0 to -5
Environmental Conditions	Various ambient conditions or situations	Varies	Varies
Multiple Attackers	-1 DCV per attacker after the first; must Coordinate	Varies	—
Objects As Weapons	May affect CV and damage done; see 6E2 173	Varies	—
Off Hand	Using off hand	-3	—
Prone Target	May be Behind Cover	—	x½
Spreading An Attack	For one target, +1 OCV per -1 DC	Varies	—
	To hit multiple targets, -1d6 per additional 1m radius Area	—	—
Surprised	In combat	—	x½
	Out of combat, take 2x Stun	—	x½
Surprise Move	GM decides	+1 to +3	—
Target Size	Large (up to 2x human sized)	+2	—
	Enormous (3-4x human sized)	+4	—
	Huge (5-8x human sized)	+6	—
	Gigantic (9-16x human sized)	+8	—
	Gargantuan (17-32x human sized)	+10	—
	Colossal (33-64x human sized)	+12	—
	...and so on		
	Small (down to ½ human size)	-2	—
	Diminutive (down to ¼ human size)	-4	—
	Tiny (down to 1/8 human size [about 1 foot])	-6	—
	Minuscule (down to 1/16 human size)	-8	—
	Minute (down to 1/32 human size)	-10	—
	Insectile (down to 1/64 human size [about 1 inch])	-12	—
	...and so on		
Target An Area	Must hit target point's DCV (3; 0 if adjacent)	—	—
Unfamiliar Weapon	Character lacks appropriate Weapon Familiarity	-3	—
Weapon Size/Shape	GM decides	Varies	Varies

—: No change in the indicated value



Autofire

Automatic weapons and Powers bought with the Advantage *Autofire* can fire more than one attack with a single Attack Roll. Thus, they can hit one target several times or several targets one time each with just one Attack Roll (as opposed to Multiple Attack [6E2 73], which requires one Attack Roll per attack).

Characters may train themselves to overcome some of the restrictions on Autofire attacks. See *Autofire Skills*, 6E1 65, for more information.

AUTOFIRE AGAINST A SINGLE TARGET

To use an attack with Autofire on a single target, the character decides how many times he wants to fire the attack, up to a maximum of the number of “shots” he has purchased via the *Autofire* Advantage. He makes a normal Attack Roll. If the Attack Roll succeeds, the character hits the target one time; in addition, for every full 2 points by which the Attack Roll succeeds, he hits the target an additional time. For example, if a character’s Attack Roll indicates that he hits a target with DCV 12 or less, he hits a target with DCV 12 once, one with DCV 10 twice, one with DCV 8 three times, and so on. A single target cannot be hit more times than the number of “shots” fired.

Example: *Andarra fires her Autofire (5 shots) blaster at an alien agent standing next to her. Andarra has a base OCV of 7, and since the attack is point-blank, there’s no Range Modifier. The target has DCV 5, though Andarra doesn’t know that. Andarra rolls an 8, so she hits (7 + 11 - 8 =) DCV 10 or less. Therefore she hits her target three times: once at DCV 5, once at DCV 7, and once at DCV 9.*

AUTOFIRE AGAINST MULTIPLE TARGETS

To use an attack with Autofire on multiple targets, a character declares the targets and counts the line of meters “connecting” all the targets. He suffers a -1 OCV penalty for each 2m in the line. He must make a separate Attack Roll for each target fired at, and each target can only get hit one time. He must fire a minimum of one shot into each 2m “area” of the line, even if no target occupies it (thus, a character with a 5-shot Autofire weapon could affect a maximum of 10m and, at most, five separate targets). If the character misses one of the targets, he may continue down the line attempting to hit other targets.

Example: *Andarra fires at three rock creatures in a 10m continuous line. She suffers a -5 penalty to her OCV for firing at each target (-1 for each 2m in the line). Andarra has a base OCV of 7, modified down to 2 by the penalty. Each rock creature has a DCV of 4 (though she doesn’t know that). Andarra’s Attack Roll subtracts from (2 + 11 =) 13. Her first roll is a 5, so she can hit DCV 8, easily enough to hit the first rock creature (each target can only get hit once). Andarra rolls to hit the second rock creature and gets a 10, so she can only hit DCV 3 and misses it. Against the third rock creatures she rolls a 6, so she can hit DCV 7, and thus succeeds in hitting the monster.*

AUTOFIRE DAMAGE

If a character uses a Combat Skill Level or other means to increase the damage done by an Autofire attack, the increased damage applies to every shot that hits the target. The GM may change this rule if he considers it unbalancing for a particular attack.

Each Autofire shot counts as a separate attack for purposes of determining if the target’s Stunned — the individual Autofire shots don’t add together to make a “single attack.” For example, if a character with CON 20 takes 18 STUN and 14 STUN (after defenses) from two Autofire hits from the same burst of fire, he’s not Stunned, since neither hit, by itself, did 21 or more STUN to him. (Of course, even though he’s not Stunned, he may be Knocked Out.)

If a character with an Autofire attack Coordinates with other characters, regardless of whether they do or do not have Autofire attacks themselves, and he hits the target with two or more shots, add only the largest STUN total from any of the shots to his comrades’ attack for purposes of determining the effects of Coordinating. The other shots still hit and cause damage to the target, they’re just not counted for purposes of the Coordination rules.

If a character has an Autofire attack that’s also Constant, it continues to affect the target with the same number of shots that hit him the first time, unless the GM rules otherwise based on the circumstances.



AREA-EFFECTING AUTOFIRE ATTACKS

If a character has an attack that lets him Auto-fire an area-affecting attack (such as Darkness or a power with the *Area Of Effect Advantage*), it's possible he might miss some shots even though he attacks against DCV 3. Here's how to resolve that.

For multiple shots against a single target, the Attack Roll determines how many shots hit the target. The rest are considered misses and have no effect on the target. You can randomly determine the “scatter” for the missed shots, adapting the rules under *Area Of Effect Attacks*, above, if you want, but the target shouldn't suffer any additional damage. If the GM wants to do some extra work, he can determine the exact area affected by each missed attack, and if any of them overlap the target or another character, apply the damage as appropriate.

If the attack misses entirely, make one calculation for where the shots would scatter to based on the normal rules, then apply the damage from that one attack to the affected area. Again, the rest are considered misses and have no effect on the area hit (which may or may not overlap to hit the target anyway), unless the GM wants to resolve each miss separately.

In either case, lots of other things may get destroyed in the area from the other “missed shots,” but they shouldn't have any effect in game terms — it's just a special effect — unless the GM wants to take the time and trouble to come up with a more “realistic” result.

For single shots against multiple targets, determine whether each hits, and for any misses determine the scatter normally.

Behind Cover

Targets who are partly Behind Cover are harder to hit. The less of the target that can be perceived and targeted, the worse the attacker's OCV penalty (see accompanying table). This affects both Ranged and HTH attacks, though Behind Cover is most likely to come into play during Ranged Combat.

BEHIND COVER MODIFIERS

Percentage Of Body Behind Cover	OCV Modifier
1-10% (nearly all of the body showing)	-0
11-24% (two-thirds of the body showing)	-1
25-50% (half the body showing)	-2
51-74% (one-third of the body showing)	-3
75-90% (head and shoulders showing)	-4
91-100% (head showing)	-8

BEHIND COVER WITH HIT LOCATIONS

If the campaign uses the optional Hit Location Table (6E2 108), Behind Cover works differently. If a character has some cover from an opponent, the GM should decide what Hit Locations are covered. For example, a character standing behind a desk would have his feet, legs, and (perhaps) abdomen covered; similarly, a character firing a pistol around a corner would only expose his head and one hand, arm, and shoulder. Once the GM determines what's Behind Cover, combat occurs normally. If an attack hits the Behind Cover character, roll the Hit Location. If the Hit Location rolled is Behind Cover, the attack strikes the cover instead. This usually means the target takes no damage, although if the cover's lightweight or the attack was powerful, the attack may “blow through” the cover and still have enough power to damage the target.

Example: *Andarra has just drawn her blaster on a squad of Imperial Star Marines. Not liking the odds, she ducks behind a rock before firing. The well-trained Marines return fire. Because the rock protects roughly half of Andarra, the Marines suffer a -2 OCV to their Attack Rolls.*

Alternately, the GM could have the Marines attack normally and then roll Hit Locations. Only Andarra's head, arms, shoulders, and chest are exposed, so any Hit Location roll of 12 or more hits the rock, doing no damage to her.

FIRING INTO MELEE

Gamemasters may, if they wish, use the normal Behind Cover rules when a character tries to make a Ranged Attack against a character in the middle of a HTH Combat with one or more other persons (“firing into melee,” in gaming parlance). In this situation, the GM decides how much “cover” the other bodies in the battle provide, based on the number of combatants, how quickly they're moving around, their relative sizes, and other factors. The attacker then makes his Attack Roll against the target's DCV, including the OCV penalty from Behind Cover. If the roll misses *solely as a result of the Behind Cover OCV penalty* (i.e., it misses by less than or equal to the penalty), then the attacker may have actually hit the cover — one of the other people in the melee. The GM decides which combatant is the potential target (either randomly, or based on his evaluation of the fighters' positions when the attacker fired). The attacker must make another Attack Roll against that target, using only his base OCV (no bonuses from Combat Skill Levels, Combat Maneuvers, or the like apply). If that Attack Roll hits, the attacker's shot has accidentally hit someone other than his intended target!



Example: *Lt. Andy Barrett, a skilled sniper, wants to help out the other soldiers in his squad, who've run out of ammunition while assaulting a terrorist training camp and are now involved in a swirling hand-to-hand melee with the terrorists. He decides to shoot the terrorist who's fighting his friend Sgt. Ortiz. Barrett has an OCV of 10. The GM decides that, based on the swirling confusion of the combat, the terrorist Barrett's aiming at has a little more than half cover — ordinarily a -3 OCV penalty for Barrett. However, the GM also thinks that the fact the terrorist's a little larger than Ortiz helps Barrett, so he reduces the penalty to -2 OCV, giving Barrett a final OCV of 8.*

Barrett rolls a 14, so that means he can hit $(8 + 11 - 14 =)$ DCV 5 or less. Unfortunately the terrorist's DCV is higher than that (DCV 6). That means Barrett missed by 1, which is less than or equal to the Behind Cover penalty of 2, so he may hit someone else in the battle. Since there are six other combatants (Ortiz, Private Michaels, and four terrorists), the GM rolls 1d6 (1-2 for Barrett's friends, 3-6 for the terrorists). He gets a 4 — the potential victim is another terrorist, fortunately! Barrett uses his base OCV of 6 to make an Attack Roll. He rolls a 10, so he hit $(6 + 11 - 10 =)$ DCV 7 or lower. The terrorist has DCV 5, so that's a hit! At least Barrett didn't shoot one of his friends....

Bouncing An Attack

A character with a Ranged Attack and Combat Skill Levels that apply to it can Bounce the attack off the right surface. The GM must decide what surfaces are appropriate for Bouncing a given type of attack. For each bounce the character wants the attack to perform, the character must use one CSL. (For example, if the character wants to ricochet his attack off of three walls to hit the target from behind, he has to allocate 3 CSLs to Bouncing.) Determine the Range Modifier for the attack by counting the length of the entire path of the attack. A Bounce can give the character a Surprise Move bonus (+1 to +3 OCV) if the target isn't expecting this type of attack (or possibly eliminate or reduce the effects of the *Behind Cover* Combat Modifier).

Example: *Marshal Graves squares off against some desperadoes holed up inside the Last Chance Saloon. One of them has hidden behind the bar. Graves wants to Bounce a shot from his Colt Peacemaker off one of the wooden shelves behind the bar to hit his target. The GM rules that this is possible. Graves has OCV 6 and three Combat Skill Levels with his Peacemaker; he's 8m from the shelf, and the shelf is 2m above the desperado. Graves must use one CSL to Bounce, and decides to use the other two to increase his OCV to 8. The Range Modifier depends on the entire path of the attack: $8m + 2m = 10m$, for a -2 Range Modifier. Thus, Graves has a final OCV of 6. However, the GM rules that he doesn't suffer the -4 OCV penalty he normally would for the desperado using the bar to be Behind Cover.*

Bouncing is most often used in Superheroic campaigns. However, it's appropriate for some types of Heroic campaigns as well. For example, in a Dark Champions campaign or a Western Hero campaign, characters might be skilled at bouncing bullets underneath cars or wagons, off of posts, and so forth to hit targets hiding behind cover.

Characters shouldn't be able to Bounce some Ranged attacks, such as frangible bullets and many types of spells; the same applies to arrows and throwing knives in campaigns stressing "realism." They can take a $\frac{1}{4}$ Limitation, *Cannot Be Bounced*. The GM may reduce this to -0 if Bouncing is uncommon in the campaign.

BOUNCED WEAPONS

Characters in some campaigns often use blunt missile weapons — thrown billy clubs, shields, weighted disks, and the like — against their enemies, carefully planning the ricochets to hit multiple targets (a form of Multiple Attack, usually) and/or to make the weapon bounce right back to the character so he can catch it and throw it again right away. In game terms, a character can do this with the Bouncing An Attack rules. He simply devotes one applicable Combat Skill Level to make the weapon return to his hand. The CSL doesn't improve his OCV with the attack, it just guarantees he threw the weapon with the right "spin" to make it ricochet back to his hand. (Alternately, the character can simply define the attack as a power without the *Focus* Limitation — thus ensuring, as a special effect, that it always "bounces back" to him, because the rules let him use the attack again and again without anyone being able to take it away from him.)

Coordinated Attacks

This Combat Modifier allows two or more characters to "coordinate" so their attacks are more effective against a single opponent.

HOW TO COORDINATE

Before any two (or more) characters can Coordinate attacks, at the very least they must have fought together or trained together in the past. This training can be "in the field" during typical combats, or the characters can deliberately spend time practicing Coordinating their attacks. A character cannot "Coordinate" with himself.

To Coordinate attacks, the characters must attack on the same DEX on the same Phase (the attacks are considered to occur simultaneously). Faster characters may have to Hold their Actions to wait for comrades who have lower DEXs. If the combat is particularly confusing or noisy, the GM might require the characters to make a PER Roll to notice the cue to attack.

Even though Coordinated attacks are considered to occur "simultaneously," if one of them would reduce the target's DCV or otherwise make the target easier to hit or harm, it's considered to occur "last." For example, suppose two characters want to Coordinate an attack where one of them

Grabs-and-Squeezes the target while the other punches him (thus combining the STUN damage from the punch and the Squeeze). Since a Grab reduces the victim's DCV, that part of the attack is considered to occur "last" so the character who's punching the target has to make his attack against the target's normal DCV.

When characters try to Coordinate, they must make an appropriate Skill or Characteristic Roll to see if they succeed. Typically they have to use the Agility Skill *Teamwork*, which represents their ability to Coordinate properly (see 6E1 91). However, at the GM's option, a character who doesn't know *Teamwork* can make a DEX Roll or Tactics roll, with negative modifiers to simulate his lack of experience fighting together with other characters (a flat 8- chance to Coordinate may be appropriate in some situations).

EFFECTS OF COORDINATING

If two or more characters successfully Coordinate, there are several effects. First, Coordinating attacks may make the target easier to hit (see *Multiple Attackers*, below). Second, Coordinated attacks are more likely to Stun the target. When two or more attackers successfully Coordinate their attacks, each of them rolls his damage as usual for the type of attack he used. However, any STUN damage the target takes after applying his defenses adds together for the purpose of determining whether he's Stunned. If the Knockback rule is being used, Knockback is determined normally for each attack, then added together.

Typically, characters can Coordinate any types of attacks that do damage. However, Mental Powers that do damage, such as Mental Blasts, generally cannot be Coordinated with attacks that do physical damage (the GM must decide when attacks can be Coordinated based on the nature of the Powers involved, the attacks' special effects, and the circumstances). Mental Powers that do damage can be Coordinated with other Mental Powers that do damage in the usual fashion (to "coordinate" continuing-effect Mental Powers, use the rules for complementary Mental Powers on 6E1 152). When Coordinating the effects of Powers like *Dispel*, which don't directly cause damage, add the effect rolls together, or use some other common-sense result.

Because the point of Coordinating is to improve the chances of Stunning a target, characters cannot Coordinate attacks that don't do STUN damage (or the types of damage described above). For example, characters can't Coordinate their Grabs to somehow obtain a "better" Grab effect.

In the event one or more characters involved in a Coordinated attack uses an attack or power that somehow lowers the target's DCV, the lowering does not apply to any attacks used in that Coordinated attack. Depending on how the lowering works, it might apply in later Segments, or to other attacks (not a part of the Coordinated attack) that take place in the same Segment but after the Coordinated attack occurs.

Example: *Arkelos the mage (SPD 3, DEX 18) and Chiron the rogue (SPD 4, DEX 20) attack a dragon who just incinerated their friend the paladin. They decide to Coordinate their attacks. On Segment 6, Chiron holds his attack. On Segment 8, Arkelos has a Phase, and on DEX 18, they both attack (Chiron uses his Held Action). Chiron's sword does 15 STUN after defenses, Arkelos's flame bolt does 18 STUN after defenses. The damage is totaled for the purposes of seeing whether the dragon is Stunned. Since $15 + 18 = 33$ STUN is greater than the dragon's 28 CON, the dragon is Stunned. Whew!*

Coordinating works the same even if different types of attacks are used (such as a Normal Damage attack and a Killing Damage attack, or a Normal Damage attack and a Drain), or if the campaign uses the Hit Location rules. Each attack applies against its relevant defenses in the regular manner, modified by Hit Locations as appropriate. When you determine the total STUN damage the target takes after applying the relevant defenses to reduce each attack's damage, add it together to find out if he's Stunned.

Encumbrance

A character who carries around heavy equipment or objects may become *encumbered*, and therefore not able to fight and move as well. He also finds it difficult to perform acts requiring agility (*i.e.*, a DEX Roll). The Encumbrance rules should only be used in Heroic campaigns (except regarding movement, in which case they also apply to Superheroic campaigns).

To determine Encumbrance, calculate the total weight of all the items a character carries. This includes both worn items (such as his armor, clothing, backpack, and sheathed weapons) and any items carried in his hands. Since a character often carries around a fair number of miscellaneous items, he should probably add one or two kilograms to the total. The GM must decide the weight of any items not listed. Compare this total weight to Encumbrance Table I. Encumbrance Table II provides a quick reference suitable to most Heroic campaigns.

Because the Encumbrance movement penalties can become severe, GMs may wish to modify the rules slightly for characters who only have the standard 4m of Swimming. For any level of Encumbrance from 50-89%, a character in the water cannot move, but can tread water and keep himself afloat by paying the END for his Swimming and his Encumbrance. At 90% Encumbrance and above, the character can only tread water by paying *double* those END costs. At 100%+, the character sinks like a stone.

ENCUMBRANCE TABLE I

Total Weight Carried	DCV/DEX Roll	Movement	END Cost per Turn
Up to 10%	-0	—	0
10-24%	-1	—	0
25-49%	-2	-2m	1
50-74%	-3	-4m	2
75-89%	-4	-8m	3
90-100%	-5	-16m	4

Notes:

Total Weight Carried: A percentage of the total weight a character can lift, as indicated by the Strength Table (6E1 43). For example, a character with a 20 STR can lift 400 kilograms; if carrying 200 kilograms, he would suffer a -3 to DCV and DEX Rolls.

Movement: Moving characters can carry up to 24% of the weight they can carry with their STR at no penalty. However, carrying more than that slows them down. The Movement column shows the impact that carrying 25% or more of their carrying capacity has on their movement. The number of meters listed in the table is subtracted from the character's movement rate. As explained on 6E2 25, characters can use their movement to improve their STR; this may allow them to overcome some or all effects of encumbrance at less cost in velocity.

END Cost Per Turn: When Encumbered in combat, the character uses this much END per Turn in addition to any other END used for STR, Powers, and the like. Additionally, you can use this number as the amount of Long Term END he loses every hour which he carries that much weight.

A character must pay the END cost for Encumbrance in his first Phase of each Turn. (Alternately, the GM may divide the END cost equally over the character's Phases for the Turn.) At the GM's option, characters so Encumbered that they must pay END do not get Post-Segment 12 Recoveries (and possibly not even normal Recoveries) until they get rid of enough weight to remove the penalty, or sit down and do nothing but rest.

ENCUMBRANCE TABLE II

ENCUMBRANCE (TOTAL WEIGHT CARRIED)

STR	0-10%	11-24%	25-49%	50-74%	75-89%	90-100%
5	0-5.4	5.5-12.4	12.5-24.5	24.6-37.0	37.1-44.5	44.6-50.0
8	0-7.5	7.6-18.0	18.1-36.8	36.9-55.5	55.6-66.8	66.9-75.0
10	0-10.0	10.1-24.0	24.1-49.0	49.1-74.0	74.1-89.0	89.1-100.0
13	0-15.0	15.1-36.0	36.1-73.5	73.6-111.0	111.1-133.5	133.6-150.0
15	0-20.0	20.1-48.0	48.1-96.0	96.1-148.0	148.1-178.0	178.1-200.0
18	0-30.0	30.1-72.0	72.1-147.0	147.1-222.0	222.1-267.0	267.1-300.0
20	0-40.0	40.1-96.0	96.1-196.0	196.1-296.0	296.1-356.0	356.1-400.0
23	0-60.0	60.1-144.0	144.1-294.0	294.1-444.0	444.1-534.0	534.1-600.0
25	0-80.0	80.1-192.0	192.1-392.0	392.1-592.0	592.1-712.0	712.1-800.0

0-10%: No Encumbrance penalty

11-24%: -1 DCV/DEX Rolls

25-49%: -2 DCV/DEX Rolls, -2m movement, 1 END per Turn

50-74%: -3 DCV/DEX Rolls, -4m movement, 2 END per Turn

75-89%: -4 DCV/DEX Rolls, -8m movement, 3 END per Turn

90-100%: -5 DCV/DEX Rolls, -16m movement, 4 END per Turn

Greater than 100%: Character cannot move or take other actions

All weights listed are in kilograms (kg).

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS TABLE

Condition	Problem; Modifiers
Climbing	During easy climbs (such as a ladder), characters suffer -1 DCV; more difficult ones can reduce DCV by up to half and subtract 2 DCs from all attacks.
Cluttered, Cramped	In cluttered or cramped areas, characters are typically at -2 DCV, -1 OCV (if not worse); an Acrobatics roll eliminates these penalties.
Falling, Flying	May restrict the types of Martial Arts or other attacks characters can use (see text).
Intoxication	Intoxicated or drunk characters are at -2 OCV and -2 DCV.
Narrow Surfaces	Characters fighting on tightropes, tiny ledges, tree branches, and other narrow surfaces are at -2 DCV and -2 DC to all attacks; an Acrobatics roll eliminates these penalties.
Poor Footing	When footing is poor — on ice, rain-slicked rocks, mud, or the like — characters suffer -1 DCV and -1 DC to all attacks; a Breakfall roll eliminates these penalties.
Water	Characters fighting underwater or while swimming are at -2 DCV and -2 DCs to all attacks unless they make an appropriate Skill Roll or have TF: SCUBA. A character who stands in water while he fights is at -2 DCV (and typically also suffer Poor Footing penalties) unless he makes a Breakfall roll.
Zero-Gravity	Characters in Zero-G are typically at -3 OCV and/or -3 DCs for any attacks that require them to have their feet on the ground (such as kicks) or which need the momentum of gravity to function properly (such as some punches or throws). Characters are also usually at ½ DCV. Characters can eliminate some or all of these penalties with a successful PS: Zero-G Operations roll.

The OCV, DCV, and DC penalties for Climbing and other conditions apply to both HTH and Ranged Combat, unless otherwise noted.

Environmental Conditions

The Environmental Conditions Table lists some typical environmental conditions and the problems they can cause in combat. In addition to the CV and DC penalties (which apply to all forms of attack unless otherwise noted) and other penalties listed in the table, GMs may also wish to restrict the use of certain Maneuvers or other Actions in particular conditions. For example, characters fighting in hip-deep water usually can't use kicks.

Characters can eliminate the combat penalties for a particular type of environment with the Skills listed in the table or by purchasing the Talent *Environmental Movement* (6E1 113).

CLIMBING

When a character makes easy climbs (such as climbing up or down a ladder), he suffers -1 DCV, but no penalty to OCV or DCs. More difficult climbs, including most climbs that require the character to make a roll with his *Climbing* Skill, reduce his DCV by up to half and subtract 2 DCs from all attacks.

In either case, a character can eliminate these penalties with a successful Climbing roll. This roll is separate from any roll needed to keep climbing or not fall; typically it takes no time, but the GM may require the character to use up to a Half Phase Action to make it in appropriate circumstances. If the character fails the roll, the penalties still apply; if he fails it badly, he probably falls as well.

CLUTTERED OR CRAMPED CONDITIONS

In cluttered or cramped areas, characters are typically at -2 DCV, -1 OCV (if not worse). Based on the type of area, a character may not be able to use certain types of maneuvers (such as various kinds of kicks) at all. Characters can eliminate these penalties by succeeding with an Acrobatics roll.

See 6E2 202 for rules about weapon length and cluttered, cramped, or enclosed conditions.

FALLING AND FLYING

Every now and then a character may have to fight during a long fall. The parachuting sequence from the James Bond movie *Moonraker* probably provides the classic example of this sort of thing — two falling characters struggling for a single parachute.

Falling characters are severely restricted in their use of martial arts and other forms of attack. Attacks requiring them to use their legs — just about all kinds of kicks and sweeps, for example — are difficult or impossible to perform, as are most throws and dodges. Punches or hand attacks are allowed, and grappling and choking attacks are the easiest of all (and often the most logical choice, too). There's no way to eliminate these penalties.

In some situations characters need to remember the possibility of doing Knockback, something they'll often want to avoid — if your opponent has the only parachute, you want to stick close to him and take it from him, not knock him away from you.

Parachuting characters often use the reverse of these rules — punching and grappling attacks are not really possible, but some kicks are. The GM should determine what maneuvers a character can use based on the situation.

Refer to *Zero Gravity*, below, for information about fighting in situations where there is no gravity at all.

INTOXICATION

Intoxicated, drunk, stoned, or similarly impaired characters are at -2 OCV and -2 DCV.

NARROW SURFACES

Characters sometimes have to fight on narrow surfaces such as tightropes, tiny ledges, tree branches, and the like. In this situation, a character is at -2 DCV and -2 DC to all attacks; he can eliminate these penalties by succeeding with an Acrobatics roll.

POOR FOOTING

Sometimes characters find themselves fighting in environments with poor footing: ice, rain-slicked rocks, mud, rowboats, and the like. In this situation, a character suffers -1 DCV and -1 DC to all attacks, but can eliminate these penalties with a successful Breakfall roll.

WATER

Characters fighting underwater or while swimming have -2 DCV and -2 DCs to all attacks unless they make an appropriate Skill Roll or have TF: SCUBA. A character who stands in water while he fights is at -2 DCV (and typically also suffer Poor Footing penalties) unless he succeeds with a Breakfall roll. See 6E2 158 for rules for underwater adventuring.

ZERO GRAVITY

The standard Skill Roll and OCV penalty for all activity in zero gravity (*a.k.a.* free fall) is -3; the standard DCV penalty is ½ DCV. Characters can overcome this penalty in two ways. First, they can buy the PS: *Zero-G Operations* Skill. This method is the most “realistic,” and is best suited for characters used to normal gravity but trained for zero-G work. Second, they can buy the *Zero-G Training* form of Environmental Movement (6E1 113). This costs 6 Character Points and automatically cancels all Skill Roll and CV penalties caused by zero-G. This method is most appropriate for characters born to a zero-G environment, or who spend virtually all of their time in one.



ZERO GRAVITY AND HTH COMBAT

The penalties for Ranged Combat in zero-G are noted above, but HTH combat requires some additional explanation and rules. These penalties all apply when the character is in free fall in zero-G. If he's braced against a surface (for instance, if he wears magnetic shoes and stands on a steel surface), they do not apply.

OCV Penalties: A character suffers a -3 OCV penalty for all attacks requiring him to have his feet on the ground (such as Martial Arts kicks) performed in zero-G. In some situations the GM may rule that characters cannot use these maneuvers at all. He also suffers a -3 OCV penalty for other HTH attacks, reflecting the general difficulty he has moving and contorting his body in zero-G.

DCV Penalties: Characters are at $\frac{1}{2}$ DCV when in zero-G.

Damage Penalties: All HTH Combat attacks suffer a minimum of a -1 DC damage penalty when performed in free fall, as they normally benefit from the character's secure contact with a surface or momentum arising from a leap from a surface. These penalties are usually higher (-3 DC), but the GM can adjust the penalty as he sees fit.

Action/Reaction (Knockback): Combat in free fall should always use the Knockback rules, even if the campaign normally only uses Knockdown rules.

Knockback becomes a very serious problem in zero-G combat. When a character takes Knockback, he continues to move that many meters per Segment until he hits something. If the character has a safety line or tether, he moves until he reaches the limit of the rope and stops. Without a tether, there's a real danger of floating off helplessly into deep space. Characters in that situation can make a DEX Roll once per Phase to attempt to grab objects within Reach and thereby keep from flying away. Victims wearing any sort of zero-G flight pack can bring themselves to a stop using their thrusters.

For characters in free fall, roll 1d6 less than normal to determine Knockback, as if they were flying — which, in essence, they are. Moreover, instead of applying Knockback just to the target, divide it between attacker and target. If an attack does 8m Knockback, then the target doesn't sail back 8m — both attacker and target sail away from one another 4m.

Grappling: Grabbing someone negates OCV penalties for strikes and the Action/Reaction effect (when a character has Grabbed someone and hit him, doing Knockback, neither of them goes anywhere).

Multiple Attackers

This optional rule reflects the fact that when there are a lot of attackers fighting a single defender, it's harder for the defender to evade their attacks. To gain a Multiple Attacker Bonus, the attackers must Coordinate their attacks (see *Coordinated Attacks*, above). If the attackers successfully Coordinate, the defender suffers a -1 DCV for every attacker after the first, down to a minimum of ½ DCV. The attackers can fight at Range, HTH, or a combination of both. The DCV penalty applies only against those opponents who Coordinate their attacks; the character's DCV against other attacks is determined normally. A character who has the Skill *Defense Maneuver* (6E1 74) can avoid the effects of Multiple Attackers.

A character attacked by Multiple Attackers can choose to ignore some of them to concentrate on a more dangerous opponent. In this case he gets his full DCV against the single opponent, but is ½ DCV against all the other Multiple Attackers.

Characters with Mental Powers may obtain a Multiple Attackers Bonus for MCV when using any Mental Power with which they can Coordinate (see above).

Multiple Attackers is an optional rule. It can be particularly inappropriate for a Martial Arts campaign or one based on the swashbuckling exploits of the Three Musketeers, since generally heroes in those genres are *supposed* to be able to take on large numbers of less skilled opponents and defeat them without getting hurt. The same applies to cinematic Dark Champions campaigns where characters often seem to survive fusillades of bullets, or in Fantasy campaigns where it's common for a single skilled warrior to fight and defeat several lesser swordsmen at once.

Example: *Five VIPER agents attack Nighthawk. Because they find Nighthawk almost impossible to hit, they decide to try for a Multiple Attacker Bonus. (This is made simpler because all VIPER agents have DEX 14 and SPD 3.) On Segment 4, they Coordinate their attacks (this is easy for them because they've all trained together and purchased the Teamwork Skill) and attack as one. Nighthawk receives a -4 to his DCV, and will probably be hit.*

Objects As Weapons

Characters often use objects (or even other characters!) as “improvised weapons.” This can affect not only their CVs but how much damage they do. See *Objects As Weapons* on 6E2 173 for more information.

Off Hand

An attack made with a weapon used in the character's “off” hand suffers a -3 OCV penalty. If the character is right-handed, this applies to weapons held in the left hand, vice-versa for left-handed characters. The Talent *Ambidexterity* eliminates this penalty.

The Off Hand rules only apply to weapons — a character can punch someone with either of his fists and suffer no OCV penalty for the “off” hand. However, GMs interested in fairness or “realism” may want to apply the Off Hand penalty to bare-handed attacks like punches (and many Martial Maneuvers).

This optional rule is usually used only in Heroic campaigns or other games where characters buy Weapon Familiarity and similar Skills instead of paying Character Points for their weapons and equipment.

Prone Target

A prone target (*i.e.*, one who's lying on the ground) is at half DCV. However, he may be Behind Cover, making it harder to hit him. Many attacks and other situations can cause a character to become prone.

If a character wants to drop prone voluntarily (perhaps to get Behind Cover quickly, avoid being run over by a train, or the like), he must use a Zero Phase Action (this is a defensive Action he can Abort to). Getting back to one's feet takes a Half Phase Action (unless the character uses Breakfall; see 6E1 66). Neither dropping down nor standing up costs END, but it does affect the character's CV — see *Groundfighting*, 6E2 127, for details.

Spreading An Attack

This optional rule allows a character to “spread” a Ranged attack to get a better chance to hit a target. Effectively, the character “widens” the attack at the cost of doing less damage. The character does -1 Damage Class for every +1 OCV he wants. He makes his Attack Roll against the target's DCV.

Alternately, a character may Spread his attack to hit more than one target. The character loses 1 Damage Class for each 1m radius Area he wants to fill with his attack. (If the character wants to convert more than one DC into an Area, each additional -1 DC is another 1m radius Area; it doesn't increase the Area to a 2m radius.) The Areas affected must be adjacent, and typically in a straight line as well (thus allowing the character to hit multiple targets standing next to one another), but the GM can let the character arrange the Areas differently if desired. The character must make a separate Attack Roll against each target, using that target's DCV; he receives no OCV bonus for Spreading (his “bonus” is the ability to attack more targets). A Spread attack can be Deflected or Reflected.

With either form of Spreading, the character must pay the full END cost for the attack, even though it's not doing full damage.

Spreading is most commonly used with Blast, but characters may also Spread other types of Ranged attacks (unless the GM rules otherwise). The only Mental Power characters can Spread is Mental Blast (and at the GM's option, AVADs that are considered "Mental attacks").

A character can only Spread a Multiple Attack if he can Spread all the powers used in the attack; see 6E2 78 for more information.

If a character Spreads a Constant attack (such as Telekinesis), the reduced effectiveness applies throughout the use of the ability. The character can't "increase" the ability's power in later Phases.

Spreading is usually only used in Superheroic campaigns. Characters may not spread attacks that already affect an Area (such as Darkness, or any power with the *Area Of Effect* Advantage) or that have the *Beam Limitation*.

Example: *Starburst has a Blast 10d6. He decides to Spread his attack to get a better chance to hit his target. He spreads his attack by 2d6. This gives him a +2 OCV, but he only does 8d6 damage if he hits. He pays the full 5 END that his Blast normally costs.*

Starburst now wants to try to hit several agents with one shot. The agents, not being particularly clever, have conveniently lined up shoulder to shoulder, six agents filling 6m of space. Starburst spreads his attack by 3d6, filling three 1m radius areas and thus covering the entire area where the agents are standing. Starburst must now roll his Attack Roll against each agent. Each agent he hits takes 7d6 damage. Starburst pays the full 5 END for his Blast.

Surprised

This Combat Modifier applies when a character is attacked from behind, above, by an invisible attacker, from ambush, or any other situation where he's surprised by the attack.

A character Surprised while out of combat is at ½ DCV and takes 2x STUN from the attack; moreover, the penalty for any Placed Shot is halved (see 6E2 109). Double the STUN damage before applying defenses (and, in campaigns using the Hit Locations rules, before applying the STUN modifier for a location). The "double STUN" rule applies to any attack that does STUN damage — Blasts, Killing Attacks, punches, AVADs, Drain STUN, and so on.

A character Surprised while in combat is at ½ DCV, but Placed Shot penalties are not halved, and he takes regular STUN damage from attacks.

WHEN SURPRISED APPLIES

For an attacker to receive a Surprised bonus, the target must not be expecting any attacks. For example, a character running at Noncombat velocity toward a fight expects trouble, and isn't totally unaware, so he usually can't be Surprised. In this situation he wouldn't take 2x STUN (but he would have a DCV penalty because he's using Noncombat Movement). Conversely, an unconscious (Knocked Out) or asleep character takes 2x STUN.

The GM should interpret the phrase "expecting any attacks" in a common-sense fashion. Obviously, anyone who's in combat expects to be attacked, so in most cases other attackers entering the fray (even by surprise, such as when unexpected reinforcements arrive) won't inflict the Surprised penalty. However, it's possible for a character in combat to be attacked from so unexpected a quarter, or in so unexpected a way, that he suffers a Surprised penalty. Some possible examples include:

- a clever assassin uses Stealth to sneak up behind the character and stab him in the back
- a character who seems like an ordinary soldier suddenly reveals that he has superhuman powers
- a heretofore unseen sniper fires at the character

On the other hand, if the character has good reason to suspect the presence of a sneaky attacker, a sniper, or the like, Surprised probably wouldn't apply. And if the character has Defense Maneuver, whether he's expecting surprise attacks really doesn't matter; he's automatically prepared for them.

SURPRISED AND FACING

One of the most common ways for a character to be Surprised is to be attacked from behind. However, that's not to say that all attacks from behind qualify for the Surprised bonus. As always, the GM should apply common sense and dramatic sense — remember, combat is a dynamic situation where the rules reflect many variables. For example, if an opponent a character doesn't know about attacks him from behind, that usually means the character is Surprised (though not necessarily, as discussed above). But if the character knows about or can see an opponent, that opponent can't get a Surprised bonus just by making a Half Move behind the character before attacking. The opponent might get the bonus if the character is distracted (for example, if he's already fighting one foe who's in front of him), but moving behind a character before attacking does not *per se* earn an attacker a Surprised bonus.



Surprise Move

A Surprise Move is any maneuver a character makes that startles an opponent, tricks an enemy, takes advantage of a foe's unperceptiveness, or involves an unexpected action that provides him with a new angle of attack. Examples might include faking unconsciousness and attacking when an enemy comes close, swinging from a chandelier to attack an enemy from above, or suddenly shifting from one type of attack to another.

The GM should reward this sort of inventiveness on the part of the players with a bonus, because this type of creative playing adds depth, interest, and excitement to the game. (Of course, the villains also get their chance to pull Surprise Moves on the characters.) The bonus for a Surprise Move is +1, +2, or +3 OCV (sometimes even greater), depending upon the maneuver attempted and the circumstances.

Target An Area

A character may make an Area-affecting attack (such as with Darkness or a power with the *Area Of Effect* Advantage) against either an Area or the target's normal DCV. Generally, it's easier to hit the Area the target's standing in, because the DCV of an Area is 3, or 0 if the Area is adjacent to the attacker (*i.e.*, within 2m). Attacks aimed at an Area suffer the normal Range Modifier.

Target Size

Targets larger or smaller than normal human size (2m tall) are easier or harder to hit. Big objects are easier to hit: a target 2x human size is +2 to an attacker's OCV; a target 4x human size is +4; and so on. Targets smaller than human size are harder to hit: ½ human size is -2 to an attacker's OCV; ¼ human size is -4; and so forth. (A human-sized inanimate object typically has a DCV of 3; the GM can treat the OCV bonus for large objects as a DCV penalty, and the OCV penalty for small objects as a DCV bonus, if he prefers.)

These same modifiers apply to PER Rolls made to perceive an object that's larger or smaller than normal human size.

Unfamiliar Weapon

This optional rule is usually only used in Heroic campaigns. A character must have Weapon Familiarity with a weapon to use it properly. Otherwise, he suffers a -3 OCV penalty when using the unfamiliar weapon.

Typically the Weapon Size/Shape modifier for using improvised weapons (6E2 173) and the Unfamiliar Weapon modifiers don't both apply to an attack with the same weapon — the GM should pick one. However, if appropriate the GM can impose them both.

NINE WAYS TO SPEED UP COMBAT

The slow pace at which combat sometimes proceeds is a complaint common to many roleplaying games. Here are a few suggestions for making your *HERO System* combats run swiftly and smoothly.

1. Restrict SPDs: The more Actions the participants can take, the longer combats last. Limiting characters to relatively low SPDs (such as a maximum of 4 or 5) can help to speed combats up some.

2. Abolish The Speed Chart: Another approach is to abandon the Speed Chart altogether and allow each character to take, for example, three Actions per Turn (or “one action per round,” with each round defined as being, say, four seconds long). This may require the GM to create some “house rules” to handle Holding an Action, speedster characters, and the like.

3. Be Prepared: The GM should come to the game with a chart for his use listing the DEXs, SPDs, and other relevant combat information for the PCs and their enemies. This allows him to read off the order of combat quickly. Sometimes putting this chart up for everyone to see (by writing it on a chalkboard, for example) helps to keep the players focused on the game (albeit at the expense of letting them see the NPCs’ combat information).

Similarly, as much as possible the players should be prepared with their characters’ Actions when a character’s Phase occurs. *HERO System* combat features a lot of options, and a player who’s not paying attention to the battle or thinking in advance about what his character should do has to spend time considering all the possibilities when it’s his turn to act. The single most common factor that slows down many games is player inattentiveness and unpreparedness. If necessary, the GM should encourage players to be prepared by enforcing a strict time limit for making decisions about what PCs do, and skipping a PC’s Phase if his player violates that limit.

4. Let Players Roll In Advance: If you trust your players, let them make their Attack Rolls and other rolls before you call their DEX in a Phase. That way, instead of having to wait for Fred to roll to hit, then roll damage, then count the damage, you can just have him tell you, “I missed” or “I hit DCV 8 for 38 STUN, 7 BODY.” You could even have each player make twenty or thirty Attack Rolls and damage rolls in advance and write them down on a piece of paper for you. For each one of their attacks, you cross the next entry off the list and describe what happens.

5. Require VPP Preparation: If any PC has a Variable Power Pool, only let him use powers he’s prepared in advance — don’t let him stop in mid-game to create a new gadget, spell, or ability he hasn’t already written up.

6. Use Average Damage: To save time rolling and counting damage, assume all attacks do average damage. If that becomes too predictable, roll 1d6 for damage — on a 1-2, the attack does 25% less damage, on a 5-6 33% more damage. Or, for every point by which a character makes his Attack Roll, increase the average damage of his attack by 10%.

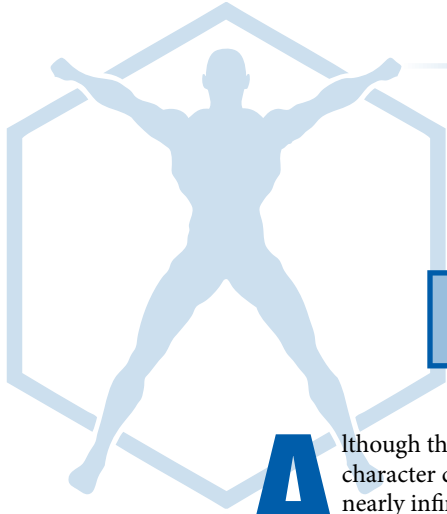
7. Ignore STUN Damage: For some genres, such as Fantasy, you can ignore STUN damage from ordinary attacks without negatively affecting the game. If an attacker wants to Stun (instead of kill) his target, or uses an attack that only does STUN, keep track of STUN damage, but otherwise don’t bother. This also saves the characters from having to engage in the highly unheroic act of administering a coup de grace to every unconscious opponent when the fight ends. (See 6E2 119 for more information about this.)

8. Don’t Let NPCs Take Recoveries: For all but the most powerful or important enemies and NPCs, don’t apply Recoveries (even the Post-Segment 12 Recovery). Once they go down, they stay down.

9. Treat Minor NPCs Differently: When the characters are facing “thugs” or other low-powered, low-quality enemies, don’t calculate every point of damage precisely. One good, solid hit (perhaps any attack, or an attack succeeding by 3 or more on the Attack Roll) takes any thug out of the combat.



CHAPTER THREE
COMBAT &
MARTIAL
MANEUVERS



COMBAT MANEUVERS

Although the number of different ways one character can strike another in combat is nearly infinite, the differences between the vast majority of these maneuvers — *in game terms* — are minimal. Therefore, the *HERO System* has a limited number of *Combat Maneuvers* that cover most of the possibilities. Any character can use the Combat Maneuvers, provided he has the necessary weapon (if any) or meets other special conditions listed.

There are three types of Combat Maneuvers. The first type, *Standard Combat Maneuvers*, can be used by any character in just about any type of campaign. They cover the vast majority of combat situations, and many characters never need to use any other maneuvers. The second type, *Optional Combat Maneuvers*, tend to be more advanced or complicated, or are primarily suited to particular types of campaigns. As their name indicates, they're optional; not all GMs use them in all games.

The first two types of Combat Maneuvers are free — they cost no Character Points, and any character can use them. The third type, *Martial Maneuvers*, costs Character Points to learn (see 6E1 90). Martial Arts are discussed in the next section of this chapter.

Combat Maneuvers can modify the character's OCV, DCV, damage done, and/or other factors. Any modifiers from a Maneuver remain in effect from when the character performs the Maneuver until the beginning of his next Phase. Thus, a SPD 3 character who Dodges on his Phase in Segment 4 retains the Maneuver's +3 DCV bonus until the beginning of his next Phase in Segment 8.

Some Combat Maneuvers provide a DCV bonus or penalty. For Dodge and Martial Dodge, the bonus applies to all attacks; for other Maneuvers, the modifier generally only applies to HTH Combat. However, for ease of game play, some GMs allow a Maneuver's DCV modifier to apply to DCV generally (*i.e.*, against all attacks, HTH or Ranged).

A character can use any of the Combat Maneuvers, provided he meets the conditions and restrictions listed on the Combat Maneuvers Table and his GM allows the maneuver. The character must state what Combat Maneuver he uses before rolling the dice. Unless the rules note otherwise, using a Combat Maneuver counts as an Attack Action (see 6E2 18). Using a Combat Maneuver typically costs 1 END (see 6E2 131), and the character also has to pay the END cost for any STR or power used with the Maneuver.

Characters are not limited to using the maneuvers described here — they're free to try any action they want, even if it's not listed on the Combat Maneuvers Table. The GM should determine the modifiers applicable to and effects of a maneuver by comparing it to the listed Combat Maneuvers. If the action is sufficiently odd, the GM should give the character a Surprise Move bonus. Usually actions players suggest consist of several parts, and may take their characters more than one Phase to accomplish.

Example: *Andarra says: "I'll pull out my pistol, shoot the guard, smash the window, and leap outside!" The GM analyzes this action, and decides it consists of: a Half Phase Action (draw weapon), an Attack Action (shoot the guard, which is a Strike), a Zero Phase Action (smashing the window, a use of Casual STR), and a Half Phase Action (leap out of the window). It takes Andarra one full Phase and a Half Phase to do what she's described. That leaves her a Half Phase to move away from the window, shoot other guards, or do something else.*

HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT AND RANGED COMBAT

Broadly speaking, all combat can be divided into one of two types: Hand-To-Hand and Ranged.

Hand-To-Hand Combat ("HTH Combat") is combat between two characters who are within Reach of one another. A character's Reach is 1 meter around himself — about the length of an ordinary human arm, with a little extra space to allow for the minor movement that occurs during any combat situation. Some Powers or abilities increase a character's Reach, as can using a long weapon (see 6E2 201). HTH Combat usually involves punching or melee weapons such as swords, not attacks that work at Range (such as guns or Blasts).

Ranged Combat is combat that takes place at any distance beyond HTH Combat range. It involves the use of Ranged attacks such as missile weapons (handheld weapons used at a distance, such as arrows or thrown daggers), small arms (pistols, rifles, lasers guns, and the like), energy bolts, and so forth. A HTH attack with some form of the *Ranged Advantage* counts as a Ranged attack for purposes of things like Combat Skill Levels and other game elements that can be bought to apply to HTH or Ranged attacks as a category.

ROLEPLAYING COMBAT MANEUVERS

The rules explain how combat in the *HERO System* works in game terms. But no system, however complex, can include every possible combination of punch, kick, energy bolt, sword, spell, and gun. The Combat Maneuvers' names describe the general form of a particular type of attack. But the names of the Maneuvers shouldn't dictate how a character actually performs the attack.

Each of the Combat Maneuvers and Martial Maneuvers actually encompasses dozens of different types of attacks — in essence it labels them with a generic name and allows you to apply some game rules to them. For example, you won't find "Snap Kick" or "Elbow Smash" listed in the Combat Maneuvers Table. Those are simply forms of Strike. A character may use a Snap Kick against a fallen foe, or an Elbow Smash when infighting, but the *HERO System* simulates all of these with the OCV, DCV, and effects of a Strike. A Haymaker can be a double-handed smash, a kick, an all-out attack with a Blast, or a full uppercut. A Trip or Martial Throw can be as simple as a foot thrust in the way of a running opponent.

The martial arts styles listed below are a good example of this. Although constructed from the same group of Martial Maneuvers, each one applies its own name and effects to the various Maneuvers. Thus, a Nerve Strike is a Low Blow in Dirty Infighting and a *Tien-hsueh* Strike in Kung Fu. The rules applicable to each Maneuver are the same, but they have different names and special effects in each style.

Players should strive to come up with creative attacks and actions in combat and then find the Maneuver that best represents the actions they envision. Truly unusual moves should earn a Surprise Move bonus, but GMs must be careful not to give out bonuses unless a move really deserves it. The listed Maneuvers assume that both the attacker and defender are fighting intelligently. Only very surprising, risky, or exciting actions should get additional bonuses.



COMBAT MANEUVERS TABLE

STANDARD MANEUVERS

Maneuver	Phase	OCV	DCV	Effects
Block	½	+0	+0	Block HTH attacks, Abort
Brace	0	+2	½	+2 OCV only to offset the Range Modifier
Disarm	½	-2	+0	Disarm target, requires STR vs. STR Roll
Dodge	½	—	+3	Dodge all attacks, Abort
Grab	½	-1	-2	Grab Two Limbs; can Squeeze, Slam, or Throw
Grab By	½ †	-3	-4	Move and Grab object, +(v/10) to STR
Haymaker	½*	+0	-5	+4 Damage Classes to any attack
Move By	½ †	-2	-2	((STR/2) + (v/10))d6; attacker takes 1/3 damage
Move Through	½ †	-v/10	-3	(STR + (v/6))d6; attacker takes ½ or full damage
Multiple Attack	1	var	½	Attack one or more targets multiple times
Set	1	+1	+0	Take extra time to aim a Ranged attack at a target
Shove	½	-1	-1	Push target back 1m per 5 STR used
Strike	½	+0	+0	STR damage or by weapon type
Throw	½	+0	+0	Throw object or character, does STR damage
Trip	½	-1	-2	Knock a target to the ground, making him Prone
Other Attacks	½	+0	+0	

OPTIONAL MANEUVERS

Maneuver	Phase	OCV	DCV	Effects
Choke	½	-2	-2	NND 1d6 (see text), Grab One Limb
Club Weapon	½	+0	+0	Killing weapon does equivalent Normal Damage
Cover	½	-2	+0	Target held at “gunpoint”
Dive For Cover	½	+0	+0	Character avoids attack; Abort
Hipshot	½	-1	+0	+1 DEX only for purposes of initiative
Pulling A Punch	½	-1/5d6	+0	Strike, normal STUN damage, ½ BODY damage
Roll With A Punch	½	-2	-2	“Block” after being hit, take ½ damage; Abort
Snap Shot	1	-1	+0	Lets character duck back behind cover
Strafe	½ †	-v/6	-2	Make Ranged attack while moving
Suppression Fire	½	-2	+0	Continuous fire through an area, must be Autofire

*: This maneuver takes one extra Segment to perform

†: Grab By, Move By, Move Through, and Strafe are usually performed at the end of (or during) a Full Move, and thus take a Full Phase. However, a character could perform one after taking a Half Phase Action (such as opening a door), so they're listed as Half Phase Actions.

EXPLANATION OF TERMS:

Phase: How long it takes to perform the Maneuver (usually either a Half Phase [½] or a Full Phase [1]).

OCV (Offensive Combat Value): The Maneuver's modification to OCV. For example, a +1 OCV means a character has +1 to his OCV when making an Attack Roll with the Maneuver.

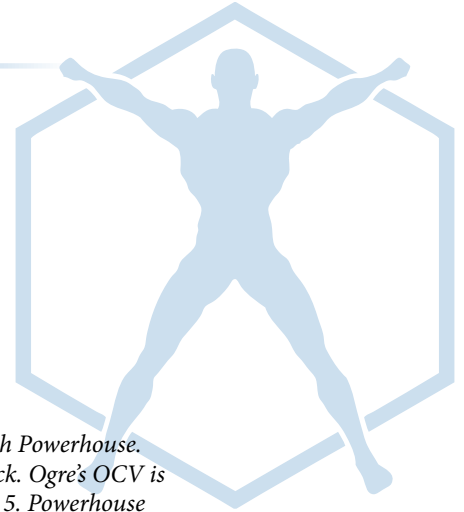
DCV (Defensive Combat Value): The maneuver's modification to the attacker's DCV. For example, performing a Haymaker decreases the attacker's DCV, making it more likely he'll be hit.

Effects: The damage or other effect done by the Maneuver. STR means the Maneuver does STR/5 in d6 of Normal Damage.

Abort: A character can forfeit his next Phase to perform this Maneuver in a Segment when he doesn't have a Phase. For a more detailed explanation, see *Aborting An Action*, 6E2 21.

Dash (“—”): That column is not relevant to that maneuver.

STANDARD COMBAT MANEUVERS



Here are the rules for the Standard Combat Maneuvers. A few, particularly Block and Grab, have information that pertains to related Martial Maneuvers as well.

Most of the Combat Maneuvers are fairly simple and straightforward at their core, with increased complexity you can add on as you learn the rules and/or begin to deal with complex situations in the game and want more detailed rules. If necessary, check with your GM to find out what level of detail he considers appropriate.

BLOCK

This Combat Maneuver allows a character to block an opponent's HTH attack and set himself up to deliver the next blow.

Using Block

A character who wants to Block must declare his intention before his attacker makes an Attack Roll. To attempt a Block, he must make an Attack Roll against his opponent's OCV (not DCV). This is his opponent's OCV as modified by the attack the opponent is making and any other factors, not his unmodified base OCV. If he succeeds, he Blocks the attack and takes no damage (and no Knockdown or Knockback). Furthermore, if these two characters both have their next Phases in the same Segment, the character who Blocked automatically gets to act first, regardless of relative DEX (the Blocking character's opponent is delayed until after the Blocking character's DEX; see below). Blocks only affect Ranged attacks with the GM's permission, according to special rules (see below). Using Block counts as an Attack Action.

If the Block misses, the attack doesn't automatically hit the Blocker; the attacker still has to succeed with his Attack Roll to hit the Blocking character's DCV. The CV bonuses obtained from Block are general ones; they apply against all characters, not just against the attacker the character attempts to Block.

Example: *Ogre tries to punch Powerhouse. Powerhouse attempts to Block. Ogre's OCV is 6, and Powerhouse's OCV is 5. Powerhouse rolls a 10 on his Attack Roll, so he can hit $(5 + 11 - 10 =)$ OCV 6 or less, which means he successfully Blocks. Powerhouse takes no damage and no Knockback. If he and Ogre both have their next Phases in the same Segment, Powerhouse automatically gets to act first, even though Ogre's DEX is higher than his.*

A character can normally Block any HTH Combat attack, including Disarms, Chokes, Grabs/Grab Bys, Move Bys/Throughs, sword blows (see below), most No Range attacks (unless the GM rules otherwise), and so forth. However, the GM must consider common sense, dramatic sense, and game balance when determining what attacks a character can Block. For example, although a character could Block a Move Through performed against him by another character, he probably can't Block a Move Through performed by a Vehicle.

If a character Blocks a Constant HTH attack, the first roll deflects it entirely — it's as if the attacker missed. He doesn't have to keep Blocking it in subsequent Segments.

If a character Blocks a Move Through, the character making the unsuccessful Move Through attack does not take any damage.

Generally, a character cannot Block a HTH Combat attack bought with the *Area Of Effect* Advantage. However, the GM can allow a character to Block such attacks in appropriate circumstances. For example, if both the attacker and the defender had Area Of Effect for their STR, bought to represent the enormous size of their hands, the GM might allow each character to Block the other's attacks.

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VISUALIZING BLOCK

Don't forget the visual element of the combat you're describing. A Block is a Block, but visually it can be any number of things. A character can Block a punch or weapon by catching the incoming blow on his own wrist or forearm; he can Block a kick by using the forearm or a counterkick; he can Block a sword attack by clapping the incoming blade between his two hands (a popular technique in martial arts movies).

WEAPONS, SHIELDS, AND STRENGTH

If appropriate, the GM can assign a penalty (-1 to -3) to Block if one character is using a melee weapon and the other is not (in other words, he's performing an unarmed Block against an armed opponent, trying to use his bare hands to stop a weapon). This is most common in Heroic campaigns.

A character using a shield to Block may add the shield's DCV bonus to his OCV for purposes of Blocking.

When Blocking, a character with the *Off-Hand Defense* Talent may add his DCV bonus to his OCV to determine if the Block succeeds. At the GM's option, any character, regardless of whether he buys Off-Hand Defense, may add +1 to attempts to Block when wielding a weapon in his off hand. (In effect, this makes any weapon the equivalent of a small shield.) If the GM establishes such a rule, the +1 DCV from Off-Hand Defense adds to that basic +1 for a total of +2.

Block doesn't depend on the relative STRs of the characters involved, or on the weapons used. A pixy with a dagger can Block a giant wielding a club — the special effect of the Block could be gently deflecting the blow *just enough* to keep from being hit, or even a sort of dodging. If the GM wants to, he can adapt the modifier for unarmed Blocks of weapon attacks (see above) to this sort of situation.

BLOCK AND INVISIBLE ATTACKS

Generally, a character cannot Block an attack he cannot perceive (or, at best, can only Block with OCV 0). That means the GM has to decide on a case-by-case basis whether a character can "perceive" an attack. If the attack is Fully Invisible (including the source of the power), then a character probably has no chance to Block it. On the other hand, if the character can't perceive the attack but can perceive his attacker gesturing at him or initiating the attack, the GM might simply apply the penalties for fighting an invisible attacker, or maybe a Surprised modifier, to the Block attempt.

ACTING FIRST

As noted above, a character who Blocks an attacker automatically gets to act first (regardless of relative DEX) if he and the attacker have their next Phases in the same Segment. If this benefit applies, it does so even if the attacker decides not to attack the character in his next Phase. However, the attacker's DEX for purposes of acting first is not lowered as to any other character. Unless the character stops the attacker somehow, the attacker can attack some other target at his normal DEX.

The "may act first" benefit only applies if the two characters involved both have their normal Phases on the next Segment. If the attacker Holds his Action and chooses to act in a Segment in which the character has a Phase but the attacker normally does not, the characters' respective Actions occur in their normal order — whichever character has the higher DEX acts first, despite the Block. Similarly, if the character Aborted his

next Phase to Block, he's already used his Action from his next Phase by Aborting, so his ability to act first is irrelevant. (However, he can still go on Blocking at the cumulative -2 penalty per Block described below, so his ability to act first may carry over to his next Phase after that in some circumstances.)

BLOCKING FOR SOMEONE ELSE

A character can Block for someone else — a useful tactic when he wants to defend an injured or defenseless person from an attacker. To do this, a character must be within Reach of either the attacker or the target (either naturally, or because he can extend his Reach with a weapon or some other way).

An attempt to Block for someone else is made at -2 OCV. If it succeeds, the attack is Blocked. However, the character doesn't automatically get to go first before the opponent whose attack he Blocked if they both have their next Phase in the same Segment; they act on their respective DEXs in the usual manner.

Multiple Blocks

A character who has successfully Blocked one attack can Block additional attacks made against him (by the same or different characters). He may make these additional attempts to Block in the same Phase or later Segments before his next Phase (this doesn't count as Aborting to Block; it's just an extension of the initial Block). Each additional roll is made at a cumulative -2 penalty (second Block -2, third Block -4, and so on). If the character misses any of his Blocks, he cannot Block further attacks. If he attempts to Block an attack in a Segment in which he doesn't have a Phase, he cannot Abort in that Segment.

Example: *Ogre, frustrated, brings a group of friends to pound on Powerhouse. Powerhouse Blocks Ogre's punch as before, but now must Block another attack in this Phase (in Segment 4), one in Segment 5, and two more in Segment 6. His roll to Block this second attack is determined as described above, but with an additional -2 penalty to Powerhouse's OCV. He makes this roll, but fails against the third attack (he had a -4 penalty, after all). Because he failed to Block an attack, Powerhouse cannot try to Block any more attacks in Segment 5. Furthermore, he cannot Abort to a defensive Action in Segment 5, because he tried to Block.*

If a character Aborts to Block, and then continues to Block other attacks in later Segments after he Aborted, he may continue to Block in the Segment in which his next Phase occurs, but before his Phase occurs. For example, if a SPD 3, DEX 15 character Aborts his Phase in Segment 12 to successfully Block an attack, he can Block a second attack (at -2) in Segment 4 — when his next usable Phase occurs on DEX 15 — if his attacker has a Phase in Segment 4 prior to DEX 15. Furthermore, he then receives his normal Phase when his DEX occurs in the initiative

order, and may make an attack or perform any other Action he normally could during a Phase. However, the GM may, in his discretion, change these rules, and/or impose an OCV penalty (or other appropriate penalty) on the Action the character takes when his Phase arises.

If a character successfully Blocks attacks from multiple opponents, he gets the “may act first in the next Phase, if they share it” benefit against all of them.

There’s no absolute limit to the number of Blocks a character can perform, though the penalty for multiple Blocks imposes a practical limit.

MULTIPLE ATTACKS

Some attacks, such as Multiple Attack, involve a sequence of attacks directed at the target in which if one of the attacks misses, all subsequent attacks automatically miss. For these purposes, successfully Blocking one of the attacks in the sequence does not count as a “miss”; the attacker may continue with the rest of the sequence.

Sometimes a character wants to Block an Autofire HTH Combat attack that has “hit” him multiple times. Autofire used against a single target requires a single Attack Roll from which the number of hits are determined. Therefore, the character makes a single Block roll. If he makes the roll exactly, he Blocks one of the hits. For every 2 points by which he makes the roll beyond that, he Blocks another hit. If the character Blocking the attack gets attacked by another character that same Phase and wants to Block that character’s attacks, his Block roll suffers a -2 for the second attack, -4 for the third, and so forth. The penalty doesn’t derive from the number of Autofire shots Blocked, because the character only made one Block roll. Blocking some but less than all of an attacker’s Autofire shots does not count as a “missed Block” for purposes of ending a character’s ability to make multiple Blocks.

For an attack like Multiple Attack, that involves multiple Attack Rolls, a character must make one Block roll for each Attack Roll, at the normal penalty for making multiple Blocks in the same Phase. So, to Block a three-attack Multiple Attack involves one normal Block roll, a second roll at -2, and a third at -4. If another character attacked the Blocking character, an attempt to Block his attack would be at -6.

Blocking Ranged Attacks

With the GM’s permission, characters may Block Ranged attacks. Examples include a superhero using his energy bolt to shoot down a villain’s energy bolt, a knight raising his shield to stop an arrow, or mystically-powered Science Fiction warriors deflecting blaster fire with their laser swords.

A character can Block most types of Ranged attacks (unless the GM rules otherwise). Typically characters cannot Block Area-affecting attacks (see above) or Mental attacks, and may have great difficulty Blocking invisible attacks (see above).

Ranged Powers with the *No Range* Limitation usually count as HTH attacks for Block purposes. Indirect attacks aren’t exempt from being Blocked, but the GM should apply common sense and dramatic sense — if a character’s ready for an attack from the front, the GM might not allow him to Block a Ranged attack that strikes him from behind due to Indirect.

Blocking a Ranged attack is generally the same as Blocking a HTH attack, and the same rules apply, but there are a few differences. First, the penalties for trying to Block a Ranged attack unarmed are more often incurred, and can be more severe (-4 or worse). The GM may even forbid a character to Block a Ranged attack unless he has a weapon or some other object to do it with, or impose some other penalty. For example, trying to Block a laser beam with one’s bare hands tends to be a Very Bad Idea.

Second, the rule about the Blocking character getting to act before the attacker if they have their next Phase in the same Segment does not apply when Blocking Ranged attacks.

Third, characters cannot Block both HTH and Ranged attacks in the same Segment. Once a character Blocks one type of attack, he can’t Block the other type.

Fourth, Combat Skill Levels with HTH attacks do not apply to attempts to Block Ranged attacks, but characters can use CSLs that apply to Ranged attacks to improve their Block OCV versus Ranged attacks.

A Ranged attack doesn’t necessarily have to hit a character for that character to be able to Block it. However, the GM could rule that an attack that misses by a considerable margin (say, 5 or more) doesn’t even come close to the character and therefore is not Blockable. (In this case the GM would have to let the attacker roll first to see if he hit, before letting the character roll to see if he Blocks the attack.) In any event, the standard rules on the timing of Block (it’s an Attack Action, it must be declared before the attacker rolls his Attack Roll, and so forth) apply.

The GM can forbid any attempt to Block a Ranged attack, or can restrict the types of Block-based Maneuvers characters can Block a Ranged attack with, based on common sense, dramatic sense, the special effects involved, and preserving game balance.

BLOCKING WITH LARGE OBJECTS

At the GM’s option, a character who’s strong enough to pick up large objects (such as cars, trees, and the like) can use them to aid an attempt to Block a Ranged attack made against him (or perhaps someone adjacent to him). He receives an OCV bonus for his Block equal to the Target Size OCV bonus to hit the object. Thus, using a typical automobile (+2 OCV for others to hit it due to its size) would add +2 to the character’s OCV for purposes of Blocking Ranged attacks.

BRACE

This Maneuver allows a character to brace himself to steady his aim and improve his accuracy at range.

To Brace, a character must take a Zero Phase Action (not an Attack Action) to steady himself — in effect, it “tacks on” to another Combat Maneuver, allowing a character to Brace and then make an Attack Action all in the same Phase. This gives him a +2 OCV that only offsets the Range Modifier. Additionally, Bracing reduces the STR Minimum for using a Ranged weapon by 5. However, the character’s DCV is halved because he stands still to Brace. If a character is Stunned while Bracing, he loses the effects of the Maneuver.

A character can combine Brace with Set in the same Phase and get both bonuses. He gains a +1 OCV, plus a +2 OCV only to offset the Range Modifier — but this takes a Full Phase, and he’s at ½ DCV. For more information, see *Set*.

If a character is Bracing and/or Setting, and he’s Stunned by an attack, he loses the effects of either maneuver (or both, if using both).

DISARM

This Maneuver allows a character to knock a weapon or hand-held object out of another character’s grasp.

USING DISARM

To use Disarm, the character makes an Attack Roll. If the Attack Roll succeeds, the two characters engage in a STR Versus STR Contest: each rolls 1d6 per 5 points of STR and counts the Normal Damage BODY. If the attacker’s BODY total is higher or the rolls tie, the Disarm succeeds and the target’s weapon or object goes flying 1d6+1 meters in the direction of the strike (attacker’s choice, within reason; the GM can modify the distance based on the circumstances).

If the defender’s BODY total is higher, he retains his grip on his weapon — the Disarm fails.

Recovering a Disarmed weapon typically requires a Half Phase Action to move to the weapon (possibly a Full Phase Action, if the weapon is more than a Half Move away), plus another Half Phase Action to pick it up. If the character has an appropriate form of the *Fast Draw Skill* and succeeds with a roll, picking up the weapon is a Zero Phase Action.

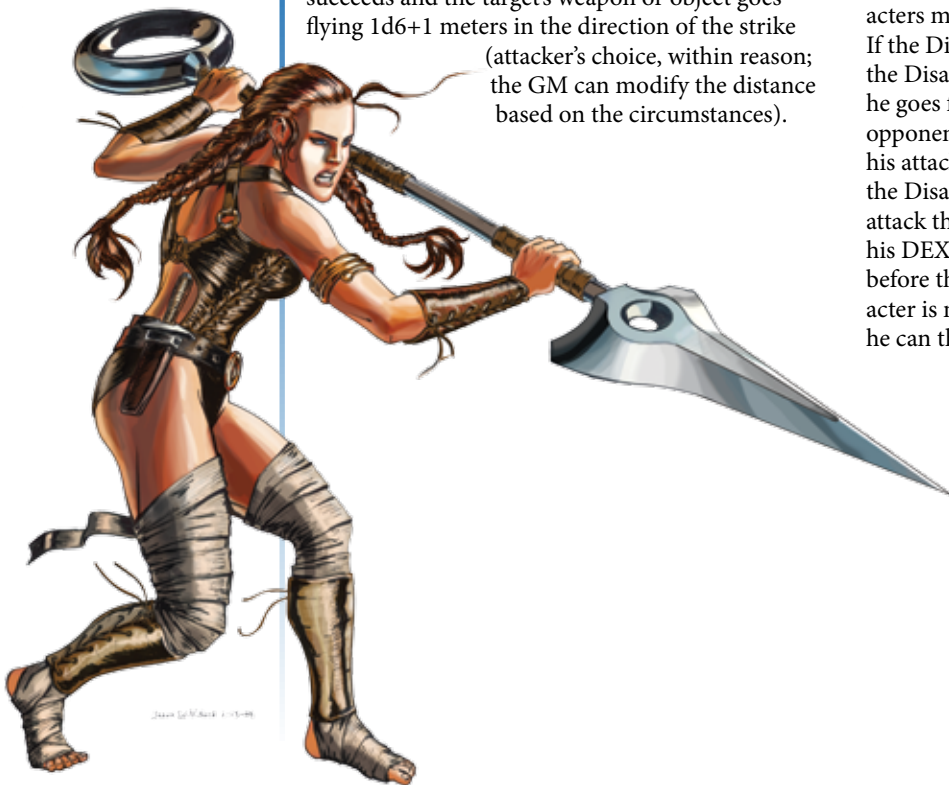
MODIFYING THE DISARM ROLL

In some situations the GM may wish to modify the Disarm roll. First, there may be a negative modifier (-1 to -3) if the character attempting the Disarm is unarmed or using a short weapon to try to Disarm an armed character or one with a much longer weapon — it’s hard for a bare-handed fighter to Disarm someone with a sword! Second, if the target of the Disarm is Surprised, he may only use his Casual STR to resist the Disarm. Third, it’s a little more difficult to Disarm a two-handed weapon than a weapon held in one hand. A character trying this suffers a -2 OCV penalty on his Disarm. Alternately or in addition, the target gets +5 STR in the STR Versus STR Contest to keep hold of his weapon. Fourth, characters with Martial Maneuvers that involve Disarming opponents (such as Martial Disarm) can use the maneuver’s STR bonus to resist being Disarmed. This option prevents fencers and similar characters from constantly Disarming each other.

DISARMING INCOMING ATTACKS

A character can Hold his Action to Disarm an incoming attack. This happens especially often when a character makes a Half Move and then Holds his Action, waiting for his attacker to reach him. However, a Disarm versus an incoming attack doesn’t automatically mean the attacker is Disarmed before he performs his attack. The characters must make DEX Rolls to see who goes first. If the Disarm rolls tie, or the character performing the Disarm succeeds with his DEX Roll by more, he goes first. If he successfully Disarms his opponent, the opponent doesn’t get his to make his attack and can do nothing else this Phase. If the Disarm misses or fails, the opponent gets his attack this Phase. If the target of the Disarm makes his DEX Roll by more, he goes first and attacks before the Disarm attempt. If the Disarming character is not Stunned or Knocked Out by the attack, he can then perform the Disarm.

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RANGED DISARMS

Characters can perform Disarms (but not Martial Disarms or the like) with Ranged weapons — for example, by shooting a gun out of an enemy's hand. Determining the outcome of the attack is a two-step process, described below.

First, the character has to make an Attack Roll to hit the weapon. He doesn't suffer the standard -2 OCV penalty for making a HTH Disarm; instead, the OCV penalty depends on the size of the weapon (or other object) he's trying to shoot out of the target's hand (see accompanying table).

Second, if the character hits the object, convert the Damage Classes of the attack into STR at the rate of 1 DC = 5 STR. The GM may rule that some Damage Classes (such as those provided by exotic types of bullets) don't count for purposes of calculating the "STR" of a shot. Once you know the attack's "STR," roll a STR Versus STR Contest in the standard method for the Disarm maneuver. For example, a 1d6+1 RKA bullet has 4 DC, which equals 20 STR for Disarm purposes, so a character shooting one would roll 4d6 to determine the "BODY damage" done by his STR for Disarming.

Standard rules for where the Disarmed weapon goes and how it's retrieved apply to Ranged Disarms. The GM decides whether the Disarmed weapon suffers damage.

You can also use these rules to determine whether the force of an attack is enough to knock over an object. But the GM should apply some standards of "realism" to this sort of action — it isn't usually possible to tip over cars and other large objects with most attacks, even if an attack has the "STR" to do it.

As an alternative to using the Disarm rules, characters can simply try to wound their enemies in ways that make them drop held objects. A character who takes an Impairing or Disabling wound to the Hand or Arm may drop whatever he's holding. The target makes an EGO Roll at -1 to the roll for each 2 BODY taken; if he succeeds, he maintains his grip, if he fails, he drops the held object. Another alternative would be to use other appropriate powers, such as Teleportation Usable As Attack or Telekinesis, to remove the weapon from the target's grasp (in this case, the GM may want to impose the standard OCV penalty for targeting an object the size of the weapon, or perhaps the -6 for targeting the Hand).

RANGED DISARM

Weapon	Attack Roll Penalty
Assault Rifle	-3 to -5
Bow	-4 to -6 (this assumes the character is targeting the bow itself; targeting the bowstring would be a -12, but any hit to a bowstring will break it)
Crossbow	-3 to -6 (most crossbows are large and bulky enough that they're fairly easy to hit, but pistol crossbows are as difficult to target as a handgun)
Grenade	-6 to -7
Handgun	-5 to -8 (especially large handguns, such as the AMT Automag, would be -5; derringers and other small guns are -7 or -8. Most handguns are -6)
Knife	-5 to -8
Machine Gun	-2 to -5
Rifle	-3 to -4
Shotgun	-3 to -5
Submachine Gun	-4 to -6
Sword	-3 to -5

DODGE

This Maneuver allows a character to avoid an attack. A character performing a Dodge can't attack, but is much harder to hit — he adds +3 DCV against all attacks. Characters can Abort to Dodge. Using Dodge counts as an Attack Action.

Dodge has no effect against Area Of Effect attacks and other attacks that affect an Area — those attacks apply against the DCV 3 of the target point, so the target's DCV is irrelevant. This applies even to HTH Combat attacks bought with those Advantages.

Some attacks, such as Multiple Attack, involve a sequence of attacks directed at the target in which if one of the attacks misses, all subsequent attacks automatically miss. For these purposes, successfully Dodging one of the attacks in the sequence counts as a "miss" and ends the sequence of attacks.

SQUEEZING MULTIPLE TARGETS

In some situations, a character may want to Grab and Squeeze two characters. This could simulate, for example, smashing two enemies' heads together, or simply be a clever combat tactic for a character with large arms. This is a form of Multiple Attack (6E2 73). In the first Phase the character makes a Multiple Attack with Grab and Squeeze; in later Phases he Multiple Attacks with Squeeze against any targets he maintains the Grab on.

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PULLING THE SQUEEZE

Pulling A Punch applies to any HTH attack. If the character knows before performing the Grab that he wants to pull his Squeeze, or if the Squeeze is one performed in a Phase after the Grab and so requires an Attack Roll, then the OCV penalty applies as usual. If the character decides he'd like to Pull the Squeeze after he makes his Grab Attack Roll, the GM can either decide to let him do it with no penalty, or can require him to make another Attack Roll not for purposes of hitting but only for purposes of determining if the Pull succeeds.

GRAB

This Maneuver allows a character to get a hold on another character or object.

Making A Grab

To Grab an opponent, a character must make an Attack Roll with appropriate modifiers. If successful, he has Grabbed his opponent. (As described below under *Escaping From Grabs*, the victim immediately gets a Casual STR roll to break free, if desired.)

SQUEEZING, SLAMMING, AND THROWING

In many cases, a character Grabs his enemy just to hold onto him or prevent him from doing something, but sometimes the Grabber wants to hurt the target at the same time. A character who has Grabbed someone can do either of the following:

- *Squeeze* him. This does regular STR damage (STR/5 in d6 of Normal Damage) to the victim; the character retains his hold on the victim.
- *Slam* him against something (such as the ground or a wall). This does regular STR damage (STR/5 in d6 of Normal Damage) to the victim; the character retains his hold on the victim.
- *Throw* him, using the *Throw* Combat Maneuver (6E2 80), which requires him to let go of the victim.

If the Grabber chooses to Squeeze, Slam, or Throw the Grabbed character in the same Segment in which he (the Grabber) successfully Grabbed him, the Squeeze, Slam, or Throw does not require an Attack Roll (it automatically succeeds) and takes no time. A character cannot Hold this “free” action; he must use it in that same Segment. If the Grabber wants to Squeeze, Slam, or Throw his victim in a later Phase, doing so is an Attack Action (it doesn't automatically succeed, requires an Attack Roll, and so forth). Assume any Grab-and-Throw is a Standing Throw, unless the Grabber begins a Phase with a Grabbed victim and the GM lets him move before making the Throw. If the Attack Roll for a Squeeze or Slam fails, the victim takes no damage but remains Grabbed.

After performing a Grab, in that same Segment a character can only Squeeze, Slam, or Throw the target as an immediate attack. He can't use any other maneuvers or attacks (unless the GM so permits, and even in that case, using another attack should mean releasing the Grab in most circumstances). In later Phases he can use any attacks he wants (provided he has the free limbs or other means to do so).

If a Grab-based Maneuver (such as Martial Grab) provides a STR bonus, that bonus applies solely for the purposes of holding on to the target. It doesn't increase the damage done by Squeezing, Slamming, or Throwing the target, increase the distance a target can be thrown, or have any other effect. Similarly, characters can use Combat Skill Levels to increase their OCV or DCV when Grabbing, but not the damage done by Squeezing, Slamming, or Throwing.

A character cannot use his Hand-To-Hand Attack to improve the damage done by Squeezing, Slamming, or Throwing a Grabbed character. Nor can characters Haymaker Squeeze, Slam, or Throw damage. Grab-and-Throw damage doesn't get a bonus from the velocity of the Grabbed character the way a Martial Throw does.

See 6E2 124 for rules regarding using a Grabbed character as a “club” or “missile” against other characters.

COMBAT SKILL LEVELS WITH SQUEEZE, SLAM, OR THROW

Characters could apply the following types of Combat Skill Levels to a Throw made after Grabbing someone:

- CSLs with Throw
- CSLs with All Ranged Combat
- CSLs specifically bought for Throwing Grabbed characters

CSLs for Grab do not apply, since this is a Throw, not a Grab. CSLs bought for Throw-based Martial Maneuvers (such as Martial Throw) would not apply, since a Throw is a distinct Combat Maneuver.

Characters could apply the following types of Combat Skill Levels to a Squeeze made after Grabbing someone:

- CSLs with HTH Combat
- CSLs specifically bought for Squeezing Grabbed characters

CSLs for Grab do not apply, since this is a Squeeze, not a Grab.

Characters could apply the following types of Combat Skill Levels to a Slam made after Grabbing someone:

- CSLs with HTH Combat
- CSLs specifically bought for Slamming Grabbed characters

CSLs for Grab do not apply, since this is a Slam, not a Grab.

GRABBING LARGE TARGETS

Sometimes a character wants to Grab a target that's significantly larger than himself, such as a dwarf trying to Grab a giant in a Fantasy game, or an ultra-strong superhero trying to Grab a gargantuan rampaging monster. In many cases the rule about immediately using Casual STR to break free from a Grab (see below) resolves this situation quickly, making it impossible to keep a large, strong target Grabbed. If that's not the case, the GM should apply some common and dramatic sense when interpreting the rules. Ordinarily a Grabbed character can't move, but that assumes a relative equality of size between Grabber and Grabee. If a small character tries to Grab a much larger one, what may happen is that the Grabber suffers the CV penalty for a Grab and the target suffers no restrictions or penalties at all. A human-sized character probably isn't going to be able to immobilize Godzilla by Grabbing him... he'll just get carried along as Big Scaly smashes through downtown. In other cases, the size difference is so great that the GM might rule that the smaller character simply can't get any sort of hold on the larger character.

But of course, just because a small character can't always immobilize a target with a Grab doesn't mean a Grab is pointless. For example, a superhero might Grab Godzilla to try to trip him, or even to pick him up and Throw him. It's a question of what the GM thinks is reasonable under the circumstances.

MULTIPLE GRABS

In some situations, two or more characters may want to perform Grabs on the same target. For purposes of analyzing this situation, assume three characters: A, B, and C.

Suppose C has Grabbed B. A also wants to Grab B. If C is willing to have A help him hold B, A simply makes a normal Attack Roll against B's DCV (which is reduced by the Grab, of course). To break free B must defeat the *higher* of A's and C's STRs. Alternately, the GM can add A's and C's lifting capacities together to determine their "group STR," as described on 6E1 41, and B has to break free from that. If B only wants to free the part of his body held by one of his captors, he has to make his STR Roll versus that person's STR, but if he succeeds he only frees that part of his body.

If C doesn't want A to Grab B (maybe A is trying to pull B free), A has to make his Attack Roll against the higher of C's DCV or B's DCV.



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If A succeeds, he can then engage in a STR Versus STR Contest with C to free B (B takes no damage from this, unless the GM feels it would be appropriate to apply some measure of the STR involved to reflect the tugging on B's body).

Instead of trying to free B by Grabbing him, A might instead Grab C and then try to pry his arms from around B. He makes a Grab attack against C as normal (keep in mind that C has a reduced DCV from performing a Grab on B). A may then pit his STR against C in a STR Versus STR Contest to pry C's arms from around B, and if he succeeds, he frees B.

GRABBING A MOVING CHARACTER

Sometimes a character wants to Grab a character who's moving. When a moving character is Grabbed, he immediately gets a standard Casual STR Roll to break out. If the GM uses the optional rule on 6E2 25 regarding the effect of movement on STR, then the character's Casual STR is calculated with that in mind. If the Casual STR roll succeeds, the character keeps moving until the end of his declared meters of movement (assuming he wasn't there already). If the roll fails, the character is reduced to 0m of movement and remains where he was Grabbed. He has to break out in the usual fashion, without gaining any STR benefit from movement.

Typically a Grabbed character cannot use any form of movement to keep moving while Grabbed. He may be able to use his movement to improve his STR to break free (see 6E2 25), but that's all (though Teleportation lets a character escape from most Grabs easily). Even if the GM allows a Grabbed character to keep moving and drag his Grabber along, the Grabbed character may be subject to Encumbrance rules for carrying so much weight.

MOVING A GRABBED CHARACTER

Unless some other rule (like the weight limit for Teleportation, or Encumbrance) prevents it, typically a character who has the STR to pick up a target he's Grabbed can move the Grabbed person with him as he moves. With the GM's permission, he might even be able to move fast enough to smash the Grabbed person into something and add velocity/10m to his Slam or Throw damage (though the victim can only take a maximum number of dice of Normal Damage equal to the PD + BODY of the object he hits). The GM may restrict or forbid this form of attack to preserve game balance, in the interest of dramatic sense, or the like.

Escaping From Grabs

When a Grabbed character tries to escape from his captor, both characters roll 1d6 for each 5 STR they have and count the Normal Damage BODY. If the Grabbed character's total is higher, he escapes; if the Grabber's total is higher or the rolls tie, the victim remains Grabbed. Trying to break out of a Grab does no damage to either character.

The rules for Casual Use of STR (6E1 131) mean very strong characters can effectively ignore Grabs performed by much weaker foes. A Grabbed character should be allowed to roll his Casual STR immediately after being Grabbed, if desired (even if he doesn't have a Zero Phase Action available; this initial attempt to break free is an Action that takes no time, though the character can only try it once, right after he's first Grabbed). The Grabbing character uses his entire Grabbing STR to resist this breakout attempt; he's not restricted to using just his Casual STR.

A character attempting to escape immediately with Casual STR may apply half his STR bonus from an Escape-based Martial Maneuver (such as Martial Escape), but may not apply bonus dice from using Contortionist, a Movement Power, or the like. In later Phases, he may use half the bonuses from Contortionist and/or Movement Powers to increase a Casual STR roll to break out, but using either or both converts the use of Casual STR to a Half Phase Action. He can add full Contortionist and/or Movement Power bonuses to a normal, full-STR damage roll to break free.

A character cannot Abort his next Phase to use his full STR the very same moment he's Grabbed, unless the GM specifically permits this on the grounds that it's "defensive" because being free from a Grab prevents the character from suffering a DCV penalty.

A character may not use a Ranged Attack that exerts force (such as a Blast) to break free from a Grab, even if it has the *No Range* Limitation.

The standard rules for Grab indicate that the victim's STR damage roll to break free must exceed the Grabber's roll — in other words, ties go to the Grabber, not the victim. As an option, the GM can rule that ties go to *the stronger character*. That way a character with, say, STR 41 derives a little benefit from spending that extra point when he's wrestling with a character who has STR 40.

See 6E2 124 for more information on escaping Grabs, including the time required and the Actions available to the character after he breaks free.

OTHER WAYS TO ESCAPE FROM GRABS

Here are some other tricks characters can use to break free from Grabs:

Growth: If a Grabbed character activates the *Growth* Power, he may automatically be able to break free from a Grab. Alternately, the GM can add +5 STR for every +2 OCV bonus other characters get to hit the Grown character as a bonus to the Grown character's STR to see if he can break out by Growing; this bonus applies only in a Phase when the character actually uses Growth to become larger.

Shrinking: Shrinking to half a character's size or less allows him to slip out of a Grab automatically if he beats the character Grabbing him in a DEX Roll Versus DEX Roll Contest. (At the GM's option, the shrinking character may use his *Power: Shrinking Tricks* Skill instead, if he has it.)

Stretching: Depending on the special effects of a character's Stretching, the GM may allow him to escape from a Grab automatically by Stretching or contorting his malleable body, or may grant him STR bonuses solely for purposes of determining if he can escape.

Teleportation: Unless the special effects of the power indicate otherwise, a character can Teleport out of a Grab by making a Half Move or Full Move with Teleportation.

The Effects Of Grab

Grab immobilizes two of the target's limbs (usually his arms; see below) and reduces his CV. The Grabber can attempt to Multiple Attack with his Grab to immobilize more than two limbs (or more than the defined number of limbs for the maneuver, in the case of Grab-based Martial Maneuvers). Each limb (or group thereof, if the maneuver immobilizes two or more limbs at its basic level) counts as a separate attack.

While the Grabber immobilizes the Grabbed character's arms, the Grabbed character cannot use most handheld weapons and Accessible Foci. (See *Attacks By The Grabbed Character*, below.)

GRABBING WITH ONLY ONE HAND

The Grabber must use both hands/arms to gain the full effect of a Grab. If he uses only one hand, he's at -5 STR to hold on (but can use his other arm to make other attacks in later Phases); he still suffers the usual CV penalties for performing a Grab. If a Grab-based Maneuver (such as Martial Grab) provides a STR bonus, a character performing a one-handed Grab can only use half of the STR bonus. If a Grab-based Martial Maneuver specifies that it only immobilizes one Limb (*i.e.*, it takes the "One Limb" restrictive element), it only require one hand to perform at full STR.

Example: *Ken the sumo wrestler is STR 20. He executes a Sumo Grab on his opponent, but uses only one hand, the better to pummel his foe with the other. Ken normally uses his full STR of 20 and gets a +10 STR from the Grab maneuver. But this time, using only one hand, he gets only STR 15 and +5 STR from the Grab maneuver (total of STR 20).*

If a character Grabs another character with just one hand, that typically means both characters have at least one free hand. They can use their free hands to attack each other if they want to. Standard Grab modifiers (which include OCV penalties for the Grabbed character to attack the Grabber) apply. Technically the Grabber could Squeeze the Grabbed character, but the GM might want to restrict that depending on the exact arrangement (*e.g.*, if the Grabber has only Grabbed the victim by the arm, inflicting damage by Squeezing probably doesn't make much sense).

If a character has more than two manipulable limbs (typically because he has the Power *Extra Limbs*), he can Grab a single target with each limb other than his first using this rule (there's no additional penalty or effect). That's one of the benefits of buying Extra Limbs. However, per the usual Grab rules, he's going to be ½ OCV against other targets after Grabbing the first target, so he may have trouble hitting them.

TARGETABLE LIMBS

Characters are considered to have five limbs: two arms, two legs, and one head. (The head counts as a limb because a character can use it to attack [*i.e.*, headbutt] an opponent close enough to Grab him.) The standard Grab, attacks defined as joint-locks, and similar attacks normally Grab one to two limbs; "pins" and bearhug-type holds, such as those used in wrestling, may Grab three or more limbs. A character can always choose to Grab fewer limbs than the maximum allowed by his maneuver.

Example: *Okamura Hiromi is using her Jujutsu to fight a big, tough street thug wielding a pair of knives. She wants to capture him for interrogation. However, her Joint Lock maneuver only immobilizes one limb (typically, one arm), leaving her vulnerable to being stabbed by the knife the thug is carrying in his other hand. She also prefers to prevent him from kicking her with his hobnail boots.*

Since she has a 12 OCV and the thug only has a 5 DCV, Hiromi decides to try to Grab both of his arms and one of his legs. This requires her to Multiple Attack him with her Joint Lock. The Joint Lock immobilizes one limb, so each additional limb counts as a separate target, imposing a -4 on each of her Attack Rolls. She rolls a 14, an 11, and a 10, hitting all three times. In the space of but a second, she's used her martial arts to almost completely immobilize the thug. Now she can bear him to the ground so he can't stomp on her foot with his free leg.

Had Hiromi missed one of her rolls, no further rolls would be allowed and all remaining target limbs would have been free to move.

Example: *Suppose the thug in the above example faces Strongarm, a low-level "brick" superhero. Strongarm isn't any more willing to be stabbed or stomped on by this miscreant than Hiromi was, even though he's harder to hurt. Since a basic Grab immobilizes two limbs, each additional two limbs impose a cumulative -2 on each of his Attack Rolls. He decides to Multiple Attack his Grab, so he can Grab the thug's arms and legs. This imposes a -2 to both of his rolls, since the arms count as his first two limbs, and the legs as his second two limbs. He rolls a 7 and a 10, easily hitting both times. The thug is now trussed up like a Thanksgiving turkey.*

GRAB'S EFFECT ON COMBAT VALUE

When a character tries to Grab another character, he suffers the standard -2 DCV penalty listed on the Combat Maneuvers Table. If the Grab succeeds, the Grabber suffers the ½ DCV penalty described below — this replaces the -2 DCV penalty, it's not in addition to it.

Example: *Defender (DCV 8) attempts to Grab Devastator. He's at -2 DCV, giving him DCV 6. He misses. He remains at DCV 6 until his next Phase.*

But suppose Defender hits Devastator. He's now Grabbing someone, so he has ½ DCV, giving him DCV 4. The ½ DCV penalty replaces the standard -2 DCV penalty instead of adding to it (i.e., he's not DCV 3).

A Grabbed character has ½ DCV against all attacks. The Grabber also has ½ DCV against all attacks (both those from other characters, and any the Grabbed character may be able to launch) — concentrating on holding someone leaves the character more open to attack.

The Grabbed character may be able to attack the Grabbing character at -3 OCV (or another character at ½ OCV), but this requires an appropriate free limb or other means of attack, and the GM may rule that a Grabbed character cannot perform some attacks or Maneuvers. The character performing the Grab has his full OCV against the Grabbed character and is ½ OCV against other targets. At the GM's option, some of the penalties the Grabber suffers may be reduced if his STR is 20 or more points greater than the Grabbed character's STR (see accompanying text box).

A Grabber cannot let a Grabbed character maintain his full OCV and DCV, even if the Grabbed character voluntarily submits to the Grab. The OCV and DCV penalties for Grabbing and being Grabbed end immediately when the victim breaks free or is released.

ATTACKS BY THE GRABBED CHARACTER

As noted above, a Grabbed character can try to attack the person Grabbing him. (At the GM's option, he might be allowed to attack some other character instead, using the same abilities with which he could attack his captor.) The sorts of attacks a Grabbed character can use in this situation depend largely on the special effects involved, common sense, dramatic sense, and the circumstances. He can never use Accessible Foci (but see below regarding weapons), and he can always use his own raw STR to try to break free or hurt the character Grabbing him. Beyond that, the GM has to decide whether he can or cannot use an attack, and adjust the rules as needed for each specific situation, based on the special effects and characters involved. As a default rule:

- the Grabbed character can use any of his own attacks against the character Grabbing him, but cannot use Combat or Martial Maneuvers other than Strike unless the GM so permits (since those typically require a degree of movement and mobility the character cannot achieve when Grabbed)
- the Grabbed character can only use attacks that are “free” (unhindered by the Grab — such as eyebeams) against other targets

One important factor for the GM to keep in mind is the number of limbs Grabbed. If the attacker only Grabs one limb, or the victim has Extra Limbs that are fully manipulable, then the victim may be able to use his free limbs to attack freely, wield Accessible Foci, or the like.

A Grabbed character usually finds it impossible to use weapons, since they're Accessible Foci. However, in some situations, he might have a limb free with which he could draw and use a weapon (possibly suffering Off Hand penalties, depending on what limb he has free). Assuming weapons use is even possible, a Grabbed character can use any Short weapon at no additional penalty, any Medium weapon at an additional -2 penalty to OCV, and any Long or Extra Long weapon at an additional -5 penalty to OCV. These penalties are in addition to those imposed by the Grab itself.

GRAB AND HIT LOCATIONS

By default, a Grab immobilizes the target's arms and accessible Foci. This presumes the Grabbing character either specifies the arms as a target or does not specify any particular target.

Within the bounds of “realism,” characters can choose which limbs to immobilize with a Grab maneuver. With a standard Grab, the maneuver almost always affects the two arms, but with a Martial Grab just about any combination is possible.

Regardless of which limb the character chooses as a target, Hit Location Attack Roll and damage modifiers *do not apply*, just like with any maneuver defined as specifically targeting a Hit Location.

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GRAB AND COMBAT VALUE

The standard CV penalties for performing a successful Grab are:

Grabber:

- ½ DCV against all attackers (including Grabbed character)
- Full OCV against the Grabbed character
- ½ OCV against other targets (if attacks are possible at all)

Grabbed:

- ½ DCV against all attackers (including Grabber)
- -3 OCV against the Grabber (if attacks are possible at all)
- ½ OCV against other targets (if attacks are possible at all)

At the GM's option, if the Grabber's STR is 20 or more points higher than the Grabbed character's STR, change the penalties to the following:

Grabber:

- -2 DCV against all attackers (including Grabbed character)
- Full OCV against the Grabbed character
- -1 OCV against other targets (if attacks are possible at all)

At the GM's option, a character may suffer penalties to a standard Grab maneuver if he tries to Grab anything other than the arms or the head. If the campaign uses Hit Locations or the character specifies an attack against Location 5 (the Head), a Grab maneuver hitting Location 5 (the Head) and involving a Squeeze both does extra damage (Head locations take 2x STUN and BODY from Normal Damage attacks) and cuts off the target's breath, making him unable to shout or talk (see the rules below for Chokes). A Grab maneuver hitting Locations 3 and 4 does the extra damage, but doesn't cut off the victim's breath with a Squeeze.

GRABBING AND BEING STUNNED OR KNOCKED OUT

A Grabber who's Stunned automatically lets go of the Grabbed person (or object) at the end of the Segment unless he succeeds with an EGO Roll. The roll suffers a penalty of -1 per 10 points of STUN damage (or fraction thereof) the character took from the attack that Stunned him (after defenses). At the GM's option, even if the character maintains his grip, a Grabbed person may receive a bonus to break free (such as +5 or +10 STR) until the Grabber recovers from being Stunned.

A Grabber who's Knocked Out automatically lets go of the Grabbed person (or object) at the end of the Segment.

GRAB AND KNOCKBACK

A Grabbed character may be attacked by a third party and suffer Knockback (or maybe even suffer Knockback from the Grabber, if the Grabber has more limbs free to attack with). Similarly, a Grabbing character could be attacked and suffer Knockback. In either case, determine the number of meters of Knockback normally. Then roll the Knockback damage dice (the full amount, as if the character had hit an obstacle) in a "Strength" Versus Strength Contest against the Grabber's STR. If the Knockback wins the contest, the Grabbed character is knocked out of the Grab and the character who was attacked travels a number of meters equal to the ((meters of KB) - (2 x BODY rolled for Grabber's STR)). Resolve the damage from those meters of Knockback traveled normally. If the Grabber wins the contest, the character takes no Knockback, and no damage from Knockback.

Example: *Squeeze (STR 40) has Grabbed Brainwave. One of Squeeze's allies takes advantage of Brainwave's reduced DCV to shoot him with a Blast that does 15 BODY damage. The GM rolls 5 on the 2d6 for determining Knockback, so Brainwave would ordinarily take 20m of Knockback. The GM rolls the 10d6 in a "Strength" Versus Strength Contest against Squeeze. The GM rolls 10 BODY, and Squeeze rolls 8. So, Brainwave is knocked out of Squeeze's grip and travels (20m - (8 x 2) =) 4m, taking 2d6 Knockback damage.*

The same rules apply to Knockdown.

Grab Weapon

A character can choose to Grab a target's weapon, Accessible Focus, or other held or carried object instead of the target himself. Such attacks are at -2 OCV in addition to all other modifiers. If the attacker successfully makes the Grab, then he has his hands on the target's weapon or Focus and can attempt to wrench it away. In this case, use normal Grab rules to see if the attacker succeeds. Until one character gains control of the weapon, neither character can use it. As an optional rule, the GM may want to assign additional penalties (-1 to -3) if one character is fighting with a much shorter weapon (simulating the fact that it's harder for a character with a short weapon to get close enough to one with a longer weapon to Grab that weapon). The Grabbing character take no damage from touching or grabbing hold of the weapon.

When Grabbing a weapon, Focus, or object, a character's DCV is only reduced during the Segment in which the object was Grabbed — his DCV returns to normal at the beginning of the next Segment (assuming he has control of the object). Otherwise, standard rules for Grab apply, unless the GM rules differently. For example, a character who Grabs a weapon could immediately Squeeze, Slam, or Throw that weapon.

GRAB BY

Grab By is essentially a combination of Grab (as it pertains to weapons and Foci, and sometimes to people) and Move By. It allows a character to make a Full Move past another character and Grab an object that person's holding, or to do things like flying through the air and catching a falling person. The character suffers OCV and DCV penalties combining those of Grab and Move By.

When the character performs the Grab, in addition to the penalties for the maneuver he suffers the standard -2 OCV penalty if he attempts to Grab an Accessible Focus, weapon, or object. However, if the Grab succeeds, he doesn't suffer the typical reduction to DCV caused by Grabbing someone. He only suffers the DCV penalty for the Maneuver itself (-4) during the Segment in which the object was Grabbed — his DCV returns to normal at the beginning of the next Segment (assuming he has control of the object).

The character's velocity divided by 10 adds to his STR (not his STR dice) only for purposes of succeeding with the Grab. Otherwise, standard rules for Grabbing weapons and Foci apply, as appropriate (e.g., the victim can immediately make a Casual STR roll to hold onto the object). Standard rules for Move Bys also apply, as appropriate. At the GM's option, characters may use Teleportation to perform a Grab By (at no STR bonus), even though it cannot be used to perform Move Bys. Characters cannot combine Grab By with Move By/Through, taking objects from some targets and hitting others (unless the GM allows this as some sort of Multiple Attack).

VOLUNTARY GRABS

If the target being Grabbed wants to be Grabbed (perhaps to let another character carry him), there's probably no need for any rolls other than the Attack Roll — and maybe not even that. It's all up to the GM. He might, for example, require a Grabbed character to make STR Rolls to hang on to a person who's moving quickly or erratically, even if that person doesn't mind "giving the character a lift." If the target doesn't want to be Grabbed, then STR Rolls are necessary to represent

whatever efforts he makes to break free, unless for some reason he chooses not to make STR Rolls. If the GM rules that the target's making no such efforts, he can rule that the Grabber automatically wins the contest. As always, common sense, dramatic sense, and considerations of game balance should apply.

A Grabber cannot let a Grabbed character maintain his full OCV and DCV, even if the Grabbed character voluntarily submits to the Grab. The Grabber's OCV and DCV are also affected as usual for a Grab.



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Example: Defender wants to snatch an enchanted staff out of an evil sorcerer's grasp. He plots out his movement path, flies by the sorcerer at 50m, and performs a Grab By. His normal CV is 10; it is reduced to OCV 7, DCV 6 by the maneuver, and he loses another 2 points of OCV for trying to Grab an object, so his final OCV is 5. Fortunately for him, the sorcerer only has a DCV of 5, so an Attack Roll of 9 succeeds. He rolls 12d6 (11d6 for his base 55 STR, +1d6 for +5 STR for his velocity (50/10)) while the sorcerer rolls 3d6 (for his 15 STR). Defender easily wins the contest and takes the staff away from the sorcerer. Defender's DCV is not halved, only reduced by 4 for the Maneuver.

HAYMAKER

A Haymaker is basically an all-out attack — the character takes extra time to “wind up” a punch, put extra force into his Blast, focus the power of his mind particularly well, or otherwise attack the target powerfully. It offers the chance to do extra damage, but at the risk of the target moving or the character being hit while he's standing still and preparing to attack.

Haymaker applies to any attack, not just punches. This includes Mental Powers and other attacks that don't involve physical force. For example, a character could Haymaker his Drain STR, his Mental Blast, his Transform, or his Telekinesis. When a character Haymakers an unusual attack, the GM determines how much damage or effect the Haymaker adds (see accompanying text

box, and the *Adding Damage* rules on 6E2 99). A character may not Multiple Attack with Haymaker, nor Haymaker any attack that's part of a Multiple Attack.

Although Haymaker applies to any attack, that doesn't necessarily mean any action that involves an Attack Roll or that's defined as an Attack Action. For example, the *Healing Power* requires an Attack Action. But it really isn't an “attack” in the sense contemplated by the Haymaker rules, so characters generally shouldn't be allowed to Haymaker it. The same applies to Presence Attacks, which require an Effect Roll but no Attack Action. For a Haymaker to be valid, performing it has to subject a character to the potential drawbacks of having a reduced OCV and taking extra time. This is rarely the case with Powers like Healing, which are typically used out of combat — if characters aren't in combat, DCV doesn't usually matter and there's plenty of time to get things done. But the GM could allow a character to Haymaker his Healing or his Presence Attack if he felt the situation justified it, such as a desperate attempt to use Healing to keep a comrade alive in the middle of a battle.

USING HAYMAKER

Haymaker takes an extra Segment to execute. The character begins the attack on one of his Phases (this only requires a Half Phase Action; the character could, for example, make a Half Move to the target first). However, he doesn't actually launch the attack until the very end of the next Segment, after all characters who can act in that Segment have acted. The character may Abort

to a defensive Action in the Segment in which the Haymaker goes off, but doing so ruins the Haymaker.

Example: *A character with a Phase in Segment 6 declares he's going to Haymaker his Punch (a Strike). He begins the attack on his Phase in Segment 6, but the blow won't land until the very end of Segment 7, after all characters in Segment 7 have taken their Actions. He could Abort to, say, Block in Segment 7 before the Haymaker goes off, but if so he loses the attack.*

Haymaker adds four Damage Classes to the damage of the attack used. Haymaker is a Maneuver in and of itself — a character cannot, for example, do a Haymaker with an Offensive Strike. (The *Strike* Maneuver is an exception to this, since it represents the “default” attack; most Haymakers characters perform are with some type of Strike.) He can perform a Haymaker with a Normal Damage or Killing Damage weapon (see *Adding Damage*, 6E2 99, for more information).

There are several risks to performing a Haymaker. First, the character's DCV is greatly reduced. Second, if the target moves 1m or more before the Haymaker is used, the character suffers any Knockback, or the character is Stunned or Knocked Out, the Haymaker fails and the character has wasted his Phase. At the GM's option, other events, such as the character taking a large amount of damage, may also prevent a Haymaker from being used. These rules apply regardless of what type of attack the character Haymakers with.

A character pays the END for the STR or power used to perform a Haymaker in the Segment in which he launches the attack (*i.e.*, the Segment after he begins the attack); if the attack fails or cannot be performed for any reason, he must still pay the END. For example, if a character begins a Haymaker during his Phase in Segment 6, he pays the END for it in Segment 7. With STR, this means he pays END for it even if he used his STR for other purposes during his Phase in the previous Segment.

A character cannot Push a Haymaker. However, he could Haymaker an attack that he's Pushing.

Unless the GM rules otherwise, characters cannot buy Combat Skill Levels specifically with Haymaker. They have to buy CSLs with the attacks they Haymaker with, then apply them when Haymaking with those attacks.

HIGH-SPD HAYMAKERS

At SPD 7 and above, characters can have Phases in two or more consecutive Segments. If a character begins a Haymaker in a Phase before a Phase in a consecutive Segment, he's still performing the Haymaker in the next Segment, and therefore loses his Phase in that Segment.

Example: *Thunderbolt (SPD 8) begins a Haymaker in his Phase in Segment 2. He's SPD 8, so he also has a Phase in Segment 3 — but since he doesn't finish his Haymaker until the end of Segment 3, he loses his Phase in that Segment.*

OFFENSIVE HAYMAKER

At the GM's option, characters can use a variant of Haymaker called *Offensive Haymaker*. It works just like a standard Haymaker, but instead of a -5 DCV penalty it has a -5 OCV penalty. This represents taking extra time to aim precisely or to hit a vital spot — an attack that gains effect through a precise or “sophisticated” use rather than the raw extra power that characterizes most Haymakers.

UNUSUAL HAYMAKERS

Here are some guidelines for quick-and-easy adjudication of the effect of unusual Haymakers:

Drain: Haymaker adds +2d6 to any Drain.

Entangle: Haymaker adds +2d6 for purposes of determining the Entangle's BODY; it doesn't add any PD/ED. At the GM's option, a character can Haymaker his STR when trying to escape from a Grab or Entangle (but this means breaking out automatically takes a Full Phase, regardless of how well the character breaks out). Since many of the difficulties involved with performing a Haymaker don't matter when a character's trying to break out of a Grab or Entangle, the GM may prefer not to allow this.

Firearms: A character can Haymaker a gunshot, unless the GM forbids him to. This could represent carefully aiming to hit the most vulnerable part of a target.

Flash: Haymaker adds +4d6 to any Flash, regardless of the number and type of Sense Groups affected.

Grab: A character cannot Haymaker a Grab or the Squeeze, Slam, or Throw damage he can do to a Grabbed opponent. He could Grab a target with less than all of his manipulatory limbs, then use one of his free limbs to make a Haymaker Strike on the Grabbed target in a later Phase (he'd suffer all the penalties for both Grab and Haymaker, though).

Mental Powers: Haymaker adds +2d6 to a Mental Blast, or +4d6 to any continuing-effect Mental Power (such as Mind Control). This reduces both the character's DCV and his DMCV.

Presence Attack: If allowed at all, Haymaker adds +4d6 to any Presence Attack.

Telekinesis: Haymaker adds +2½d6 to Telekinesis when it's used to attack, or +13 STR when used to Grab (or the like).

Transform: Haymaker adds +6d6 to a Cosmetic Transform, +4d6 to a Minor Transform, +2d6 to a Major Transform, and +1d6+1 to a Severe Transform.

MOVE BY

This Maneuver allows a character to attack while doing a Full Move past his target. The character simply thrusts out an arm, fist, leg, tail, other appendage, or weapon and hits his opponent as he moves by him. Move By is a Maneuver in and of itself — a character cannot, for example, do a Move By with an Offensive Strike. Characters cannot perform Move Bys with Ranged attacks (but see the *Strafe* Optional Combat Maneuver).

To use Move By, the character must plot his entire movement path and then make his Attack Roll. The target can be at any point along the hero's intended path. Hit or miss, the character finishes at the end of his movement path. The character must be able to move at least 2m to perform a Move By.

A successful Move By does half of the character's regular STR damage plus $(\text{velocity}/10)d6$ Normal Damage to the target (in other words, $(\text{STR}/2) + (\text{vel}/10)d6$) (if a character adds damage to some other type of attack, each "+1d6" from velocity adds +1 Damage Class). (Halve a character's STR before determining the STR damage he does with a Move By; that eliminates potential problems with trying to halve a half-die of damage.) However, the character himself takes one-third of the STUN and BODY damage done to the target. He cannot avoid this damage by taking *Personal Immunity* on his STR or Movement Power, but his appropriate defenses apply against it. The character doesn't necessarily have to travel his Full Move to get the damage for his full velocity; see *Acceleration, Deceleration, And Gravity*, 6E2 25. If a target Blocks a Move By, the character making the unsuccessful Move By attack doesn't take any damage.

Example: *Starburst (Flight 30m) is 10m away from Ogre. He does a Move By on the villain and ends up 20m away from Ogre at the end of the Maneuver. The villain takes ½ of Starburst's STR damage plus $30/10 = 3d6$ for Starburst's velocity. Starburst has a 15 STR, so the villain takes $(\frac{1}{2} \times 3d6) + 3d6 = 4\frac{1}{2}d6$ of damage. Starburst will take one third of the damage himself, but he's got enough PD that it shouldn't cause him any harm.*

A character may not perform Move Bys with Extra-Dimensional Movement, FTL Travel, Teleportation, or any MegaScaled movement. However, he can perform them at Noncombat Movement speeds with other forms of movement (though this means he has OCV 0; see 6E2 24).

A character may perform a Move By with a HTH weapon or a HTH Killing Attack; see *Adding Damage*, 6E2 99. Divide the character's STR by 2 for purposes of calculating extra damage or DC/OCV penalties based on the weapon's STR Minimum. The weapon, not the character, takes the one-third damage from the Move By. If the BODY damage done to the target exceeds three times (3x) the weapon's base Damage Classes, the weapon breaks. If a character makes a Move By

with a natural Killing Attack (say, his claws), the damage he takes is the equivalent DCs of Normal Damage, not Killing Damage. Characters cannot use other innate attacks (such as a "Shock Touch" [No Range Blast]) with Move By without the GM's permission; if the GM grants permission, he determines the Maneuver's effect (if any) on the attack.

See 6E2 74-75 for special rules about Multiple Attacking with Move By.

MOVE THROUGH

Move Through allows a character to attack at the end of a Full Move by running right into his opponent. This can simulate a ramming attack, a full-force tackle, or many similar actions. Move Through is a Maneuver in and of itself; a character cannot, for example, do a Move Through with an Offensive Strike. Characters cannot perform Move Throughs with Ranged attacks.

A character can perform a Move Through as a Half Phase Action. If he wants to do that, he can only make a Half Move toward his target, but in most cases that's enough to accelerate to full velocity using the movement rules, so it won't change the calculation of CVs or damage/effect. However, it's also possible to perform a Move Through as a Full Phase Action — at the end of a Full Move. In fact, that's how it's most often used.

Characters may not perform Move Throughs with Extra-Dimensional Movement, FTL Travel, Teleportation, any MegaScaled form of movement, or Telekinesis. However, they may perform them at Noncombat Movement speeds with other forms of movement (though this means the character has a base OCV of 0; see 6E2 24). See 6E2 74 regarding Multiple Attack Move Throughs.

USING MOVE THROUGH

To perform a Move Through, the attacker must make an Attack Roll against his target, modified for his velocity. If the attacker misses his target and has meters of movement remaining in his Full Move, he keeps traveling in a straight line through the point where the target was standing (and may collide with some object in the vicinity, such as a wall or a tree, and hurt himself; he has no chance to hit other targets he would want to hit). He may decelerate if he wishes. If he doesn't have meters of movement remaining in his Full Move, he ends his Full Move at the target's location. A character must be able to move at least 2m to perform a Move Through, but doesn't necessarily have to travel his Full Move to get the damage for his full velocity; see *Acceleration, Deceleration, And Gravity*, 6E2 25. However, in most cases a character should make a Full Move when performing a Move Through, unless he can articulate a good reason for the GM why he wouldn't.

If the character hits his target, he does his regular STR damage + $(\text{velocity}/6)d6$ in Normal Damage (if a character adds damage to some other type of attack, each "+1d6" from velocity adds +1

Damage Class). The target takes full damage, and the character performing the Move Through takes half of the STUN and BODY damage done to the target. He cannot avoid this damage by taking *Personal Immunity* on his STR or Movement Power, but his appropriate defenses apply against it. If the attack did no Knockdown or Knockback, then the attacker takes the *full* damage instead (it's like running into a wall — and yes, it's possible for a character to Stun himself or Knock himself Out with his own Move Through). If a target Blocks a Move Through, the character making the unsuccessful Move Through attack doesn't take any damage.

If the attacker hits the target and doesn't do Knockdown or Knockback, or he hits the target at the end of his Full Move, he stops at the target's Location, directly in front of the target. If he hits and does Knockdown or Knockback and has meters of movement remaining in his Full Move, he has several choices. First, he can travel with the target, ending up either in front of the target at the location the target ends up in (if he doesn't choose to decelerate) or at any point between the point of impact and where the target comes to rest (if he decelerates after hitting the target). Second, he can continue to move up to the remaining meters of movement in his Full Move or the meters of Knockback done to the target, whichever is less. Third, he can remain at the place where he hit the target.

COMMON MOVE BY/THROUGH RULES

Several rules apply to both Move By and Move Through.

RELATIVE VELOCITY

Since the damage from a Move By or Move Through depends on velocity, it's the characters' *relative velocity* that matters when determining it. (Determine the OCV penalty the character performing the Move By/Through suffers from just his own velocity, however.)

“Relative” velocity refers to the relationship between the velocities of the attacker and his target — sometimes they add together, sometimes they cancel each other out. For example, if two attackers rush together at 16m each, their relative velocity is 32m; the Move Through gets +5d6 damage. If one runs toward the other at 12m while the other is standing still (0m movement, in other words), the relative velocity is 12m and the Move Through gets +2d6 damage. If the attacker runs at 20m, and the victim runs away from him at 8m, the relative velocity is 12m and the Move Through gets +2d6 damage.

If a character's attacked with a velocity-based Maneuver in a Segment in which he doesn't have a Phase but the GM judges that he is “moving” (e.g., he's in mid-air or mid-run in a situation when he moved last Phase and is obviously going to keep moving in his next Phase), the GM can assign him whatever velocity seems appropriate. As always, apply common sense and dramatic sense.

These rules also apply to Trip, Martial Throw, and other Maneuvers that add damage based on velocity.

STUNNING AND MOVEMENT

Because a character takes one-third, half, or full damage from his own Move By/Through, he could Stun or Knock himself Out by performing the Maneuver.

With a Move By, the character has to plot his entire movement path before performing the maneuver, as detailed in the text. If he's Stunned or Knocked Out, the plotted movement path still

applies, even if it means he's tumbling along the ground, unconscious, due to momentum.

With a Move Through, the character should have already declared which of the three “follow-through” options — move with the target, keep moving to the end of his own movement, or stop where he hit the target — he wants to use. If he's Stunned or Knocked Out, the declared condition still applies, even if it means tumbling along the ground, unconscious, due to momentum.

Alternately, the GM could declare, based on special effects, the circumstances, common sense, and dramatic sense, that the character stops moving where he is when Stunned or Knocked Out.

HAND-TO-HAND ATTACK

If a character performs a Move By/Through, he can add his Hand-To-Hand Attack damage to it *if* the GM believes that makes sense based on the special effects of the HA and the Combat Maneuver. For example, if the HA is defined as a club, a character might be able to run past someone and smash them with it (Move By), but couldn't use those HA dice when tackling someone (Move Through). An HA defined as a particularly skillful, or even superpowered, punch probably couldn't be used with either Maneuver. In some cases a character might buy HA with a Limitation indicating that it *only* works with Move By/Through. In any event, the damage from the HA dice should not be halved, though the GM is free to do so if he feels that's necessary to maintain game balance. In either case, the HA dice are part of the overall damage, and thus affect the damage the character himself takes from performing the maneuver.

ADVANTAGES ON STR

If a character has an Advantage on his STR that affects how it does damage (such as Armor Piercing), that Advantage does not apply to the damage he takes from performing a Move By/Through. However, the GM may change this rule if he believes it's causing game balance problems.

Example: *Starburst does a Move Through on Ogre with Flight 30m. Starburst does 3d6 for STR, and $15/6 = 5d6$ for velocity, for a total of 8d6. Starburst rolls the damage, getting 23 STUN, 8 BODY. Ogre takes full damage — 23 STUN, 8 BODY — and Starburst takes half the damage — 11 STUN, 4 BODY (he can apply his PD to reduce it, of course). If he rolls no Knockback, he takes full damage (23 STUN, 8 BODY), just like Ogre.*

If a character performs a Move Through on a target, the situation may arise in which the Knockback roll indicates the attack would do Knockback, but the target can't take Knockback (perhaps because he's standing against a wall, or the like). In that case, the character takes only half damage from his own Move Through — he "did" Knockback, even if the target didn't actually move. However, in the interest of common sense and dramatic sense, the GM may, if he wishes, rule that this was the equivalent of "no Knockback" and apply full damage.

TYPES OF ATTACKS ALLOWED

Generally, a character can only use his STR, most types of HTH weapons, or some forms of HKA (like claws) when performing a Move Through (see below). He can't use special abilities representing HTH Combat attacks, such as a Rapid-Fire Punch (Blast, Autofire, No Range), unless the GM is willing to analogize the attack to a weapon. The GM may rule that some weapons — such as clubs or maces — can't be used as part of a Move Through.

At the GM's option, a character can Grab a victim, then perform a Move Through on him by carrying him and running into a large object like a wall, vehicle, or hillside. In this case, the character suffers the penalties for both maneuvers. The GM may limit the damage done to the PD + BODY of the object the character collides with, if appropriate.

WEAPONS AND KILLING ATTACKS

If a Move Through is performed with a HTH weapon or HTH Killing Attack, divide the character's STR by 2 for purposes of calculating extra damage or DC/OCV penalties based on the weapon's STR Minimum. The weapon, not the character, takes the half (or full) damage from the Move Through; if the BODY damage done to the target exceeds three times (3x) the weapon's base Damage Classes, the weapon breaks. If a character makes a Move Through with a natural Killing Attack (say, his claws), the damage he takes is an equivalent DC of Normal Damage, not Killing Damage. Characters cannot use other innate attacks (such as a "Shock Touch" [No Range Blast]) with Move Through without the GM's permission; if the GM grants permission, he determines the Maneuver's effect (if any) on the attack.

COLLISIONS

Sometimes two characters deliberately run into each other. Resolve this as if each had simultaneously performed a Move Through on the other. Since they *want* to hit each other, you can probably dispense with the Attack Roll altogether and simply assume they collide as planned, but if you want them to make Attack Rolls, each character's CV modifiers are based on his own velocity alone. However, the damage each of them take is based on their *combined* velocity — in other words, each character does his own STR damage + ((his velocity plus target's velocity)/6)d6 of damage to the other character, and takes half that much damage, with his own Move Through. Each character takes the half/full damage from his own Move Through, plus the full damage caused by his opponent's Move Through, separately — he applies defenses to each of them individually, and they don't add together for purposes of determining whether he's Stunned or the like.

Example: *Ramrod has STR 40 and Running 60m. Tank has STR 60 and Running 30m. They deliberately run into each other at full speed to determine who's tougher. Ramrod does 23d6 damage $((STR/5=8) + ((60 + 30)/6=15))$ to Tank, and takes half that himself (or all of that, if Tank takes no Knockback). Tank does 27d6 damage $((STR/5=12) + ((60 + 30)/6=15))$ to Ramrod, and takes half that himself (or all of that, if Ramrod takes no Knockback).*

If a character collides with a large object, typically he takes his velocity/6 in dice of Normal Damage, but limited to a number of dice equal to the PD + BODY of the object impacted. The GM may alter this in the interest of game balance, common sense, and dramatic sense.

MULTIPLE ATTACK

This Maneuver allows a character to make more than one attack in a Phase, either at a single target or at multiple targets, in either HTH Combat, Ranged Combat, or a mixture of the two. Multiple Attack allows a character to:

- make multiple strikes against a single target with a single attack
- make multiple strikes against a single target with multiple forms of attack
- make multiple strikes against multiple targets with a single attack
- make multiple strikes against multiple targets with multiple forms of attack
- freely mix HTH and Ranged, or non-Mental and Mental, attacks as part of the Multiple Attack sequence

The GM can forbid any use of Multiple Attack if he feels the proposed attack defies common or dramatic sense, would cause game balance problems, involves incompatible Power Modifiers or special effects, or the like. For example, he might forbid a character to use a fire power and ice power at the same time, combine an attack with the *Autofire* Advantage with one lacking that Advantage, combine an attack requiring Concentration with one that does not, or use an attack that does No Knockback together with one that does normal Knockback. If attacks have Power Modifiers that are mutually exclusive — such as Concentration, Gestures, or Incantations, each of which prevents the simultaneous use of other powers with the same Limitation — those attacks may not be combined into a Multiple Attack.

The GM may wish to restrict characters using Multiple Attack to a maximum of 2-3 attacks per sequence. That provides a reasonable increase in firepower without slowing the game down too much or effectively rendering the attacker immune to counterattack.

BASIC RULES

Multiple Attack requires a Full Phase to use (the *Rapid Attack* Skill, 6E1 87, reduces this to a Half Phase). Using it reduces the character to ½ DCV. The character's OCV is affected by the number of targets, the types of attacks used, and other factors (see below).

A character using Multiple Attack has to make a separate Attack Roll for each attack in the sequence. If he misses any of his Attack Rolls, all remaining attacks in that Multiple Attack sequence automatically miss also.

A character making a Multiple Attack must expend END or Charges for each attack made (this includes any that automatically miss because he missed one in the sequence). He may elect to stop the Multiple Attack after any successful attack. This does not retroactively diminish the OCV and DCV penalties for using the Maneuver, but it saves END or Charges.

A character making a Multiple Attack against multiple targets can choose to attack some or all of them more than once, but this of course increases the number of attacks (and thus the OCV penalty suffered; see below). For example, Thunderbird could make a Multiple Attack with his pistol by shooting Lazer once, Mechassassin twice, and Steel Commando once. That's a total of four attacks, so he suffers a -6 OCV penalty on all the Attack Rolls.

Example: *Defender has a Blast slot in his Multipower and a Sight Group Flash (bought separately, outside his Multipower). He may make a Multiple Attack with both Powers in the same Phase (assuming he has enough END to pay for both). He could use both Powers against a single target, or one or both against each of multiple targets. Making the Multiple Attack reduces his DCV by half.*

During a battle against the Ultimates, Defender finds himself facing Binder, Blackstar, and Slick. He decides to make a Multiple Attack using his Blast and Flash. He declares that he'll shoot Binder once with each Power, Slick once with each Power, and Blackstar with just the Flash. That's five attacks, so he suffers a $((5-1) \times -2 =) -8$ OCV penalty on each Attack Roll. Good luck....

Example: *Starburst decides to try a Multiple Move By on Ogre's three henchmen (each of whom is DCV 4). Starburst suffers a -6 OCV penalty on all of these attacks (-2 for Move By, -4 for Multiple Attack), so his OCV is only 3. His first Attack Roll is a 10, which hits; unfortunately, his second one is a 13, which misses. Because he missed the second attack, he doesn't get to attack the third henchman at all.*



Example: *Firefight wants to use Multiple Attack on the boss of the terrorist group he's been pursuing. He decides to fire three shots from his assault rifle — that ought to be enough to take the terrorist scum down! This takes a Full Phase and halves his DCV. He has a -4 OCV on all three shots.*

After killing the boss, Firefight wants to use Multiple Attack to shoot one time at each of the boss's four henchmen, who are also firing at him. These four thugs are all in front of him, but are spread out over 20 meters. He's at ½ DCV and suffers a -6 OCV penalty, but he doesn't take an additional penalty for firing at multiple targets or "tracking" his attack across the 20 meter area.

Example: *Nighthawk faces four thugs. He knows his fighting skill greatly exceeds theirs, so he decides to punch all four of them. He performs his Punch (Martial Strike) as a Multiple Attack.*

He starts out with OCV 11 (from his base OCV and some Combat Skill Levels that can apply to his Punch). He's Multiple Attacking four characters, so with the -2 OCV cumulative for each target after the first, he suffers a -6 OCV, making his final OCV 5 versus each foe.

His enemies have DCV 4. He needs a 12 or less to hit. He rolls an 11, an 8, a 12, and a 4. He hits all four targets. On his next Phase, he does it again. He rolls a 12, a 9, and a 13. Since his third Punch was a miss, he doesn't even get to roll to hit the fourth target. (He still has to pay END for that attack, though.)

Later on, after polishing off the four thugs, Nighthawk encounters their master. Hoping for a quick end to the encounter, he decides to use Multiple Attack to punch the master three times (which will give him a -4 OCV [total OCV of 7] against the master's DCV of 8). He roll 10, 9, and 12. The first two attacks hit, but the third misses. Unfortunately, he's now at ½ DCV against the master's counterattack.

COMBINED ATTACK

Using two or more powers or similar abilities (but not Combat/Martial Maneuvers or the like) once against a single target isn't a Multiple Attack. It's a **Combined Attack**, and counts as type of Strike. Therefore it has no OCV penalty, doesn't halve the attacker's DCV, and doesn't take a Full Phase to perform. (Using two such powers multiple times against a single target, or against multiple targets, is a Multiple Attack and subject to all Multiple Attack rules.) However, the GM can apply appropriate Multiple Attack rules to a Combined Attack, such as the rule that the overall attack is considered to be made with the character's "good hand."

For example, suppose a military robot in a Science Fiction campaign has a pulson blaster (Blast 8d6) built into its right hand and a laser (RKA 2d6, Armor Piercing) built into its left. If it fires each of them once against a single target, that's a Combined Attack, performed as a standard Attack Action with +0 OCV, +0 DCV modifiers.

USABLE ATTACKS

Unless another rule or the GM rules otherwise, a character can make a Multiple Attack with any type of attack: barehanded; using a weapon; using a Ranged power; using a Mental Power; using a Combat Maneuver or Martial Maneuver; throwing a rock; anything.

Furthermore, unless another rule or the GM says otherwise, a character may make a Multiple Attack with any two or more attacks, without any restrictions on what types of attacks can be "mixed together." (Though mixing certain types of attacks may entail an OCV penalty; see below.) For example, a character could:

- use an HKA and a Blast attack against a single target or multiple targets
- use an HKA and an HA against a single target or multiple targets
- use a Blast and a Mental Blast against a single target or multiple targets
- throw a knife at one target while kicking another target
- use a Martial Strike, an Offensive Strike, and a Defensive Strike against a single target or multiple targets
- stab one target with a rapier while shooting another target with a flintlock pistol
- use a Martial Strike and a Disarm against a single target or multiple targets
- fire a pistol at one target while blasting another with a shotgun
- Mind Control one target while poking another target in the eye
- use a Blast and an RKA, Area Of Effect against a single target or multiple targets
- skewer one target with a spear while beheading another target with an axe

However, a character *cannot* use defensive maneuvers or Actions (such as Block, Dodge, or Deflection) as part of a Multiple Attack. Nor can he make a Multiple "Attack" that consists of nothing but defensive actions.

SPECIFIC COMBAT MANEUVERS AND SITUATIONS

A character can only Multiple Attack with maneuvers that involves a Full Move (such as Move Through) if all targets are adjacent or near to one another in some way that makes it reasonable to perform the attack. For example, a Multiple Attack with Move Through against multiple targets typically requires that the targets be "lined up" somehow, since even in a world of dramatic realism there are "realistic" limits to how much an attacker can twist and turn as he moves (regardless of whether there's a Turn Mode involved). As always, the GM should adjudicate the situation with game balance, common sense, and dramatic sense in mind.

Multiple Attacks with Move Bys against multiple targets use the standard rules for Multiple Attacks (including the paragraph above). However, a character can perform a “Multiple Move By” on a single target by moving in a circle around him and hitting him repeatedly. In this situation he can only make an attack each time he returns to the point where he first hit the target. Typically that means he has to travel a full 10m circle around the target between each attack.

Example: *Kinetik wants to use his hyper-running (Running 60m) to run around and around Ankylosaur and hit him several times. Ankylosaur is 13m away from him, so Kinetik has 47m of Running to run around and around him with. That means he can attack Ankylosaur five times: once the first time he reaches him, then four more times while running around him (once for every full 10m available). Kinetik suffers a -8 penalty for the Multiple Attack, plus the standard -2 OCV penalty for a Move By, for a total of -10 OCV.*

A character cannot use an Autofire attack as part of a Multiple Attack sequence unless he knows the *Rapid Autofire Skill* (6E1 65).

If a target is holding more than one weapon (for example, a dagger in each hand), a character may Multiple Attack with Disarm, counting each weapon as a separate target.

A character may only Multiple Attack Grab as many targets as he has hands/limbs to hold them. (One exception is when the character tries to Grab more than one of a single target’s limbs, as detailed above under *Grab*. In that situation, a character may attempt to Multiple Attack as many limbs as he wants; this reflects his ability to tangle an enemy up so he can’t use his limbs properly.) Grabbing the heads of two opponents and banging them together is a Multiple Attack with Grab and Squeeze, in which the special effect of the Squeeze damage is smashing the two characters together.

A character can only perform a Multiple Attack with Choke or Grab Weapon on as many targets as he has hands/limbs to hold.

A character may not Multiple Attack with Haymaker, nor Haymaker any attack that’s part of a Multiple Attack.

Unless the GM rules otherwise, a character cannot make a Multiple Attack while Strafing. If the GM permits this, the Multiple Attack can only include Ranged attacks.

At the GM’s option, characters may make Multiple Attacks with some non-Attack Powers. For example, a character might be allowed to use his Mindreading power (Telepathy) together with his Mindbolt (Mental Blast) to create an attack that painfully “rips” surface thoughts and memories out of the target’s brain. A character cannot use a Presence Attack as part of a Multiple Attack — but since a Presence Attack takes no time, he can perform one after attacking anyway.

The GM may rule that characters cannot use Multiple Attack with some powers or weapons — such as slings, crossbows, and some spells. If so, those attacks may, at the GM’s discretion, take a $-\frac{1}{2}$ *Cannot Be Multiple Attacked* Limitation. (However, if the power already has a Limitation that prevents it from being used in a Multiple Attack, the GM may not allow it to take this Limitation. For example, in a magic system where nearly all spells require Gestures to cast, the use of Gestures already prevents two or more spells from being used in a Multiple Attack together, so a further Limitation might not be allowed, or might only be worth $-\frac{1}{4}$.)

COMBAT VALUE

When making a Multiple Attack, the attacker determines his OCV at the beginning of the sequence, based on the OCV modifiers from Multiple Attack itself and other factors (see below). That OCV typically remains unchanged throughout the sequence of shots, but the GM can alter the attacker’s OCV if desired. For example, if multiple targets are varying distances away from the character, the Range Modifier to each one might be different, the GM could change the character’s OCV versus each target on that basis.

If the attacks are made against a single target, the target’s DCV typically remains the same throughout the sequence. However, if the circumstances of the attack change his DCV in some way (for example, if one attack frees him from an Entangle, Flashes him, or Knocks him Out), then the GM may rule that the target’s DCV changes for all attacks thereafter.

If the attacks are made against multiple targets, with each being attacked once, each has its own DCV, determined by the conditions at the time the sequence began. If some targets are attacked more than once, the rules stated above apply.

If a character makes a Multiple Attack against multiple targets (who may have different DCVs), he chooses in what order to make the attacks, but the GM can override this choice if necessary. In many cases the circumstances will suggest a logical or common sense order in which the rolls should occur.

Example: *Kinetik decides to try a Move By on four VIPER agents. He’d prefer to attack the toughest agent with the biggest weapon first, but the GM rules he has to attack them in order, from nearest to farthest.*

WHICH COMBAT VALUE TO USE

If a Multiple Attack includes both non-Mental and Mental attacks, the non-Mental parts of the attack are made with OCV against DCV, and the Mental parts with OMCV against DMCV. (Of course, the *Alternate Combat Value Advantage* may alter the type of CV used with an attack.)

Regardless of what types of attacks a Multiple Attack involves, any modifiers listed for OCV and DCV also apply to OMCV and DMCV. For example, a Multiple Attack against three targets is at -4 OCV and -4 OMCV, and it halves both DCV and DMCV, whether it uses Mental attacks or not.



OCV MODIFIERS

Several factors modify a character's OCV when he makes a Multiple Attack.

First, he suffers a cumulative -2 OCV penalty for each attack after the first. For example, if a character wants to Multiple Attack four targets, that's a total -6 penalty, and that -6 applies to all four Attack Rolls.

Second, if a character mixes HTH Combat attacks and Ranged Combat attacks as part of a single Multiple Attack sequence, he suffers a -2 OCV penalty. (This is a flat penalty; it doesn't change based on the number of attacks in the sequence.)

Third, if a character mixes non-Mental and Mental attacks as part of a single Multiple Attack sequence, he suffers a -2 OCV (and OMCV) penalty. (This is a flat penalty; it doesn't change based on the number of attacks in the sequence.)

Fourth, if a character uses an Area-affecting attack (which ordinarily is against DCV 3) and a non-Area-affecting one (which ordinarily works against the target's DCV) as part of a Multiple Attack sequence against a single target, he must make the Attack Roll against the target's DCV for all the attacks (in other words, the Area-affecting attacks lose the benefit of being made against DCV 3). If he mixes non-Area-affecting and Area-affecting attacks in a Multiple Attack sequence against multiple targets where each target's hit by a

single attack, each attack is made against the DCV it ordinarily targets.

Fifth, a character may make a Multiple Attack with two or more Powers, Combat Maneuvers, weapons, or other forms of attack that provide OCV modifiers. In this case, the character uses the *worst* of the modifiers (*i.e.*, the ones that hinder him the most, or help him the least). For example, suppose a character wants to perform a Martial Disarm (-1 OCV, +1 DCV) and a Martial Strike (+0 OCV, +2 DCV) against a target as a Multiple Attack. The character's Attack Roll is at -1 OCV — the worst OCV modifier from the two Maneuvers.

Sixth, if a character makes a Multiple Attack with a Combat/Martial Maneuver that modifies OCV, the Maneuver's OCV modifier doesn't accumulate the way the Multiple Attack's penalty does — it just applies once, to the character's overall OCV. For example, if a character makes a Multiple Attack against three foes with his Offensive Strike (which has a -2 OCV penalty), his OCV penalty is -6 (-2 for using Offensive Strike, plus an additional -2 apiece for Multiple Attacking two targets after the first).

Example: *Captain Morgan Blade and the crew of the pirate ship Felonious Venture are fighting off a ninja attack. The ninja outnumber the buccaneers, so Captain Blade decides to try to take out two of the deadly warrior-assassins with a Multiple Attack: he's going to slash one with his cutlass, while shooting another with his pistol. That's two attacks, so he suffers a -2 OCV penalty for that, and he's mixing HTH and Ranged attacks, for another -2 OCV penalty. So he's at a total of -4 OCV on both Attack Rolls.*

Example: *While exploring Vandergast's World, Andarra is attacked by a psi-panther! The fearsome psionic beast tries to claw at her while simultaneously assaulting her mind. This is a Multiple Attack with the psi-panther's HKA and Mental Blast. The psi-panther suffers a -2 OCV for making two attacks, -2 for using a HTH and a Ranged attack together, and -2 for using a non-Mental and Mental attack together, for a total of -6 OCV. It's at ½ DCV as usual for a Multiple Attack. It suffers the same penalties for MCV: -6 OMCV, ½ DMCV. When it attacks, it makes the Attack Roll for the HKA using OCV, and the Attack Roll for the Mental Blast using its OMCV.*

Example: *The Verdict finds himself cornered in an alley by three thugs. Two of them advance on him with switchblade knives, while the third hangs back with a pistol in case the feared vigilante tries to make a break for it. He declares that he's going to make a Multiple Attack: Grab Weapon to get a knife away from one of the thugs, then slash the other one in HTH Combat range with it, then throw it at the thug with the pistol — an impressive feat, if he can pull it off! That's three attacks (-4 OCV), plus another -2 OCV for combining HTH and Ranged attacks, for a total of -6 OCV.*

DCV MODIFIERS

Using Multiple Attack reduces a character to ½ DCV. If one of the attacks in a Multiple Attack also halves the character's DCV, the effect isn't cumulative (a character's DCV can only be reduced to half once).

A character may make a Multiple Attack with two or more Powers, Combat Maneuvers, weapons, or other forms of attack that provide DCV modifiers. In this case, the character uses the *worst* of the modifiers (*i.e.*, the ones that hinder him the most, or help him the least). For example, suppose a character wants to perform a Martial Disarm (-1 OCV, +1 DCV) and a Martial Strike (+0 OCV, +2 DCV) against a target as a Multiple Attack. The character is at +1 DCV — the worst DCV modifier from the two maneuvers.

COMBAT SKILL LEVELS

Unless the GM rules otherwise, characters cannot buy Combat Skill Levels specifically with Multiple Attack. They have to buy CSLs with the attacks they use to make a Multiple Attack, which they may apply when making the Multiple Attack with those attacks. However, if a Multiple Attack involves two or more different attacks (whether against a single target or multiple targets), a character may only use CSLs that could apply to any of the individual attacks involved.

Example: *The Harbinger of Justice has several types of CSLs: +4 with All Ranged Combat; +4 with All Firearms; and +3 with All Pistols. If he makes a Multiple Attack with a semi-automatic handgun in one hand and a submachine gun in the other, he can apply his All Ranged Combat and All Firearms CSLs, since they could apply to attacks made with either a pistol or a submachine gun. However, he cannot apply his All Pistols CSLs, since they could not apply to a submachine gun.*

A Combat Skill Level that can apply to a Multiple Attack can be used for any of the standard uses for CSLs: increasing OCV (the only use for a 2-point CSL); increasing DCV; or increasing damage (see below).

ADDING DAMAGE

Unless noted otherwise, the standard rules for Adding Damage (6E2 99) apply to Multiple Attack. Any method used to add damage applies equally and in full to all attacks in the Multiple Attack that it can affect; it doesn't have to be "divided" among the various attacks.

A character can use any Combat Skill Level that can apply to a Multiple Attack (see above) to increase the damage done per the usual rules (see 6E1 70). The damage bonus from the CSL applies to every attack that hits a target; the character doesn't have to divide his CSLs among the attacks.

With the GM's permission, a character can use a Combat or Martial Maneuver to add damage to a Multiple Attack — for example, use a Martial Strike from a weapon-based Martial Art to add damage to the sword and dagger the character's

making a Multiple Attack with. However, if a Multiple Attack involves two or more different attacks (whether against a single target or multiple targets), a character may only use Combat/Martial Maneuvers that could apply to any of the individual attacks involved. The Maneuver provides its full damage bonus to all the attacks involved, and its OCV/DCV modifiers (if any) apply to the character's overall OCV and DCV with the Multiple Attack in the usual manner.

Example: *Yeung Li is in combat against four martial artist of lesser skill. Since he wants to impress their master (who's watching carefully), he decides to make a Multiple Attack using his Punch (Martial Strike) to hit two of them and his Kick (Offensive Strike) to hit the other two. That's four attacks, so he suffers a -6 OCV penalty for the Multiple Attack. He also suffers the worst OCV and DCV modifiers from the two Maneuvers: -2 OCV from Offensive Strike, and +1 DCV from Offensive Strike. So he's at -8 OCV altogether, and his DCV's increased by 1 before being halved.*

Yeung Li has STR 20 and has bought +2 Extra DCs for his Martial Arts. Therefore he does 8d6 Normal Damage with his Martial Strike and 10d6 Normal Damage with his Offensive Strike. He's also got some CSLs he can use: +2 with All HTH Combat and +2 with Martial Arts. He decides to devote 2 CSLs to improving his OCV, and 2 to increasing the damage of his attacks. Therefore he'll do 9d6 with Martial Strike and 11d6 with Offensive Strike, and he's only at -6 OCV because the 2 CSLs cancel out part of the penalty he's suffering.

Example: *Severin d'Compeigne is a skilled fencer. He's facing two honorless bravos from a rival social club who plan to teach him a lesson about flirting with "their" women. He wants to show them who's the better man by making a Multiple Attack with his sword. Since he doesn't want to risk injury, he decides to use his Slash (an Offensive Strike). The Maneuver adds +4 DCs to his weapon damage for each attack; he doesn't have to "split them up" between the two attacks.*

Extra DCs bought for Martial Maneuvers increase the effects of all Martial Maneuvers used in a Multiple Attack. They do not apply to non-Martial Maneuvers used as part of the Multiple Attack.

If both attacks used in a Multiple Attack involve adding STR to the damage (such as HA and HKA), the character may add his full STR to both attacks. Similarly, if a character uses velocity to add damage to a Multiple Attack involving two or more attacks that are affected by velocity, the velocity adds its full effect to both attacks.

DEFENSES

When a Multiple Attack succeeds, the target applies his defenses (if any) separately to each part of the attack. The attacks in a Multiple Attack sequence can affect different defenses (such as a Blast and an RKA, or a Drain and a Flash). If

one of the attacks reduces or affects the target's defenses or CV (for example, a Drain PD or a Flash), the other attack applies first. However, if the circumstances of the attack change the target's DCV in some way (for example, if one attack frees him from an Entangle, Flashes him, or Knocks him Out), then the GM may rule that the target's DCV changes for all attacks thereafter.

The damage from a Multiple Attack that hits a single target multiple times isn't added together for purposes of determining if he's Stunned. Each attack applies to his defenses individually, and the damage he takes is compared to his CON individually to find out if he's Stunned.

Since a Multiple Attack against a single target involves multiple Attack Rolls, a character who wants to Block the Multiple Attack must make one Block roll for each Attack Roll, at the normal penalty for making multiple Blocks in the same Phase (see 6E2 58). For example, to Block a three-blow Multiple Attack involves one normal Block roll, a second roll at -2, and a third at -4. The same rule applies to Deflecting or Reflecting a Multiple Attack with Ranged attacks.

OTHER RULES

There is no penalty for using Multiple Attack to attack multiple targets (other than the Maneuver's standard OCV penalty) or for tracking a Ranged attack(s) across an area. However, all targets of a Ranged attack that's part of a Multiple Attack must be within the character's front 180-degree line of sight.

A character cannot spread his Multiple Attack over multiple Segments (*e.g.*, one attack in Segment 12, one in Segment 1, one in Segment 2, and so forth). All attacks are made in the Segment in which the character has a Phase and uses the Maneuver.

To determine the Knockback caused by a Multiple Attack, determine the Knockback for each attack used, and then apply only the best result. For example, if a character uses a Blast and an RKA in a Multiple Attack, and one did 12m Knockback and the other 6m Knockback, the target takes 12m Knockback.

A character can only Spread a Multiple Attack if he can Spread all the powers used in the attack. He must Spread both of them equally, and though the Spreading reduces both powers' DCs, he only gets one OCV bonus. For example, if a character has a Blast and an RKA, he can reduce both by 3 DCs to obtain +3 OCV with them in a Multiple Attack (he only gets +3, not +6).

Off Hand penalties do not apply to Multiple Attacks even if the special effect of the attack is that the character makes an attack with each hand, fights with two weapons, or the like. The overall attack is considered to be made with the character's good hand.

If one or more attacks in a Multiple Attack have the *Requires A Roll* Limitation in any form, the character must make the roll each time that attack's used in the sequence. A failed roll qualifies as a "miss," thus ending the sequence.

A target successfully Blocking one of the attacks in a Multiple Attack sequence does not count as a "miss"; the attacker may continue with the rest of the sequence. However, if a character successfully Dodges an attack in a Multiple Attack sequence, or avoids it by Diving For Cover, that is a miss that ends the sequence.

POWER FRAMEWORKS

A character can make a Multiple Attack with two or more slots in a single Power Framework, provided he has enough reserve/Pool points to allocate to the two or more slots used in the attack simultaneously.

A character can use slots from two or more different Power Frameworks to perform a Multiple Attack, assuming he obeys all the rules for such attacks. For example, a character could combine his Flame Blast (Blast 8d6, bought as a slot in a Multipower) with his Firebolt (RKA 2d6, bought as a slot in a VPP) into a Multiple Attack.

A character can make Multiple Attacks with a slot in a Power Framework and a power that's not in any Framework.

EXTRA TIME

If an attack has the *Extra Time* Limitation, usually that means a character cannot use it as part of a Multiple Attack. However, the GM should consider the nature of the Limitation and the special effects involved. For example, if the Limitation only applies to activating the power the first time, but not thereafter, a character might be able to Multiple Attack with it after it's been activated.

SET

This Combat Maneuver represents the effects of taking extra time to aim at a target with a Ranged attack, thereby improving one's accuracy. Set does not work with HTH Combat attacks.

An attacker who wants to Set must spend a Full Phase aiming at the target (this is known in some genres as “drawing a bead”). During this time he cannot move, change clips of ammunition, attack the target, or perform any Actions other than Zero Phase Actions. A character who has Set on a target receives a +1 OCV to all attacks against that target until he loses his Set. A character must Set on a specific target (either an individual or an object); he can't just Set until a target presents itself.

A character who has Set can attack on a Phase, then continue aiming at his target for several Phases, and then attack again, all without losing his Set bonus. However, the character loses the Set bonus if he doesn't attack or aim at the target, or is forced to stop aiming at the target for any reason (for example, he becomes Stunned or Knocked Out). He also loses the Set bonus if the target moves out of sight. Of course, a character can regain his Set bonus by spending another Phase aiming at the target.

A character can Set and Brace in a single Phase, thereby getting both bonuses. However, the character has to fulfill the requirements for both Modifiers — he must take a Full Phase and be ½ DCV.

SHOVE

Shove allows one character to push another. A character performing a Shove is at -1 OCV, -1 DCV.

Typically Shove only works on opponents that can fight back; characters cannot ordinarily use it against inanimate objects. However, the GM can permit this, if desired.

EFFECTS OF SHOVE

When one character Shoves another, the victim is moved back 1m for every 5 points of STR the Shoving character uses (assuming he doesn't somehow resist, or some other factor doesn't affect the distance moved; see below).

Shoving does no damage to a target unless he's Shoved into a surface such as a wall. In that case, he takes the attacker's STR damage, but cannot take more damage than the PD + BODY of the object he collides with. (If the campaign uses Hit Locations, this is just generalized damage.)

The GM may, if he wishes, allow a character with less than 5 STR to still Shove someone 1m.

RESISTING SHOVE

A character hit with a Shove doesn't have to passively stumble backward. There are several things he can do to resist being moved (and potentially taking damage).

First, the target can use his STR or Flight to resist Shove. Use the same rules as for resisting Knockback (6E2 117).

Second, a Shoved character can make a DEX, Breakfall, or Acrobatics roll (his choice) at -1 for every point by which the Shoving character made his Attack Roll to fall down at any point during his “move.” This eliminates any further movement and halves the damage the Shove would have caused (if any). However, the fallen character is at the same disadvantage as a Thrown character: he's prone (and thus at ½ DCV); he has to spend a Half Phase getting to his feet; and the Shoving character gets to attack him first on their next Phase regardless of relative DEX (if they both have their next Phase in the same Segment).

Third, a character with Clinging may try to activate his Clinging as he's stumbling backwards to stop himself from moving further (if his Clinging was already being used, the rules below apply instead). If he succeeds with a DEX Roll at -1 per 10 points of STR the Shoving character used to Shove him, he succeeds in stopping himself. The GM determines exactly where he stops; usually the halfway point is a reasonable choice.

OTHER FACTORS

Some external factors may affect Shove as well.

Anything that affects Knockback (6E2 114) can affect Shove. This includes the environment (being in the air, underwater, in space...), Rolling With The Punch, and using Clinging. Every -1d6 of Knockback equals +5 STR for the Shover (only to determine distance Shoved, not damage); every +1d6 is -5 STR for the Shover (again, only to affect distance).

The rules for Knockback and mass also apply to Shove. The heavier a character is, the harder he is to Shove backward.

At the GM's option, every -1m of Knockback Resistance reduces Shove distance by -1m. (However, if the Knockback Resistance represents a character's weight, do not also use the modifier for mass discussed above; choose one or the other.)

The GM can apply the rules and guidelines for resisting Throws with Powers (see below) to efforts to resist Shove, if appropriate and desired. For Clinging, use the standard “STR versus Clinging” rule on 6E1 182 to determine if the Shove can move the character at all; even if the Shove works, the Clinging still reduces the effect as described above.



3

STRIKE

This is the basic attack Maneuver. It includes attacks such as punches, kicks, elbow smashes, headbutts, attacks with weapons, firing a gun or a longbow, and just about any other way a character can hit another character. The basic OCV, DCV, and damage modifiers are +0, but the OCV modifier and the damage may vary by weapon type.

A Strike performed with a fist (or foot, elbow, or knee, for that matter) does a maximum of the character's STR/5 in d6 of Normal Damage (1d6 for every 5 STR). For example, a STR 20 person could do up to 4d6 Normal Damage with a Strike. The GM may award a particularly creative Strike with a Surprise Move bonus. For instance, a sudden headbutt or back kick may be worth an OCV bonus.

THROW

Characters often throw things. Fantasy characters throw beer mugs in barroom brawls just as superheroes throw cars up and down the street. When they're not hurling grenades and rocks at each other, they throw each other off cliffs or toss car keys across a yawning chasm. Sometimes an improvised thrown weapon is the only way a character can attack an opponent at Range. In *HERO System* terms, characters do this with the *Throw* Combat Maneuver.

A character performing a Throw is at +0 OCV, +0 DCV, but he must have something to Throw — a rock, another character, a piece of furniture, you name it. Depending on the type of missile, the GM may require him to Grab it first (see 6E2 62). For example, a Grab is definitely required to Throw another character. On the other hand, the GM should assume that a simple, nonresisting object can be picked-up-and-Thrown as part of a single Attack Action. Generally speaking, as long as an object is non-resisting and in no way difficult to grasp or lift, a character shouldn't have to use a Grab to pick it up if he can lift it with his Casual STR.

If a character Throws an object at a target and his Attack Roll fails, it's just a miss — the impromptu missile simply failed to hit its target. If a character's Throwing another character, special considerations may apply; see *Throwing A Character*, below.

THROWING DAMAGE

A successful Throw does the character's dice of STR damage to the target, up to a maximum of the PD + BODY of the Thrown object. For example, a costumed vigilante with STR 20 who throws a coffee mug (PD 1, BODY 1) at someone only does 2d6 of damage — even though he can do 4d6 STR damage with a blow, the object's PD + BODY equals 2, which limits him to 2d6. Alternately, a Throw may be used to place an object (such as a grenade) near a target for some reason, rather than hitting him.

Example: *The Visigoth has STR 60, meaning he can do up to 12d6 damage. If he throws a boulder at someone (PD 5, BODY 13), he does his usual 12d6 of damage. If he threw a lamppost (PD 5, BODY 3), he could only do 8d6 damage, since the maximum damage he can do is his STR damage or the PD + BODY of the thrown object, whichever is less.*

If a character is “just” Throwing an object for distance, with no intention of causing any injury, all he has to do is succeed with the Attack Roll to make the Throw, then consult the Throwing Table. The GM can determine exactly where the Thrown object “lands” using the rules for missed Area-affecting attacks or whatever other method seems appropriate to him.

Special rules apply when the Thrown “object” is a character; see *Throwing A Character*, below.

THROWING DISTANCE

To determine how far a character can throw something, the GM should consider three factors: how strong the character is; how heavy the object is; and how the character throws the object.

Compare the character’s STR to the STR necessary for the character to pick up the object (see the Strength Table on 6E1 43, and the note on Lightweight Objects in the Throwing Table). Subtract the latter from the former; the result is the “Extra Strength” used with the accompanying Throwing Table. Just cross-reference the extra STR with the type of Throw the character uses to find out how far he throws the object. (This “extra STR” only determines how far the character can throw an object; use his full STR to determine damage from the Throw, if applicable.)

A character cannot Throw an object or character that weighs more than he could lift with his Pushed STR. When using a Throw, a character must use a minimum of enough STR to lift the Thrown object/character, but he doesn’t have to use his full STR if he doesn’t want to. Furthermore, he may, with the GM’s permission, use his STR only to “lift,” not to cause damage (though he still has to pay END for the STR when doing this, of course). A character cannot resist being Thrown with STR.

A *Prone Throw* is any throw made when the character isn’t standing (sitting, lying down, on his knees, and so forth). A *Standing Throw* is any throw made when the character is standing but not moving. A *Running Throw* is any throw made when the character is standing and moving, using his momentum to improve the length of his throw. The character must make at least a full Half Move to make a Running Throw (unless the GM rules otherwise). A character typically makes a Running Throw while Running, Flying, or Swinging; at the GM’s option, a Running Throw can be made with other Movement Powers as well (but not Teleportation or Extra-Dimensional Movement, which involve no momentum).

THROWING TABLE

Extra Strength	Running Throw	Standing Throw	Prone Throw
0	0m	0m	0m
1	2m	1m	0.5m
2	3m	1.5m	0.75m
3	4m	2m	1m
4	6m	3m	1.5m
5	8m	4m	2m
6	10m	5m	2.5m
7	11m	5.5m	2.75
8	12m	6m	3m
9	14m	7m	3.5m
10	16m	8m	4m
11	18m	9m	4.5m
12	19m	9.5m	4.75m
13	20m	10m	5m
14	22m	11m	5.5m
15	24m	12m	6m
16	26m	13m	6.5m
17	27m	13.5m	6.75m
18	28m	14m	7m
19	30m	15m	7.5m
20	32m	16m	8m
23	36m	18m	9m
25	40m	20m	10m
28	44m	22m	11m
30	48m	24m	12m
35	56m	28m	14m
40	64m	32m	16m
45	72m	36m	18m
50	80m	40m	20m
55	88m	44m	22m
60	96m	48m	24m
65	104m	52m	26m
70	112m	56m	28m
75	120m	60m	30m
80	128m	64m	32m
85	136m	68m	34m
90	144m	72m	36m
95	152m	76m	38m
100	160m	80m	40m

Lightweight Objects: The Strength Table (6E1 43) puts all objects that weigh 8 kg or less into the STR 1 category. To allow characters to Throw lightweight objects long distances, for every halving of the weight (4kg, 2kg, 1 kg, 0.5kg, and so on) add +5 to the character’s STR for purposes of determining how far he can Throw the object. This only affects Throw distance, not damage.

Example: Sgt. Barnes (STR 15) throws a grenade, which weighs about half a kilogram. He needs a STR of 1 to pick a grenade up, but since the grenade is much lighter than 8kg he gets +20 STR for throwing purposes. Thus, Barnes has 34 STR more than he needs to lift it. As indicated on the Throwing Table, if he performs a Running Throw (i.e., he runs half his meters of movement and then lob the grenade), he can toss the grenade a little less than 56 meters. If he merely stands and throws it, he can lob it about 28 meters. If he's lying on his stomach, he obviously can't Throw at optimum performance — he can only heave the thing 14 meters.

MODIFIERS FOR THROW

The Range Modifier applies to Throw attacks. An object's shape affects the Range Modifier, as indicated by the Thrown Objects Range Modifier Table. The GM determines whether a particular object is balanced and/or aerodynamic.

Throwing an unbalanced, unaerodynamic object, such as an unwilling character, a sword, or a car, imposes an additional -3 to -5 Range Modifier. Throwing a balanced or aerodynamic object, such as a willing character, most rocks, or a jetpack, imposes an additional -1 to -3 Range Modifier. Characters can Throw balanced and aerodynamic objects, such as a pole hurled like a spear, without any additional Range Modifier.

If the character Throws a large object, the GM may wish to use the Object Size/Shape rules (6E2 174) to modify the character's OCV in some way.

THROWN OBJECTS RANGE MODIFIER TABLE

Range Modifier	Object is
Normal	Balanced and aerodynamic (a boomerang, a pole)
-1 to -3	Balanced but not aerodynamic (a tomahawk, a grenade, most rocks)
-1 to -3	Aerodynamic but not balanced (a jetpack)
-3 to -5	Neither balanced nor aerodynamic (another character, a bale of hay, a piece of furniture, a car)

CATCHING THROWN OBJECTS

Sometimes characters may want to catch objects thrown to them. Typically this requires at least a Zero Phase Action, if not more (unless the GM rules otherwise). In the interest of dramatic sense, the GM could let a character catch something when he doesn't have a Phase, but then require him to spend a Half Phase Action (or the like) on his next Phase to "ready" the object.

These rules only apply to objects thrown to the character with the intent that he catch them.

Characters cannot catch thrown weapons and other attacks; that would require an appropriately-constructed ability built using Deflection, Reflection, or the like.

THROWING A CHARACTER

Special rules apply to Throwing another character. Throwing a character could involve dashing him to the ground, hurling him against a wall or a tree, or flinging him for distance. The Thrower has to let his target go to Throw him.

Before a character can be Thrown, he has to be Grabbed (see *Grab*, above). Standard Grab rules apply, including how it modifies OCV and DCV.

The Thrower determines what he wants to Throw the target into. If this is a specific surface or object (such as hurling a character into a wall or a tree, or tossing a grenade through an open window), he has to make an Attack Roll to hit it (use the Target Size modifiers on 6E2 51). If the target is another character, use the *Characters As Weapons* rules on 6E2 124. In either case this typically counts as a separate Attack Action, so it cannot be performed in the same Phase when the character Grabs the object/character to be Thrown. If the Thrower just wants to hurl the target without aiming at anything in particular, he makes his Attack Roll against DCV 0, but the target takes only half damage from hitting the ground unless the GM rules otherwise. At the GM's option, this sort of "undirected" Throw may not require a separate Attack Action.

If the Thrower's Attack Roll succeeds, the Thrown character takes the Thrower's STR damage, up to a maximum of the PD + BODY of the surface (or object) he's Thrown into. If the surface is extremely hard or rough, the GM may, at his option, increase the damage the Throw does.

A successful Throw has several other effects besides doing damage. First, the target usually ends up prone, which leaves him at ½ DCV. Second, if the Thrower and Thrown character both have their next Phases in the same Segment, the Thrower automatically gets to act first, regardless of relative DEX (the Thrower's opponent is delayed until after the Throwing character's DEX). This applies even if the character makes a Breakfall roll to reduce the damage suffered because of the Throw and/or an Acrobatics roll to keep his feet, but at the GM's option does not apply if the target's Breakfall roll succeeds by half.

If the Attack Roll for a Throw fails, the victim suffers no effects of a Throw: he takes no damage, remains on his feet, and suffers no initiative penalty in relation to the character who threw him. The GM decides whether the target was Thrown some harmless distance but is now unhindered, or if he got out of the Thrower's grasp and is still within Reach of him. A character cannot Throw another character in an effort to hit another target (such as another character or a specific object), miss that target, but still inflict Throw damage on the Thrown person. A miss is a miss — the character chose a tactic that would have been especially effective if it had succeeded, so he has to

live with severe consequences (doing no damage to anyone, even the Thrown character) if he fails.

A character may want to Hold his Action to “block,” stop, or interrupt an incoming attack by Throwing the attacker. In this situation, apply the rules for stopping incoming attacks with Disarms (see 6E2 60).

Unlike Martial Throw (6E2 91), if a character uses this Maneuver to Throw another character, he gets no bonus to damage based on the Thrown character’s velocity, or his own velocity. (See also the *Trip* Combat Maneuver, below.)

RESISTING THROWS

Thrown characters have several ways to resist being Thrown, or to minimize the effects of a Throw.

ACROBATICS

A character may attempt to resist being Thrown if he has the *Acrobatics* Skill. He can keep his feet (or land on them) if he succeeds with an Acrobatics roll at -3. However, this doesn’t prevent him from taking damage from the Throw.

BREAKFALL

A Thrown character may reduce the damage taken from a Throw by half if he makes a Breakfall roll at -1 for every 2d6 of damage done by the Throw. (He can also use Breakfall to stand up without taking a Half Phase, but that requires a separate roll.) If the Breakfall roll fails, the character takes full damage from the Throw.

At at the GM’s option, if the character’s Breakfall roll succeeds by half, the Thrower does not get the standard benefit of being able to attack first if they share their next Phase.

POWERS

Many Powers enable a character to resist Throws in some way.

Clinging: Before a character can Throw a target who’s using Clinging to stick to something, he first has to overcome the Clinging’s STR (see 6E1 182) to “detach” the target.

Density Increase And Growth: The rules about STR and Throws, above, apply to characters using these Powers, as well as to permanently-heavy targets (such as characters who’ve bought a Large Size Template or a Mass Template; see 6E1 442).

Flight: If the target isn’t currently flying, has his Flight power available to him, and knows a Throw is coming, he can use his Flight to resist being Thrown: every 1m of Flight subtracts 1d6 of damage, and if the damage is reduced to 0d6, the target’s not Thrown down and suffers no negative effects from the Throw attack. If the target’s Surprised, or if he’s already using his Flight for something else (like moving through the air), he cannot do this.

TRIP

This Combat Maneuver allows a character to trip someone, sweep a target’s feet out from under him, or otherwise propel him to the ground without causing serious harm.

A character performing a Trip is at -1 OCV, -2 DCV. If his Attack Roll succeeds, the target falls to the ground at any point with 2m of the attacker chosen by the attacker. (The target may make an Acrobatics roll, at a penalty of -1 per point the Attack Roll succeeded by, to avoid falling to the ground; if the roll succeeds, the Trip has no effect at all.) Trip does not involve Grabbing the target or otherwise allow the character to maintain a grip on him.

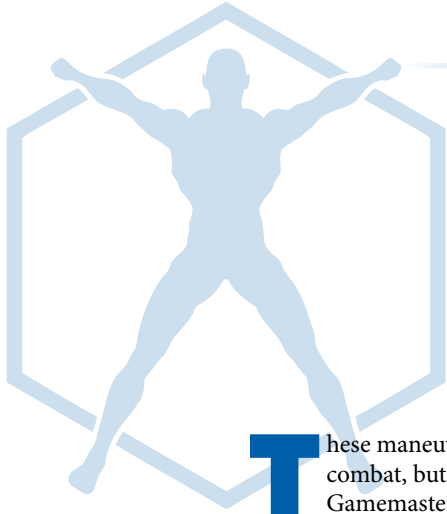
The target of a Trip doesn’t usually take any damage from the Maneuver (see below), but while on the ground he’s Prone (and thus at ½ DCV). He has to use a Half Phase Action to get back to his feet (or succeed with a Breakfall roll to do so as a Zero Phase Action). Trip does not affect the order of combat in later Phases the way Throwing a character can.

If the target of a Trip is moving when Tripped, he takes his velocity divided by 20m in dice of Normal Damage. (He can make a Breakfall roll to halve this damage; use the same rules as for Throws; see above.) Alternately or in addition, he may skid or slide in the direction he was moving and possibly collide with something to take greater damage (see *Collisions*, 6E2 72). The furthest he can skid is his Half Move or the remainder of his declared meters of movement (whichever is less) unless the GM rules otherwise based on the circumstances (for example, if he’s Tripped while running on an ice sheet).

At the GM’s option, in appropriate circumstances a character using Trip can conceal what he’s doing by succeeding with an Acting roll or Sleight Of Hand roll (or a DEX Roll at a -3 or greater penalty). In that case the target will think he tripped on his own, that someone else tripped him, or the like — the GM determines exactly what happens.

OTHER ATTACKS

Characters use this Maneuver when making any other attack not listed, including using Attack Powers such as Drain, Blast, Entangle, Flash, or other Powers that require an Attack Roll. To attack, the character should just make a normal Attack Roll, modified by any particular modifiers for the Power, Skill Levels used, or applicable Combat Modifiers.



OPTIONAL COMBAT MANEUVERS

These maneuvers add more flavor to combat, but require more work by the GM. Gamemasters who are just learning the *HERO System*, running for large numbers of players, or want to speed play shouldn't use them unless everyone in the game is comfortable with them.

unconscious, it does 1 BODY per Phase to the target if it's maintained. (See *Holding Breath and Drowning*, 6E2 130.)

A character may make a Choke one-handed, using the usual rules for Grabbing with only one hand (see above under *Grab*). This only affects the STR of the Grab part of the maneuver; it still does 1d6 NND damage.

CHOKE

This maneuver allows a character to grasp an opponent's head and neck and inflict NND damage. A Choke works just like a normal Grab for purposes of determining whether the victim escapes (for example, he gets an immediate Casual STR roll to break free and take no damage, and the OCV/DCV penalties for Grabbing/being Grabbed apply). However, it only immobilizes one "limb" — the head. Besides being Grabbed, the victim of a Choke takes the listed NND damage and cannot speak or shout. (The character using Choke cannot also Squeeze, Slam, or Throw the victim; applying the NND hold takes the place of that.) The defense against this NND is having rigid armor on the neck, Resistant Protection PD on the neck, or Life Support: Self-Contained Breathing. If the victim doesn't have one of these defenses, he takes all the damage rolled.

Choke is not a Constant attack. While the character can maintain the Grab from Phase to Phase like any other Grab, he has to make a new Attack Roll each Phase to do NND damage to the victim. A miss doesn't mean the victim's broken free, just that he somehow struggled or twisted and was able to avoid the NND effect.

A Choke prevents the use of headbutts. A Choke doesn't cut off the victim's Senses, but might interfere with them (*i.e.*, cause PER Roll penalties, as determined by the GM). It might cut off, or diminish the effectiveness of some powers (such as a sonic scream), but that's up to the GM, who should make the call in light of game balance considerations, common sense, and dramatic sense — a PC shouldn't be allowed to turn an Optional Combat Maneuver into a frequently-used Drain All Powers Emanating From The Head.

A character rendered unconscious by a Choke can be killed by continued application of the Maneuver. After a Choke has rendered the target

CLUB WEAPON

This maneuver allows a character to do Normal Damage with a weapon that ordinarily does Killing Damage. In essence, the character uses the "flat of the blade" or other blunt part of the weapon instead of the edge or point. The weapon does an amount of Damage Classes of Normal Damage equivalent to its Damage Classes of Killing Damage. For example, a great sword (2d6 Killing Damage) would do 6d6 Normal Damage when used with a Club Weapon maneuver.

Club Weapon may not work with all weapons. For example, a club with spikes all over it may not have any blunt surfaces, so a character couldn't use it to perform this Maneuver. Whether a character can perform Club Weapon with a given weapon is up to the GM.

USING RANGED WEAPONS

While Club Weapon is most applicable to melee weapons such as swords and axes, at the GM's discretion characters can use it with some Ranged weapons. For example, a character could use the haft of a throwing spear or the butt of a rifle to perform a Club Weapon attack. In this case, the GM may wish to assign a specific amount of damage to the "club," rather than convert the DCs directly.

For example, many firearms have high Damage Classes due to exotic ammunition or other factors that don't involve the size/shape/weight of the gun itself. Therefore they should do Club Weapon damage based on the type of firearm, rather than the DCs: a handgun does +1d6 Normal Damage; a submachine gun or carbine +2d6 Normal Damage; and a rifle, shotgun, or assault rifle +3d6 Normal Damage. This damage adds to the character's Normal Damage from STR, as if it were a Hand-To-Hand Attack.

COVER

This Maneuver allows the character to aim an attack successfully at an opponent, but not fire right away. It's used to simulate the common situation of holding someone at gunpoint, bowpoint, or swordpoint. Cover is usually limited to Ranged attacks, but in some circumstances characters can use HTH attacks to Cover a target. For example, a thief could Cover a victim by holding a dagger against the victim's throat.

USING COVER

To Cover an opponent, the character must declare his intention and then make an Attack Roll. He makes this roll at a -2 OCV penalty in addition to any other modifiers (such as the Hit Location penalty, if he aims at a specific Hit Location). If the attacker makes the roll, the target is Covered. The attacker does no damage then, but at any time thereafter, he may automatically do damage to the target — no additional Attack Roll is required, and doing the damage takes no time.

Example: *Defender shouts "Freeze!" at Lazer and tries to Cover him. Defender has a 7 OCV and Lazer has an 8 DCV. Lazer is standing 10m from Defender, so Defender must roll $7 + 11 - 8 - 1$ (for Range) - 2 (for the Maneuver) = 7 or less to hit. He rolls a 6, and successfully Covers Lazer. If Lazer doesn't surrender, Defender can automatically do damage to him.*

ESCAPING FROM COVER

A character can escape from being Covered. To do this, the Covered character must wait for (or arrange) a distraction. For example, any Presence Attack that equals the Covering character's PRE does the trick, but the defender is at -3d6 for any Presence Attack he makes (after all, he's at a big disadvantage). If the attacker is distracted, the two characters must make a DEX Roll Versus DEX Roll Contest (target first). If the attacker wins, the target remains Covered. If the target wins, he's no longer Covered. (Characters cannot Block or Dodge a Covered attack, because the attack's already been made.)

In some genres, such as martial arts campaigns, GMs may want characters to be able to escape from being Covered more easily. In this case, success in a Skill Versus Skill Contest (pitting the Covered character's Fast Draw, Sleight Of Hand, or DEX Roll against the attacker's PER Roll (with a Targeting Sense) or DEX Roll) allows a Covered character to escape.

DIVE FOR COVER

This Maneuver allows a character to get out of the way of explosions, Area Of Effect attacks, being englobed in a Barrier, and other attacks that cover a large area.

Using Dive For Cover

To use Dive For Cover, the character chooses a target point to move to, then makes a DEX Roll with a penalty of -1 for every 2m of distance moved (or fraction thereof). A character can only Dive For Cover up to half his maximum movement with the mode of movement used in the Maneuver.

If the DEX Roll succeeds, the character is at the designated target point when the attack goes off. He's considered to be prone (and thus at half DCV) until the next Phase in which he can act.

If the DEX Roll fails, the character is considered to be in the air at his starting location. This means he hasn't automatically avoided the attack, and if it hits him, the GM rolls 1d6 less for calculating Knockback (if the campaign uses the Knockback rules). It doesn't change his DCV or when he next acts (though if he Aborted to Dive For Cover, that obviously factors in). The "in the air" penalties and consequences apply until the character's next Phase. (Of course, he doesn't literally remain "in midair" the entire time — all this means is that the penalties and consequences of failing the Dive For Cover roll remain in effect until his next Phase.) At that point, he "lands" and is "prone"; he must spend a Half Phase to "get up." If he was hit while in midair, that may affect the situation by causing Knockback, Stunning him, or the like, and the GM should deal with that situation normally. If the attack has no significant effect on the character other than the loss of some STUN and/or BODY, he still "lands" in his next Phase as described above.

Dive For Cover is an Attack Action. A character Diving for Cover may not perform any other Maneuver (like Dodge or Block). A character can Abort to Dive For Cover.

Some attacks, such as Multiple Attack, involve a sequence of attacks directed at the target in which if one of the attacks misses, all subsequent attacks automatically miss. For these purposes, a successful use of Dive For Cover counts as a "miss" and ends the sequence of attacks.

A character cannot use Breakfall or Acrobatics to avoid the DCV penalty for Dive For Cover, or to avoid being prone after a Dive For Cover (though when he's allowed to stand up from being prone, he can use Breakfall to accomplish that as a Zero Phase Action). Nor may he use either Skill as a "Complementary Roll" for the DEX Roll to Dive For Cover.

DECLARING A DIVE FOR COVER

In most situations, a character must declare his Dive For Cover before his attacker makes an Attack Roll or announces what type of attack he's using — when the weapon's pointed at him but not yet fired, so to speak. Otherwise, problems may arise if a character declares some other defensive Action (primarily a Dodge or Block), then tries to switch to a Dive For Cover when he discovers his attacker's using an Area-affecting attack. While some Area-affecting attacks (such as grenades, flame-throwers, or Area-affecting attacks previously encountered) are obvious (and thus alert the character to Dive For Cover instead of Dodging or Blocking), others are not. The existence of the *Dive For Cover* Maneuver doesn't grant characters prescient knowledge of the types of attacks used against them.



A character can Dive For Cover two or more times in a row, provided the special effects and timing allow for that. For example, a character who Dives For Cover and ends up prone, but is attacked in a later Segment before he's had a chance to get to his feet, might not be allowed to Dive For Cover again, since he hasn't had a chance to reorient himself and get into a position that would allow him to move quickly again. But in some campaigns, the GM might let characters who are "prone" Dive For Cover by scrambling, rolling, or crawling out of the way.

LENGTH OF MOVEMENT

A character can only Dive For Cover up to half his maximum movement with the mode of movement used in the Maneuver. Making a Half Move before Diving For Cover doesn't affect how far a character can Dive For Cover with a mode of movement — he's still restricted to only half his maximum movement. For example, if Lt. Barrett has Running 20m, and he's already made a Half Move of 6m, he can still use Running to Dive For Cover a maximum of 10m (half of 20m). He can choose to Dive less than 10m if he wants to, but the rules don't force him to do so. If a character makes more than a Half Move, that's a Full Move and prevents him from Diving For Cover that Phase.

A character can Dive For Cover using his Noncombat Movement, unless the GM forbids this for reasons of game balance, dramatic sense, or the like. This allows him to Dive for up to half his Noncombat Movement distance. Doing this halves his DCV, making it more likely he'll be hit if the Dive For Cover fails.

TYPE OF MOVEMENT

Although Dive For Cover's name implies that characters use Running (ground movement) or Leaping to perform it, characters can use any type of movement (except Extra-Dimensional Movement, FTL Travel, or any form of MegaScaled movement) to Dive For Cover. The mode of movement used does not affect the need to make a DEX Roll, or modify the roll in any way.

Regardless of what form of movement a character uses to Dive For Cover, he's considered "prone" at the end of the Maneuver. He may still be standing, but due to disorientation and other factors suffers the usual penalties for being "prone." He must spend a Half Phase to get to his feet (or get his bearings) and is at ½ DCV until he does so.

If a character uses Leaping to Dive For Cover, the *Accurate Adder* has no enhanced effect (for example, it doesn't remove the need to make a DEX Roll, or add a bonus to the DEX Roll). Similarly, the *Position Shift Adder* provides no extra benefits.

PROTECTING OTHER CHARACTERS

A character can also use Dive For Cover to protect another character from an attack. He must Dive For Cover to a point between the attacker and the victim. He attempts the Dive For Cover roll normally. If he succeeds, he takes the damage from the attack — the attacker doesn't have to make an Attack Roll, he just rolls the damage, which applies normally to the character who Dove For Cover to "interpose" himself. If the Dive For Cover roll fails, the attacker must make his Attack Roll as normal to hit his intended target.

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SKILL LEVELS

A character cannot apply any type of Combat Skill Levels to the DEX Roll he makes when Diving For Cover, since CSLs only affect CV. Nor can a character buy 2-point Combat Skill Levels with Dive For Cover, since that type of Level only affects OCV. However, he can use applicable 3-point and more expensive CSLs to increase his DCV while Diving For Cover, if appropriate.

If a character has Skill Levels that can apply to DEX Rolls, he may use those to improve his DEX Roll when Diving For Cover, provided he hasn't already allocated them in the Segment when he uses the Maneuver. Typically this does *not* include Skill Levels with all Agility Skills or All Noncombat Skills, since a DEX Roll is a Characteristic Roll, not a Skill Roll. The GM can, at his option, treat the DEX Roll as an "Agility Skill" roll, thus allowing 5-point Agility Skill Levels or 8-point All Non-Combat Skills Levels to apply, but this is not recommended.

Non-Area Attacks

Dive For Cover is most useful for avoiding attacks that cover a large Area, such as Area Of Effect attacks. However, characters can use it to avoid regular (non-Area-affecting) attacks as well. For example, a character who desperately wants to avoid being chopped in two by an axe-wielding Denebian autochthon could Dive For Cover to get away from his attacker. If a character successfully Dives For Cover this way, the non-Area attack automatically misses; if the Dive For Cover roll fails, the attacker makes his Attack Roll at +2 OCV.

When a character Dives For Cover to avoid a non-Area attack, he's not required to literally dive behind cover, move beyond the range of the attack, or the like — all he has to do is travel far enough to get away from the effect of the attack. In many cases, moving 2m out of the way does the trick; in other cases, he may have to move further. The GM may, of course, establish a minimum distance based on the nature of the attack, or specify that the character has to Dive in a particular direction. For example, a character trying to Dive For Cover to avoid an attack by a spear-wielding opponent should have to Dive at least the length of the spear; Diving just 2m to the side might not remove a character from the arc of a swung greatsword. In any event, a clever opponent may try to take advantage of the character's ½ DCV if he simply dives a mere 2m away.

For Ranged non-Area attacks — such as most Blasts — the nature of the attack and the environment may restrict the character's ability to Dive For Cover. For example, if an attacker fires a Blast at a character from straight in front of him, and the only direction the character can Dive is straight back, the Dive For Cover may not help him — he might still be in the Blast's path. In that case, the GM might rule that the character has to be able to Dive at least 2m to the side to use the Maneuver with any chance of success. Or the

GM might rule that, based on the nature of the Blast, the character could Dive For Cover straight back and "hit the dirt," allowing the Blast to pass over him harmlessly. As always, common sense, dramatic sense, special effects, and the GM's discretion should apply.

HIPSHOT

This Maneuver is intended for those situations where a character just *has* to get off the first shot. To use it, a character sacrifices 1 point of OCV to get +1 DEX for this Phase *only* for the purpose of going first in the Phase. A character may not sacrifice more than one point of OCV this way. The character's DEX Roll and Agility Skill rolls aren't affected by making a Hipshot.

A character who wants to take a Hipshot must declare this at the beginning of the Segment in which he has a Phase so the GM can keep the combat in order. If two characters with the same DEX both declare a Hipshot, the GM should randomly determine who gets the first shot off.

Despite this maneuver's name, characters can use it with HTH attacks as well as Ranged attacks. Characters may use Hipshot with other Combat or Martial Maneuvers (though in most cases they simply use it with Strike).

Example: *The Sandman and Crossbow both have the same DEX, 26. The GM and the player have randomly determined who acted first each Phase. As a result, The Sandman has taken a couple of bad wounds, and he can't last much longer. He tells the GM he'll use Hipshot, so he sacrifices 1 point of OCV to get a DEX of 27 for purposes of going first. This gives him a guaranteed chance to strike first this Phase (unless Crossbow also uses a Hipshot, in which case they'll use the random determination method to see who goes first).*

Hipshot can only be used to make attacks, unless the GM rules otherwise.

PULLING A PUNCH

This Maneuver allows an attacker to Knock Out his opponent without permanently injuring him.

To Pull a Punch, an attacker takes a -1 OCV penalty for every 5d6 (or 5 DCs) in the attack. If the Attack Roll succeeds, the punch (or other HTH attack) does half the BODY it would normally do, and Knockdown and Knockback are calculated from this BODY. However, if the attacker makes his Attack Roll exactly, he does full damage to his target.

Example: *Orion wants to incapacitate a gang member without hurting him. He does a 9d6 punch, and declares he's Pulling his Punch. He's -2 OCV for the attack, giving him a final OCV of 4, the same as the gang member's DCV. Orion must roll an 11- to hit; if he rolls an 11 exactly the kid takes full damage (and probably has to go to the hospital).*

At the GM's option, characters can automatically Pull their punches without any OCV penalty. This is a good way to simulate four-color comic book combat and other campaigns where the characters are supposed to be larger-than-life good guys — penalizing such characters for trying to do the “right thing” by not severely injuring their opponents is usually unfair.

A character can Pull A Punch with a Ranged attack with the GM's permission. Characters may use Pulling A Punch with other Combat or Martial Maneuvers (though in most cases they simply use it with Strike).

REDUCING KNOCKBACK

At the GM's option, a character can Pull A Punch not to reduce damage, but to reduce the amount of Knockback an attack might do. For every 4m of Knockback (or fraction thereof) the character wishes to remove, he suffers a -1 OCV penalty. If the attack hits and does Knockback, reduce the Knockback distance traveled and damage suffered by the indicated amount.

Alternately, the GM can make things even easier and safer: the character takes a -2 penalty to his OCV, and if his attack hits, it does no Knockback at all.

ROLL WITH A PUNCH

Roll With A Punch allows a character to take less damage from a HTH attack. This Maneuver is unique because a character may perform it *after* he's been struck by an opponent's attack (*i.e.*, after the opponent's Attack Roll succeeds, but before he rolls damage).

To Roll With A Punch, the character must make an Attack Roll against his attacker's OCV (like Block); this roll has a -2 OCV penalty. If successful, the character takes only half the STUN and BODY that the attack would have normally done. (Halve the total after defenses have been applied.) However, the attacker rolls one less die for Knockback (making it more likely the character takes Knockback). A character may not Roll With A Punch against multiple attacks; he can only use the Maneuver to reduce the effects of single attack.

Unless the GM rules otherwise, the effects of Rolling With A Punch apply to any sort of HTH Combat attack — physical punches, a sword, poisoned claws, an energy gauntlet, or the like. However, the Maneuver's most appropriate for attacks that do damage from physical impact (such as an actual punch), and the GM may restrict Rolling With A Punch to such attacks if he feels that makes more sense.

A character may Abort to Roll With A Punch. However, he cannot do so if he's unable to act or Abort to an Action. For example, if he's tried to Dodge or Block the attack and failed, he cannot Roll With A Punch because he's now unable to act or Abort. A character cannot Roll With A Punch after an unsuccessful Block or Dodge, whether he Aborted to the Block or Dodge or not.

This Maneuver is most appropriate for Superheroic campaigns, but is also applicable to Heroic campaigns.

SNAP SHOT

This Maneuver allows a character to move after making an attack (which is normally not allowed) — the character ducks out from Behind Cover (see 6E2 43), makes an attack, and then ducks back behind cover. It's normally only used with Ranged attacks, but may, with the GM's permission and in the right circumstances, be used in HTH Combat as well. Snap Shot requires a Full Phase, and characters can use it with other Combat Maneuvers (for example, a character could use Multiple Attack while Snap Shooting).

To make a Snap Shot, the character must start fully Behind Cover near a corner, edge, or opening in whatever he's hiding behind. The opening or edge must be within 1m of the character. He steps out (on his Phase and DEX) and attacks, using the modifier for Snap Shot (-1 OCV) in addition to whatever other modifiers he might have (for the weapon or maneuver he uses, for example). He gets his full DCV (modified, if necessary, by any other maneuvers he is using), and an attacker's OCV will also be affected by the fact that he's partially Behind Cover.

The character may only fire at targets he's aware of, although he may make a PER Roll to spot previously unknown targets. After this combat action, he's exposed to enemy attack for the rest of the Segment in which he attacked. On the Segment after the Snap Shot he may duck back Behind Cover (at the same DEX at which he made his Snap Shot).

STRAFE

This Maneuver allows a character to make a Ranged attack while performing a Full Move. It simulates the running-and-gunning of action movies, mid-air superheroic combat between energy projectors, and many similar fast-paced fighting scenes.

To use Strafe, the character must first plot his entire movement path. It doesn't matter whether he moves toward the target, away from him, perpendicular to him, or any other direction. Then he moves and makes his Attack Roll with his Ranged attack. Hit or miss, the character finishes moving at the end of his movement path. The character must be able to move at least 2m to Strafe.

While Strafing, a character is at -2 DCV and an OCV penalty equal to his velocity divided by 6m (for example, a character Running at 12m velocity is at -2 OCV, one Flying at 30m velocity is at -5). The Range Modifier also applies, and should be calculated from where the character begins moving (unless the GM rules otherwise).

If a Strafe succeeds, the target takes the damage from the Ranged attack. The Maneuver does not

increase or decrease the attack's damage or effect, nor does the character performing the Strafe take any damage from doing so.

A character may not perform Strafe with Extra-Dimensional Movement, FTL Travel, Teleportation, or any MegaScaled movement. However, he can use Strafe at Noncombat Movement speeds with other forms of movement (though this means he has OCV 0 before the Maneuver's penalty applies; see 6E2 36).

Strafe is its own Combat Maneuver. Unless the GM rules otherwise, it can't be combined with other Maneuvers. For example, a character can't Strafe and Multiple Attack, or Strafe and Haymaker. If a character cannot perceive his target with a Targeting Sense when he begins his Strafe, he has to make a PER Roll as soon as he might be able to perceive him. This typically requires a Half Phase, so the character can only make a Half Move as part of his Strafe.

Unless the GM rules otherwise, characters cannot buy Combat Skill Levels specifically with Strafe. They have to buy CSLs with the attacks they Strafe with, then apply them when Strafing with those attacks.

The GM should monitor the use of Strafe carefully, and forbid it if necessary to maintain game balance. It's intended to allow for exciting, dynamic combat scenes, not to allow a character to repeatedly attack his enemies while remaining out of range of their attacks.

SUPPRESSION FIRE

Characters may only use this Maneuver with attacks capable of Autofire. Basically, a character uses this Maneuver to “hose down” an area with bullets, energy bolts, or what have you so that anyone coming into that area is automatically attacked. Suppression Fire simulates the classic “Cover me!” situation in movies, where one character sprays a hail of bullets at the enemy to give another character a chance to move without being fired at.

USING SUPPRESSION FIRE

To use Suppression Fire, the character defines an Area that he's firing through. Find his OCV to hit that Area, taking into account the normal modifiers for using Autofire over an Area (6E2 42). In addition, he suffers a -2 OCV penalty for performing Suppression Fire.

Suppression Fire takes a Half Phase and is an Attack Action. The character must fire into the defined Area the maximum number of shots he can fire with the Autofire power/weapon being used, unless the GM rules otherwise. The shots aren't equally divided into the Area; they're considered to be fired into the defined Area as a whole. Since Suppression Fire can last until the character's next Phase, the character fires that many shots *each Segment*, not just in Segments when he has a Phase. He must use the same number of attacks in every Segment in which he uses Suppression Fire. He must expend END

or Charges for each shot made. (If he's using an attack that costs END instead of Charges, the character should declare how many “shots” he's firing, with a minimum of one per 1m radius “zone” in the Area.)

Anyone (or anything) who enters the Area covered by Suppression Fire is automatically attacked once for each 1m radius “zone” he moves through. There's no way to “sneak” through a zone, move through a Area on a Segment in which the attacker does not have a Phase, or run through any part of the Area without getting attacked. Several targets may take damage, even if they enter the area on different Segments. The attacker must roll to hit; he makes one Attack Roll per 1m radius zone the target moves through. The attacker's OCV is determined by the number of zones being fired into, plus the -2 OCV Maneuver penalty. The target's DCV is normal, and each target can only be hit once per zone per Segment.

The maximum number of hits a character can obtain with Suppression Fire in a Segment equals the number of shots fired in that Segment. Once he rolls that many successful Attack Rolls against targets moving through the affected Area, by definition he cannot hit any more targets. A character using Suppression Fire cannot decline to make an Attack Roll against a target in the area — in each Segment, he must make one roll per 1m radius zone that every target moves through until he's used up all his hits for that Segment. However, if two targets enter the “Suppression Fire zone” at the same time, the character can choose which one to make his Attack Rolls against first. If any issues of timing arise, the GM determines which targets the character can (or must) attack first.

A character cannot “overlap” his Suppression Fire so he can attack a target more than once per zone. Autofire Skills have no effect on Suppression Fire.

PINNING TARGETS DOWN

To be hit by Suppression Fire, a target has to move into, out of, or through the “Suppression Fire zone,” or take some other Action that indicates movement (such as attacking the character who's using Suppression Fire, or most other targets). If he doesn't move in any way, the fire has him “pinned down” — which is often the point of the maneuver anyway. The GM determines what Actions, if any, a “pinned down” target can take without exposing himself to the Suppression Fire.



MARTIAL MANEUVERS

Any character can use the basic Combat Maneuvers, but only those who have received special training, or have a particular aptitude for HTH combat, know Martial Arts. Many of these Maneuvers are improved versions of standard Combat Maneuvers; a few provide new abilities.

Martial Arts is a Skill — characters have to purchase Martial Maneuvers at the cost listed in the sidebar on 6E1 82. Characters must spend a minimum of 10 Character Points on Martial Maneuvers.

Martial Arts can represent many things. It most often represents advanced HTH Combat training, whether received from an ancient Chinese master at a hidden temple deep in the Himalayas, an unarmed combat specialist in the military, a skilled practitioner of elven swordfighting, or any of hundreds of other sources. It can also simulate the standard maneuvers taught to warriors who use a particular type of weapon — instead of using the basic Strike maneuver, they use these advanced maneuvers. Martial Arts could even simulate a character who has an innate fighting ability of some sort; this is particularly good for ferocious monsters and beasts, whose skill with

their claws and fangs could be represented with a few specific Martial Maneuvers.

When a character uses a Martial Maneuver with a weapon, substitute the weapon's damage for "STR" listed in the Damage/Effects column, and consider any added damage as added Damage Classes, not added d6s. For example, a Martial Strike with a weapon does Weapon +2 DC. See *Adding Damage*, 6E2 99, for more information.

The GM should keep common sense in mind when dealing with Martial Arts damage. In the real world, some martial artists are capable of incredible feats, but that doesn't mean PCs should be able to duplicate those feats effortlessly just because they've spent a few points on Martial Maneuvers. Even though a character can do, for example, 9d6 with his Offensive Strike, he shouldn't necessarily be able easily to kick down a wall or the bars of a jail cell. Even if game terms say the wall only has 3 PD, 3 BODY per section, or the jail bars are only 6 PD, 6 BODY, a little dose of common sense tells you that people, even trained martial artists, can't routinely kick down walls or smash jail bars with their bare hands. Regardless of whether it's possible *in game terms* to do it, the GM can, and should, tell players their characters can't do these things, because it would be just plain ridiculous. If it suits the tone of the campaign, let them do it, but in more "realistic" games, feel free to ignore what the rules say and tell the players *No*.



Explanation Of Martial Maneuvers

Many Martial Maneuvers — such as Choke Hold, Defensive Strike, Martial Strike, Offensive Strike, Martial Dodge, Martial Block, and Martial Grab — are essentially just “improved” versions of Standard Combat Maneuvers. They either provide an OCV bonus, a DCV bonus, a damage bonus, and/or some other enhanced ability (such as the extra Grabbing STR from a Martial Grab). They function identically to the regular Combat Maneuvers of similar name, but with different modifiers. See the descriptions of the relevant Standard Combat Maneuvers for more information.

Here’s how the various Martial Maneuvers work. They do not cost END to use, though the character has to pay END for any STR used with them.

CHOKE HOLD

Choke Hold is an advanced version of the *Choke* Optional Combat Maneuver; it has better CV modifiers and does more damage. Extra Damage Classes applied to a Choke Hold only increase the NND damage done; they cannot increase the STR of the hold.

DEFENSIVE STRIKE, MARTIAL BLOCK, MARTIAL DODGE, MARTIAL STRIKE, OFFENSIVE STRIKE

These function identically to the regular Combat Maneuvers of similar name, but with different modifiers to OCV, DCV, and damage. At the GM’s option, a character who knows Martial Block can add its CV bonuses to any attempt he makes to Deflect (but not to Reflect).

KILLING STRIKE

This Maneuver allows a character to do Killing Damage to the target without using a weapon. It includes things like breaking bones, throat punches, snapping a victim’s neck, and so on. Rules regarding adding STR (as if to an HKA) and what defenses apply to Killing Damage apply to the damage done by a Killing Strike.

MARTIAL MANEUVERS

Maneuver	Phase	OCV	DCV	Damage/Effect
Choke Hold	1/2	-2	+0	Grab One Limb; 2d6 NND (see text)
Defensive Strike	1/2	+1	+3	STR Strike
Killing Strike	1/2	-2	+0	HKA 1/2d6
Legsweep	1/2	+2	-1	STR +1d6 Strike; Target Falls
Martial Block	1/2	+2	+2	Block, Abort
Martial Disarm	1/2	-1	+1	Disarm; +10 STR to Disarm roll
Martial Dodge	1/2	—	+5	Dodge, Affects All Attacks, Abort
Martial Escape	1/2	+0	+0	+15 STR vs. Grabs
Martial Grab	1/2	-1	-1	Grab Two Limbs, +10 to STR for holding on
Martial Strike	1/2	+0	+2	STR +2d6 Strike
Martial Throw	1/2	+0	+1	STR +v/5; Target Falls
Nerve Strike	1/2	-1	+1	2d6 NND (see text)
Offensive Strike	1/2	-2	+1	STR +4d6 Strike
Sacrifice Throw	1/2	+2	+1	STR Strike; You Fall, Target Falls
+1 Damage Class	—	—	—	Adds to all Martial Maneuvers
Weapon Element	—	—	—	Allows use of Martial Arts with weapons

EXPLANATION OF TERMS

Phase: How long it takes to perform the Maneuver (usually either a Half Phase [1/2] or a Full Phase [1]).

OCV (Offensive Combat Value): The Maneuver’s modification to OCV. For example, a +1 OCV means a character has +1 to his OCV when making an Attack Roll with the Maneuver.

DCV (Defensive Combat Value): The maneuver’s modification to the attacker’s DCV. For example, performing a Haymaker decreases the attacker’s DCV, making it more likely he’ll be hit.

Effects: The damage or other effect done by the Maneuver. STR means the Maneuver does STR/5 in d6 of Normal Damage.

Abort: A character can forfeit his next Phase to perform this Maneuver in a Segment when he doesn’t have a Phase. For a more detailed explanation, see *Aborting An Action*, 6E2 21.

Dash (“—”): That column is not relevant to that maneuver.

LEGSWEEP

This Maneuver allows a character to knock an opponent's legs out from under him, dashing him painfully to the ground. In some respects it's like a Martial Arts version of the *Trip* Combat Maneuver, but it doesn't add any damage from velocity. (See also *Martial Throw*, below.)

MARTIAL DISARM

This Maneuver is identical to a normal Disarm, except that the character receives a bonus to his STR only for purposes of determining the outcome of the Disarm STR Versus STR Contest. The character has his normal STR for all other purposes. The character also receives a bonus to his DCV.

As an optional rule, GMs might allow characters with Martial Disarm to use the Maneuver's STR bonus to resist being Disarmed. This option prevents fencers and similar characters from constantly Disarming each other.

MARTIAL ESCAPE

This Maneuver helps a character escape from Grabs. The character adds the STR from this maneuver to his own STR when rolling BODY to break out from a Grab; the additional STR has no other effect. At the GM's option, characters can also use the STR bonus from Martial Escape when attempting to escape from an Entangle. See *Other Combat Effects*, 6E2 124, for more information about escaping from Grabs and Entangles.

MARTIAL GRAB

This maneuver is identical to a normal Grab (the standard CV penalties for Grabbing or being Grabbed apply), except that the character receives a bonus to his STR. This bonus only helps the character hold the target; it does not add to damage done by squeezing or throwing the victim.

MARTIAL THROW

This Martial Maneuver is in effect an advanced version of the *Throw* Combat Maneuver (see above) that applies only to characters (it can't be used to throw ordinary objects at characters). It has a better DCV modifier, and it exploits velocity to add to the damage done. Unlike a regular Throw, a character doesn't have to Grab a character before using Martial Throw on him.

NERVE STRIKE

This Maneuver allows an attacker to strike particularly vulnerable or sensitive parts of a target's body. In game terms, this is represented by NND damage. The target takes full damage from the Nerve Strike unless he has rigid armor protecting his vulnerable spots or PD Resistant Protection.

At the GM's option, characters can develop other Nerve Strike maneuvers that are affected by different defenses. For example, solid ear coverings, Resistance, or rigid Resistant PD protecting certain parts of the body might be acceptable defenses against a variant Nerve Strike.

SACRIFICE THROW

This maneuver is basically identical to a Martial Throw. However, the victim cannot be Thrown any distance — he must land within 2m of the Thrower — and the Thrower himself ends up prone where he was standing. A character cannot use Breakfall to keep his footing when he performs a Sacrifice Throw, but can use Breakfall in a subsequent Phase to get to his feet without using a Half Phase.

WEAPON ELEMENT

Some martial arts styles teach the use of weapons with Martial Maneuvers. In fact, some styles, like Fencing, require a weapon. In the latter case, the character need not pay Character Points to use the style's Martial Maneuvers with a weapon — that's what he learned when he bought the Maneuvers (he can't use them barehanded). Other styles assume unarmed use of Maneuvers as a default. To use their Maneuvers with a weapon, the character must purchase a *Weapon Element* for each class of weapons he wishes to use with his Maneuvers. Use the subcategories in the Weapon Familiarity Table (6E1 95) to determine what categories of weapons a Weapon Element can be bought for. For example, to use a martial arts style with three subcategories (Blades; Axes/Maces/Hammers/Picks; Staff) costs 3 Character Points (1 point per weapon category). In Heroic campaigns, a character can only buy a Weapon Element for weapons he has a WF with.

A Weapon Element, if purchased, applies to all Martial Arts a character knows. However, a "free" Weapon Element gained by purchasing a weapon-based style such as Fencing, does not carry over to any other maneuvers or styles. Having a Weapon Element with a weapon does not remove or negate a weapon's inherent OCV penalty (if it has one).

+1 DAMAGE CLASS

Characters may improve their Martial Maneuvers by buying Extra Damage Classes. Each Extra DC adds one Damage Class to any Maneuver (such as Martial Strike, Killing Strike, or Martial Throw), or +5 STR to any Maneuver that grants extra STR for limited purposes (such as Martial Grab).

An Extra Damage Class adds to *all* of a character's Martial Maneuvers — he doesn't have to purchase Extra DCs maneuver by maneuver. Characters cannot purchase half an Extra DC, nor apply Limitations to Extra DCs. A character can choose not to use his Extra DCs if he wants to do less damage than normal.

Martial Arts Styles

Martial Maneuvers are often grouped together into *styles* that represent classic martial arts such as Karate, Wrestling, or Kung Fu. Characters need not buy every Maneuver and Skill listed in a given Martial Arts package to be practitioners of a style, but must spend at least the minimum 10 Character Points on Martial Maneuvers. Characters who spend at least 15 Character Points on the style's Martial Maneuvers, have a Knowledge Skill of the style on at least an 11- roll, and have bought at least one 3-point Combat Skill Level with the style can be considered “black belts.” True mastery involves buying all Maneuvers and related Skills as well as several CSLs with the style.

Players may, with the GM's permission and approval, create their own martial arts styles. Such styles should have some sort of unifying theme or doctrine and contain at least four appropriate Martial Maneuvers.

BOXING

Although normally confined to the sporting arena, Boxing is an effective martial art that concentrates exclusively on punches and blocks. A boxer is an effective fighter in a straightforward battle of upright punches, but may be at a disadvantage against more well-rounded martial artists because of his lack of throws, holds, escapes, and similar maneuvers.

BOXING

Cost	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4	Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
3	Clinch	-1	-1	Grab Two Limbs, +10 STR
4	Cross	+0	+2	STR + 2d6 Strike
5	Hook	-2	+1	STR + 4d6 Strike
	Paramedics			
	KS: Boxing			

DIRTY INFIGHTING

This isn't a typical martial art; rather, it's a collection of low blows and dirty tricks used by streetfighters and barroom brawlers.

DIRTY INFIGHTING

Cost	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4	Disarm	-1	+1	Disarm, +10 STR
4	Kidney Blow	-2	+0	½d6 HKA
4	Low Blow	-1	+1	2d6 NND ([defense is Resistant PD on groin])
4	Punch	+0	+2	STR + 2d6 Strike
5	Roundhouse	-2	+1	STR + 4d6 Strike
3	Throw	+0	+1	STR + v/5, Target Falls
	Streetwise			
	WF: Blades (switchblades and the like)			

FENCING

Fencing is the European art of swordfighting. All the maneuvers in this package require a sword; the character cannot use them barehanded (except possibly the Parry, which could be made with objects other than a sword with the GM's permission). You can use Fencing as an example of how to design other weapons-based styles, such as Escrima or Kenjutsu.

FENCING

Cost	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4	Froissement	-1	+1	Disarm, +10 STR
4	Parry	+2	+2	Block, Abort
5	Slash	+0	+2	Weapon +2 DC Strike
5	Thrust	+1	+3	Weapon damage
	WF: Blades			
	KS: Fencing			

GENERIC MARTIAL ARTS

This package represents the “generic” martial arts style practices by many comic book superheroes, pulp fiction adventurers, and the like.

GENERIC MARTIAL ARTS

Cost	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4	Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4	Dodge	—	+5	Dodge, Affects All Attacks, Abort
5	Kick	-2	+1	STR +4d6 Strike
4	Punch	+0	+2	STR +2d6 Strike
3	Throw	+0	+1	STR + v/5; Target Falls

JUJUTSU

Jujutsu (better known as its more sport-oriented form, Judo) is a defensive art that focuses on throws and holds. Typically the *jujutsuka* slams his opponent to the ground and then applies a choke hold.

JUJUTSU

Cost	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4	Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4	Choke Hold	-2	+0	Grab One Limb; 2d6 NND
4	Disarm	-1	+1	Disarm, +10 STR
4	Escape	+0	+0	+15 STR Escape
4	Joint Lock	-1	-1	Grab Two Limbs, +10 STR for holding on
3	Sacrifice Throw	+2	+1	STR Strike; Target Falls; You Fall
3	Slam	+0	+1	STR + v/5, Target Falls
4	Strike	+0	+2	STR +2d6 Strike
	Breakfall			
	KS: Jujutsu			

KARATE

Karate is a fast, straightforward Okinawan style designed to defeat an enemy as quickly as possible.

KARATE

Cost	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4	Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4	Disarm	-1	+1	Disarm, +10 STR
4	Dodge	+0	+5	Dodge all attacks, Abort
4	Knifehand Strike	-2	+0	½d6 HKA
4	Punch/Snap Kick	+0	+2	STR + 2d6 Strike
5	Side/Spin Kick	-2	+1	STR + 4d6 Strike
WF: Common Melee Weapons				
KS: Karate				

KUNG FU

Originating in China, Kung Fu is one of the oldest and most diverse martial arts styles ever created. It has hundreds of substyles, some concentrating on rapid strikes, others on defense or circular attacks.

KUNG FU

Cost	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4	Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4	Disarm	-1	+1	Disarm, +10 STR
4	Dodge	+0	+5	Dodge all attacks, Abort
4	Escape	+0	+0	+15 STR vs. Grabs
3	Joint Lock/Grab	-1	-1	Grab Two Limbs, +10 STR
5	Kick	-2	+1	STR +4d6 Strike
4	Knife Hand	-2	+0	½d6 HKA
3	Legsweep	+2	-1	STR +1d6, Target Falls
4	Punch	+0	+2	STR +2d6 Strike
3	Throw	+0	+1	STR +v/5, Target Falls
4	Tien-hsueh Strike	-1	+1	2d6 NND
Acrobatics				
Breakfall				
WF: Common Melee Weapons				
KS: Kung Fu				

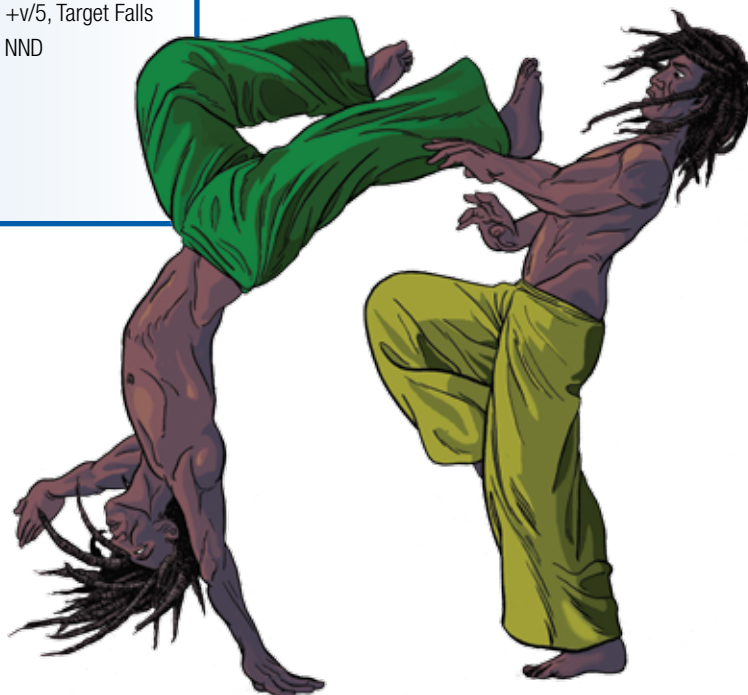
WRESTLING

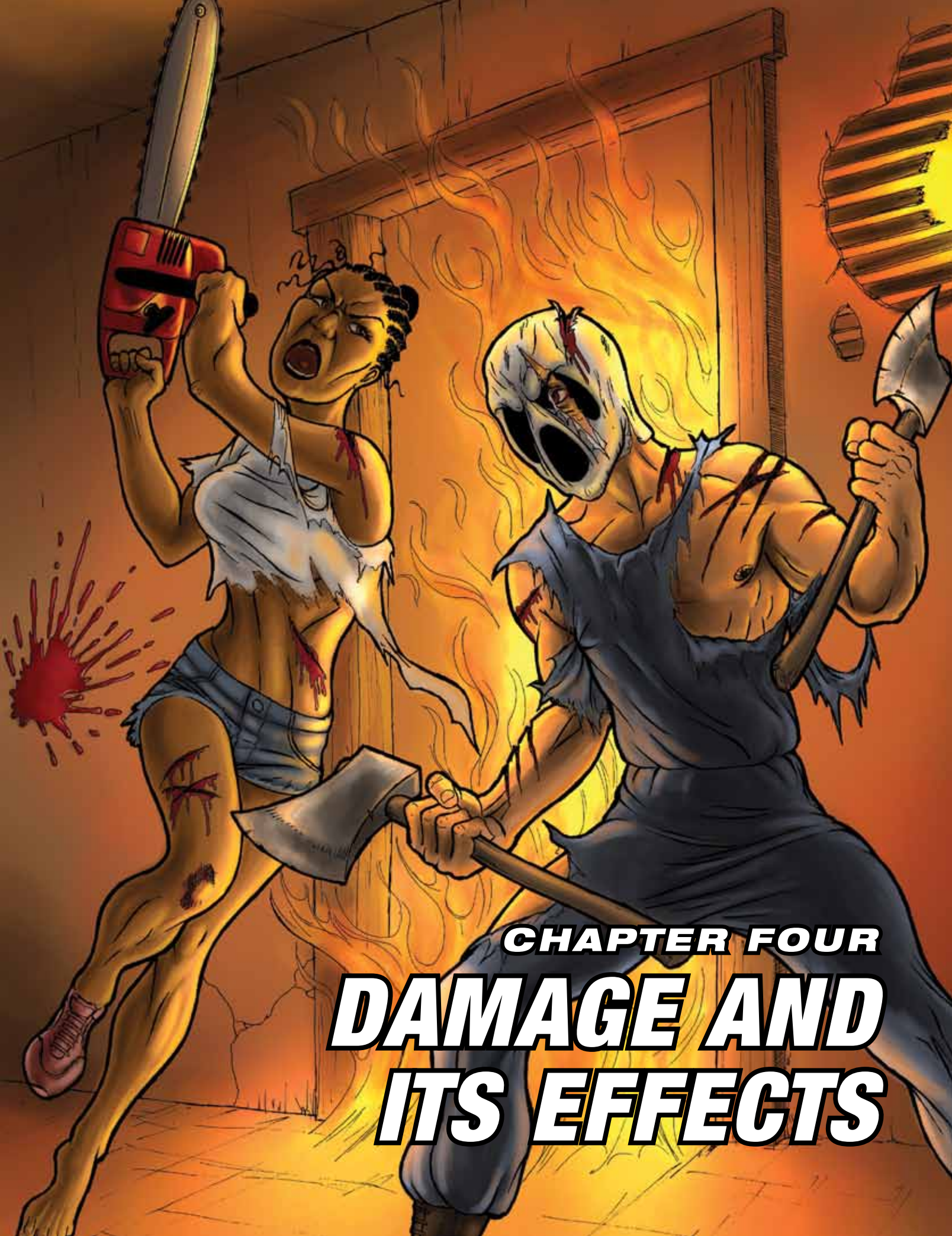
Wrestling, one of the world's oldest martial arts with variants in hundreds of countries and cultures across the globe, concentrates on bringing an opponent to the ground and holding him there.

WRESTLING

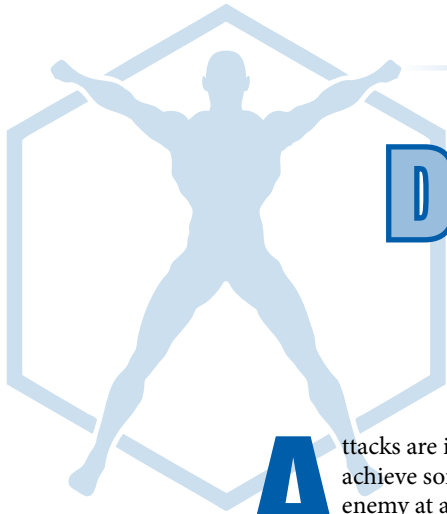
Cost	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4	Choke Hold	-2	+0	Grab One Limb; 2d6 NND
4	Escape	+0	+0	+15 STR Escape
3	Hold	-1	-1	Grab Two Limbs, +10 STR for holding on
3	Sacrifice Throw	+2	+1	STR Strike; Target Falls; You Fall
3	Slam	+0	+1	STR + v/5, Target Falls
Breakfall				
KS: Wrestling				

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CHAPTER FOUR
DAMAGE AND
ITS EFFECTS



DETERMINING DAMAGE

Attacks are intended to do damage (or achieve some other effect that puts the enemy at a disadvantage). The amount of damage an attack does, and thus the extent of its effect (if any) upon the target, is determined by rolling dice. Therefore, the damage done by any attack varies — an attack might do an enormous amount of damage one Phase, and little or no damage the next Phase. The variation in damage from rolling dice makes combat more interesting; it can also provide the GM with details to use in describing the battle (an attack that does a lot of damage may have hit a vital spot; one that does almost none may really have been more of a nick than a direct hit). And of course it's fun to roll dice.

Although there are many different types of attacks and ways to attack someone in the *HERO System*, in most cases the damage done is one of two types: Normal Damage or Killing Damage. This is explained in detail below, but basically, Normal Damage is caused by things like punches, clubs, and Blasts; it's intended primarily to Stun the target. Killing Damage is done by things like bullets, swords, and claws, and is intended to injure or kill the target.

COUNTING THE DICE

One of the things that may slow down your *HERO System* combat is counting the damage dice — particularly if you're in a game where characters have high-damage attacks, such as a superhero game. Here are a few tips to make counting the damage dice quicker and easier:

- Group dice into 10s, such as 6-4, 3-3-2-2-, 5-5, and so forth. Then you can quickly add up the 10s and any remainder dice.
- When counting Normal Damage BODY, compare 6s and 1s. If they're equal, then the BODY damage equals the number of dice rolled (the "0 BODY" from the 1s averages out the "2 BODY" from the 6s). If you have more 6s than 1s, you do that many more points of BODY than the dice rolled; if you have more 1s than 6s, you do that many BODY less than the dice rolled.

How Many Dice Do I Roll?

For characters with powers that they use to attack, the amount of damage depends on the number of dice of effect purchased or Active Points in the Power used to build the ability (which in turn depends on the number of Character Points spent on the Power).

For *weapons*, the number of dice of damage depends on the weapon type. Refer to the weapons tables in Chapter Seven of 6E2 for the damage ratings for some typical weapons. STR may add to the damage done with melee weapons.

For *unarmed combat*, the number of dice of damage depends on the character's STR, plus any extra damage for the type of Combat Maneuver used, Martial Arts, and the like. Divide the character's STR by 5 to get the base number of dice of Normal Damage done by the character. For example, a character with a STR of 20 could roll up to $20/5 = 4d6$ of Normal Damage.

Of course, characters can buy STR in totals that aren't multiples of 5. If a character's STR is over half way to the next multiple of 5 (*i.e.*, the STR rating ends in 3, 4, 8, or 9), he can add $\frac{1}{2}d6$ of effect. For instance, someone with a STR of 23 would do $4\frac{1}{2}d6$ of damage with a punch ($23/5 = 4.6$). A character doesn't have to use his full STR when attacking; he can also Pull his Punch (see 6E2 87) to reduce the damage his STR does.

Damage Class

Different dice of damage are not the same — 1d6 of Killing Damage is much more likely to injure a target than a 1d6 Normal Damage attack. However, it's necessary for game purposes to establish a rough comparison between different types of damage.

The *Damage Class* ("DC") of an attack provides a way to do this. An attack's DC is based on the number of Active Points in it divided by 5. Thus, a Blast 3d6 and Ranged Killing Attack 1d6 (each with 15 Active Points) are both Damage Class 3 — or, in more game-oriented terms, each has 3 DCs. On the average, any attack of a given Damage Class is equally as harmful for the target as any other attack of that Damage Class — but of course, since different attacks have different effects, sometimes one will be more desirable or "better" than another in a particular situation or for a particular purpose.

The basic rule for Damage Classes is: 1 DC equals 5 Active Points in the Power. Thus, a power with 45 Active Points has 9 DCs (which would be 9d6 Normal Damage or 3d6 Killing Damage). Put another way, each d6 of Killing Damage is 3 DCs, each d6 of Normal Damage is 1 DC.

DAMAGE CLASSES OF ADVANTAGED POWERS

Determining the Damage Classes of an attack with Power Advantages that directly affect how the victim takes damage is a little more difficult. Each DC remains equal to 5 Active Points, so to figure out how many DCs each dice of damage is worth, you must determine the Active Point cost of 1d6 worth of the Power. To do this, multiply the cost of 1d6 of the Power by the value of all Advantages that directly affect how the victim takes damage (see below). For example, the Power

Advantages Attack Versus Alternate Defense and *Armor Piercing* would be applied, while *Reduced Endurance* or *Indirect* would not. Then divide that number by 5, and you'll know how many DCs it takes to get an entire 1d6 worth of that Power.

Example: To determine the Damage Class of an NND Blast, start with the base Power — Blast, which has 1d6 per DC. NND for Blast is usually a +1 Power Advantage, so each d6 costs $(5 \times (1 + 1)) = 10$ Active Points. Dividing 10 Active Points by 5 Active Points yields a 2. Therefore it takes 2 DCs to get 1d6 Blast NND, so each DC of a Blast NND is $\frac{1}{2}$ d6 damage.

Now something trickier. Assume a character has a Severe Transform bought with the Power Advantage Penetrating. Each d6 of Severe Transform costs 15 Character Points, and Penetrating

DAMAGE CLASS TABLE

DC	Active Points	Normal Damage (5/1d6)	6¼ per 1d6	7½ per 1d6	Drain, MBlast (10/1d6)	12½ per 1d6	Killing Damage (15/1d6)	20 per 1d6	22½ per 1d6
1	5	1d6	½d6	½d6	½d6	0d6	1 point	0d6	0d6
2	10	2d6	1½d6	1d6	1d6	½d6	½d6, 1d6-1	½d6	½d6-1
3	15	3d6	2d6	2d6	1½d6	1d6	1d6	1d6-1	½d6
4	20	4d6	3d6	2½d6	2d6	1½d6	1d6+1	1d6	1d6-1
5	25	5d6	4d6	3d6	2½d6	2d6	1½d6, 2d6-1	1d6+1	1d6
6	30	6d6	4½d6	4d6	3d6	2d6+1	2d6	1½d6	1d6+1
7	35	7d6	5½d6	4½d6	3½d6	2½d6	2d6+1	2d6-1	1½d6
8	40	8d6	6d6	5d6	4d6	3d6	2½d6, 3d6-1	2d6	2d6-1
9	45	9d6	7d6	6d6	4½d6	3½d6	3d6	2d6+1	2d6
10	50	10d6	8d6	6½d6	5d6	4d6	3d6+1	2½d6	2d6+1
11	55	11d6	8½d6	7d6	5½d6	4d6+1	3½d6, 4d6-1	3d6-1	2½d6-1
12	60	12d6	9½d6	8d6	6d6	4½d6	4d6	3d6	2½d6
13	65	13d6	10d6	8½d6	6½d6	5d6	4d6+1	3d6+1	3d6-1
14	70	14d6	11d6	9d6	7d6	5½d6	4½d6, 5d6-1	3½d6	3d6
15	75	15d6	12d6	10d6	7½d6	6d6	5d6	4d6-1	3d6+1
16	80	16d6	12½d6	10½d6	8d6	6d6+1	5d6+1	4d6	3½d6
17	85	17d6	13½d6	11d6	8½d6	6½d6	5½d6, 6d6-1	4d6+1	4d6-1
18	90	18d6	14d6	12d6	9d6	7d6	6d6	4½d6	4d6
19	95	19d6	15d6	12½d6	9½d6	7½d6	6d6+1	5d6-1	4d6+1
20	100	20d6	16d6	13d6	10d6	8d6	6½d6, 7d6-1	5d6	4d6+1

...and so forth.

The “6¼ per 1d6” is for Normal Damage attacks with a +¼ Advantage.

The “7½ per 1d6” Column is for Normal Damage attacks with a +½ Advantage.

The “12½ per 1d6” column is for Normal Damage attacks with a +1½ Advantage or 10-point attacks with a +¼ Advantage.

The “20 per 1d6” column can be used for Killing Damage attacks with a +¼ Advantage, 10-point attacks with a +1 Advantage, and the like.

The “22½ per 1d6” column can be used for Killing Damage attacks with a +½ Advantage.



is a +½ Advantage, so the total number of Character Points per 1d6 is 22. Divide that by 5, and you discover it takes a little over 4 DCs to add 1d6. Adding or subtracting 1 DC would therefore have no effect (there's no such thing as a quarter Damage Class), but a change in roughly 2 DCs would change the Transform by ½d6 (see the Damage Class Table for a specific breakdown).

ADVANTAGES THAT DIRECTLY AFFECT DAMAGE

As noted above, for purposes of calculating the DCs of an Advantaged attack, the GM determines which Advantages “directly affect how the victim takes damage.” Typically the following Advantages qualify, though the final decision is up to the GM: Area Of Effect, Armor Piercing, AVAD, Auto-fire, Boostable Charges, Constant, Cumulative, Damage Over Time, Does BODY, Does Knockback, Double Knockback, Increased STUN Multiplier, MegaScale in some instances, Penetrating, Sticky, Time Limit, Transdimensional, Trigger, Uncontrolled, Usable As Attack, Variable Advantage, and Variable Special Effects.

Normal Damage Attacks

Punches, Blasts, blunt weapons like clubs, and concussion explosions are Normal Damage attacks. This type of damage tends to knock an opponent out (by causing STUN damage) rather than kill him (by causing BODY damage).

For Normal Damage, the total on the dice is the amount of STUN damage the attack does. To determine how much BODY damage it does, look at the numbers rolled on the dice: a 1 is 0 BODY; a 2-5 is 1 BODY, and a 6 is 2 BODY. Thus, a 6d6 Normal Damage attack that rolls 6, 5, 4, 4, 2, and 1 does 22 STUN and 6 BODY. The number of BODY done is usually close to the number of dice rolled.

Example: *Randall Irons uses his 25 STR to hit the nefarious Doctor Fang Shen. Because Shen is irredeemably evil, Randall decides to do his full damage. Randall rolls 25/5 = 5d6 for damage. He rolls the dice and the following numbers come up: 2, 6, 3, 5, 4. The total of the dice is 20, so 20 STUN is applied to Shen. The 2, 3, 5 and 4 do 1 BODY each, and the 6 does 2 BODY, so the total BODY damage is 6 BODY.*

If a character has to roll a half die (½d6), damage is determined differently. Roll the half die separately, or use a different color or size die to identify it as the ½d6. The face value of the die is multiplied by one-half and rounded up to get the number of STUN done. The ½d6 does 1 BODY if the roll is a 4, 5, or 6.

Killing Damage Attacks

Claws, knives, bullets, and similar attacks do Killing Damage. This type of damage is more likely than Normal Damage to kill an opponent.

Damage for Killing Damage attacks is determined differently from Normal Damage attacks. The total of the dice is the number of BODY applied to the target. To determine the STUN done, the character rolls a STUN Multiplier — ½d6 — and multiplies the result by the amount of BODY done.

Example: *Armadillo slashes a policeman with his claws, doing an HKA 2d6. The dice rolled are 3 and 4, for a total of 7 BODY. Armadillo then rolls ½d6 for his STUN Multiplier, rolling a 3. Thus, the STUN damage done is 7 x 3 = 21 STUN.*

In some campaigns (particularly Heroic ones), the GM may prefer to use the Hit Location Table (see 6E2 108) instead of a rolled STUN Multiplier. In that case, use the STUN Multiplier listed on the table instead of rolling one.



TOOLKITING: CHANGING THE STUN MULTIPLIER

The STUN Multiplier is set at ½d6 so that Killing Damage attacks are, on average, better at doing BODY damage but worse at doing STUN damage than a Normal Damage attack of the same Damage Classes. That works well for most campaigns, but in other games GMs may want Killing Attacks to be even more effective. Some possible ways to vary the STUN Multiplier include:

- ½d6+1
- 1d6-1 (minimum of 1)
- a flat STUN Multiplier, such as x3 or x2½ (this saves some time rolling dice)

4

NORMAL DAMAGE

Each die for
Normal Attack

Each die for Normal Attack	BODY done
1	0 (zero)
2-5	1
6	2

ADDING DAMAGE

Characters in *HERO System* combats have several ways to increase the damage their attacks do, such as Combat Skill Levels, Martial Maneuvers, and some Combat Maneuvers. The rules in this section explain how to add damage to an attack.

For ease of reference, the Adding Damage rules typically refer to adding Damage Classes. For purposes of these rules, there's no such thing as a "half Damage Class." Characters can only add damage in whole DCs (though in the case of Killing Damage and Advantaged attacks, some steps on the Damage Class tables may involve half-dice). For example, a character cannot use one Combat Skill Level to add "half a Damage Class," because there's no such thing as a half Damage Class. Similarly, when a character calculates the damage bonus from velocity, or the effect of using STR to add damage by exceeding a weapon's STR Minimum, the normal *HERO System* rounding rules *do not* apply. A character has to have a full 6m/10m of movement (depending on the Maneuver used), or full 5 extra points of STR, to get +1 DC — anything less than that has no effect.

Methods Of Adding Damage

The primary methods for increasing the damage done by an attack are: Combat Skill Levels; Haymaker and Martial Maneuvers; movement (velocity); and Strength.

COMBAT SKILL LEVELS

Combat Skill Levels (6E1 69) can increase the damage done by a HTH or Ranged attack or Maneuver. A character can use *two* CSLs to increase the damage done by a HTH or Ranged attack (whether Killing Damage or Normal Damage) by *one* Damage Class. For instance, a KA 1d6+1 weapon would do 1½d6 if a character used two CSLs to increase its damage; 2d6 if he used four CSLs, and so on.

HAYMAKER AND MARTIAL MANEUVERS

The *Haymaker* Combat Maneuver and many different Martial Maneuvers can add a certain amount of Damage Classes (typically two or four) to a character's attack. Maneuvers add damage at the standard rate, +1 DC for each +1 DC from the Maneuver, regardless of the type of damage done. For example, a Martial Strike (+2 DCs) applied to an Normal Damage 3d6 club (3 DCs) or an HKA 1d6 sword (3 DCs) increases either attack to 5 DCs (i.e., 5d6 for the club, 1½d6 for the sword).

Martial Maneuvers that don't add dice of damage — such as Killing Damage strikes, NND Strikes, Exert-based maneuvers, and so on — can't be used to add damage to weapons or other attacks. If the Maneuver doesn't add DCs to an attack — if it allows the character to do a different type of damage than Normal (e.g., Killing or NND) — it's not going to add to weapon damage at all. Its function isn't to add, but to differentiate.



TOOLKITING: ADDING DAMAGE

The rules for Adding Damage are written with two goals in mind. First, they should be fun. Players love to have characters who can do lots of damage, and to build characters that can be effective in combat in various ways. The *HERO System's* flexibility lets them do both. Second, the rules should be relatively easy to apply during game play. Unlike the character creation rules, where calculations only have to be performed once (and not during a game session), the Adding Damage rules can come up multiple times in every combat.

Flexibility and simplicity in the rules make the game more enjoyable for responsible players... but also make the rules subject to abuse by irresponsible gamers. It's not difficult to create a cheap attack and then increase its damage significantly using the Adding Damage rules, but that's not their intent, nor within their spirit. The GM should pay close attention to how characters create and add damage to attacks, and should restrict or forbid any powers or tactics that cause problems. To put it another way, regardless of what the rules say, players shouldn't try to buy small attacks and greatly increase them with the Adding Damage rules... and even if they try, the GM shouldn't let them get away with it.

As a general guideline, the GM might want to consider this: unless he rules otherwise, a character cannot more than double the Damage Classes of his base attack, no matter how many different methods he uses to add damage. (In some campaigns, such as most Heroic games, this "Doubling Damage" suggestion could even be a hard-and-fast rule, subject to any appropriate exceptions.) "Base attack" means:

- For most Combat and Martial Maneuvers, the base attack is the character's Normal Damage from STR (though the GM typically grants exceptions for Move By/Through and other movement-based attacks, Martial Maneuvers in some campaigns, and the like). An HA usually counts as base STR damage.
- If the character uses a Killing Attack or other Attack Power, that's the base attack.
- If a character uses a weapon he hasn't paid Character Points for (as in most Heroic campaigns), the weapon's damage is the base attack (the STR Minimum and Real Weapon rules, 6E2 199-200, also affect this). If a character pays points for a weapon, other appropriate Adding Damage rules apply.
- Extra DCs bought for Martial Maneuvers count as base damage for unarmed combat. (If a Maneuver's used to add damage to a weapon, the weapon is the base damage and the Maneuver affects it according to the standard rule described in the main text.)

Example: *Matterhorn (STR 60) decides to take advantage of the Adding Damage rules. He buys a dagger — HKA ½d6, Armor Piercing (+¼). Using his 60 STR, he can increase the dagger's damage to 3½d6! Fortunately for the campaign, Matterhorn's GM is no fool; he recognizes that it's unbalancingly effective to let a character have an HKA 3½d6 for 6 Character Points. (While it's true Matterhorn has also paid 50 Character Points for his STR, that has plenty of usefulness on its own.) He rules that Matterhorn can't do more than double the DCs of his dagger, so regardless of how much STR he uses it can't do more than HKA 1d6+1, Armor Piercing damage.*



MOVEMENT

Maneuvers involving movement, such as Move Bys and Move Throughs, add extra damage because of their velocity and momentum. The character must pay END for any movement he uses and for the STR involved.

Each Maneuver's description indicates how many Damage Classes it adds: velocity/10 for Move Bys; velocity/6 for Move Throughs. For example, if a character with Flight 30m performs a Move Through with his STR 20, he does 9d6 damage (4d6 from STR + 5d6 from the Move Through). If he uses a sword (HKA 1d6+1) to do a Move By, he adds +3 DCs damage from velocity, thus increasing the sword's damage to 2d6+1.

When a character performs a Move By/Through (or other movement-based Maneuver) with a weapon, divide his STR by 2 for purposes of calculating extra damage or DC/OCV penalties based on the weapon's STR Minimum (6E2 199). The weapon, not the character, takes the one-third or one-half damage from the maneuver. If the BODY damage done to the target exceeds three times (3x) the weapon's base Damage Classes, the weapon breaks.

STRENGTH

Strength (STR) adds to the damage done by HKAs: +1 DC for every 5 STR used with it (or to put it another way, +1d6 HKA for every 15 STR used).

In Heroic campaigns, a character using a weapon doesn't add his STR to a weapon's HKA damage automatically — it only adds damage if it exceeds the weapon's STR Minimum (6E2 199). For every full 5 points of STR a character has above the weapon's STR Minimum, he may add +1 DC of Killing Damage (or, for weapons like staffs that do Normal Damage, +1d6 of Normal Damage).

Example: *Brak the Barbarian (STR 21) wields a dagger (1d6-1 [2 DCs], STR Min 6). Since his STR is 15 above the STR Minimum, he can add +3 DCs to the dagger's damage. Ordinarily that would mean increasing the damage to 5 DCs, or 1½d6. However, since the STR Minimum rules are involved, he cannot do more than double the base damage of the dagger (2 DCs). Therefore he only increases its damage to 4 DCs, or KA 1d6+1.*

Later, Brak wields a battle axe (2d6 [6 DCs], STR Min 13). His STR is 8 points above the STR Minimum. That means he can only add +1 DC of damage, since he needs 5 full points of STR above the STR Minimum to add a DC. Thus, he does KA 2d6+1 with the battle axe (if he has other ways to add damage, he can increase the axe's damage up to a maximum of 4d6, or 12 DCs). If he had STR 23, he could add +2 DCs, making the axe do KA 2½d6 damage.

STR AND MANEUVERS COMBINED

A character may want to add damage to his HKA with a Combat or Martial Maneuver that would normally add to his STR damage. For example, Move By/Through and Martial Strike all involve adding damage to STR damage.

In this situation, the character doesn't get to apply his STR damage twice (*i.e.*, once to the HKA, then once to the Maneuver before it adds damage to the HKA). The HKA counts as the base damage. The character then increases that with STR. Then he may use the bonuses from the Maneuver to increase the damage further (but he doesn't get to add his STR to the Maneuver first).

Example: *Chan Hseng has STR 15, a Martial Strike (STR +2d6 damage), and a sword (HKA 1½d6, STR Minimum 10). He uses his STR to increase the damage by +1 DC (to 2d6), then uses his +2 DCs from the Martial Strike to add another +2 DCs (to 2½d6). He doesn't get to add +7 DCs (5d6 for STR + Maneuver, plus another +2d6 from the Maneuver itself) to the HKA, since he's already added his STR.*

OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES

The GM can also give a character bonus DCs for extraordinary circumstances or Maneuvers. For example, if a knight in a Fantasy campaign wants to have his horse rear right before he attacks, so that the momentum of the horse's action adds to the force of his attack, the GM might add +1 DC to the attack to reflect that momentum.

Adding Damage To Attacks With Advantages

Adding damage becomes a little more complicated if the attack has Advantages that directly affect how the victim takes damage. (See 6E2 98 for a suggested list of these Advantages.)

First, calculate the Damage Classes in the attack, using the rules on 6E2 96. The Damage Class Table on 6E2 97, make this an easy task in most cases, but you may have to do some quick calculating for heavily-Advantaged attacks and other unusual situations. (If possible, do this in advance so you don't slow down the game.)

Second, add damage according to the rules below. You can use the accompanying Damage Class Quick-Reference Table to quickly determine how much damage a character does with an Advantaged Normal Damage or Killing Damage attack. Add up the total Advantages, then find the appropriate column. Go down the column until you locate the attack's dice of damage. Then count one step down the column for each +1 DC, and that tells you the final damage of the Advantaged attack plus added DCs.

DAMAGE CLASSES QUICK-REFERENCE TABLES

NORMAL DAMAGE

DC	+0	+¼	+½	+¾	+1
1	1d6	½d6	½d6	½d6	½d6
2	2d6	1d6	1d6	1d6	1d6
3	3d6	2d6	2d6	1½d6	1½d6
4	4d6	3d6	2½d6	2d6	2d6
5	5d6	4d6	3d6	3d6	2½d6
6	6d6	5d6	4d6	3½d6	3d6
7	7d6	5½d6	4½d6	4d6	3½d6
8	8d6	6d6	5d6	4½d6	4d6
9	9d6	7d6	6d6	5d6	4½d6
10	10d6	8d6	6½d6	5½d6	5d6
11	11d6	9d6	7d6	6d6	5½d6
12	12d6	9½d6	8d6	7d6	6d6
13	13d6	10d6	8½d6	7½d6	6½d6
14	14d6	11d6	9d6	8d6	7d6
15	15d6	12d6	10d6	8½d6	7½d6
16	15d6	13d6	10½d6	9d6	8d6
17	17d6	13½d6	11d6	9½d6	8½d6
18	18d6	14d6	12d6	10d6	9d6
19	19d6	15d6	12½d6	11d6	9½d6
20	20d6	16d6	13d6	11½d6	10d6

KILLING DAMAGE

DC	+0	+¼	+½	+¾	+1
1	1 point	1 point	—	—	—
2	½d6, 1d6-1	½d6	1 point	1 point	1 point
3	1d6	1d6-1	½d6	½d6	1 point
4	1d6+1	1d6	1d6	1d6-1	½d6
5	1½d6, 2d6-1	1d6+1	1d6	1d6	1d6-1
6	2d6	1½d6	1d6+1	1d6	1d6
7	2d6+1	2d6-1	1½d6	1d6+1	1d6
8	2½d6, 3d6-1	2d6	2d6-1	1d6+1	1d6+1
9	3d6	2d6+1	2d6	1½d6	1d6+1
10	3d6+1	2½d6	2d6+1	2d6-1	1½d6
11	3½d6, 4d6-1	3d6-1	2d6+1	2d6	2d6-1
12	4d6	3d6	2½d6	2d6+1	2d6
13	4d6+1	3d6+1	3d6	2d6+1	2d6
14	4½d6, 5d6-1	3½d6	3d6	2½d6	2d6+1
15	5d6	4d6-1	3d6+1	3d6-1	2d6+1
16	5d6+1	4d6	3½d6	3d6	2½d6
17	5½d6, 6d6-1	4d6+1	4d6-1	3d6+1	3d6-1
18	6d6	4½d6	4d6	3d6+1	3d6
19	6d6+1	5d6-1	4d6+1	3½d6	3d6
20	6½d6, 7d6-1	5d6	4d6+1	4d6-1	3d6+1



COMBAT SKILL LEVELS, MANEUVERS, AND MOVEMENT

Martial Maneuvers, Haymakers, Combat Skill Levels, and velocity add damage at their usual rate — for example +4 DCs for a Haymaker, +1 DC for 2 CSLs, or velocity/6 in DCs. However, since the Advantages affect how you determine the Damage Classes in the attack, these methods have less impact than they would on an un-Advantaged attack.

This rule also applies in Heroic campaigns to damage added when a character's STR exceeds the STR Minimum of a weapon that has Advantages that affect damage.

Examples: *Chan Hseng wields a knife (HKA ½d6, Armor Piercing). He uses his Martial Strike (+2 DCs) to increase the damage done by the knife. An HKA ½d6 attack is normally two Damage Classes, so adding +2 DCs would make it a 1d6+1 attack. But this one is AP, so Chan consults the Damage Classes Quick-Reference Table and discovers that adding +2 DCs to an HKA ½d6 with a +¼ Advantage makes it an HKA 1d6.*

Smashtacular has the Advantage Double Knockback (+½) on his 40 STR. He decides he's going to Haymaker his punch (Strike). Haymaker adds +4 DCs. With 40 STR he does 8d6 damage, which is 8 DCs, so if it weren't Advantaged he'd do a 12d6 Haymaker. But he has to account for the +½ Advantage, so he consults the Damage Classes Quick-Reference Table. He finds 8d6 in the +½ column and counts four steps down for adding +4 DCs. That tells him he does 10½d6 damage with his Haymakered punch.

Rogash the Swift, who can move 20m, does a Move Through with his spear (HKA 2d6, Armor Piercing). A Move Through adds velocity/6 in DCs, so he can add +3 Damage Classes due to movement. Furthermore, the spear has a STR Min 10 and he's STR 30, so he can add another +1 DC from STR (remember, his STR is halved for these purposes when performing a Move Through with a weapon). Looking at the Damage Class Quick-Reference Table's +¼ column, he finds that he does HKA 3d6 — the entry in the table four steps down from 2d6.

STRENGTH

For purposes of the Adding Damage rules, when a character uses an Advantaged HA or Advantaged HKA, that attack is the base damage. STR adds damage at the rate of +1 DC per 5 STR used, following the rules above.

Example: *Spirit Dragon (STR 20) knows the Fiery Phoenix Fist technique, which lets him surround his fist with mystic flame (and thus greatly increases the power of his punch). The Fiery Phoenix Fist is an HA +8d6, Armor Piercing, Penetrating. Those two Advantages are worth +¾ total, so when Spirit Dragon adds the +4 DCs from using his 20 STR with the HA, he does 10d6 damage.*

NAKED ADVANTAGES

If a character buys a naked Advantage for an HKA or other attack, he can still apply damage from STR, Martial Maneuvers, velocity, and the like only if he buys the naked Advantage so that it's powerful enough to cover the whole attack, including damage from additive factors like Martial Maneuvers.

Example: *Brak's cousin Thorgos the Semi-Civilized has an HKA 2d6 sword and 15 STR. So, he normally does HKA 3d6 with his sword. If he wants a naked Armor Piercing Advantage for the overall 3d6 attack, it costs 11 points ((45 x ¼) - 45). If he has enough damage he can add from Martial Maneuvers to increase the damage to HKA 4d6, he can't use his naked Advantage unless he restricts himself to HKA 3d6 — it's not bought to cover a larger attack. If he wants it to cover an HKA 4d6 attack, it has to cost 15 points ((60 x ¼) - 60).*

ADVANTAGES FOR STR

If a character has an Advantage for his STR but hasn't bought the same Advantage for an attack he adds damage to with STR, the Advantage doesn't apply to the attack at all (not even to the damage dice added by STR), unless the GM rules otherwise. It only applies to the damage done by the character's STR when he uses STR by itself. For example, a character with 20 STR, Armor Piercing, who uses an Offensive Strike (+4d6) or Haymaker (also +4d6) does 8d6 Normal Damage, with no Armor Piercing effect.

If a character has bought the same Advantage for his STR as for an HA or HKA that he wants to add damage to, just add the dice together, and the Advantage applies to the entire attack. For example, STR 20, Armor Piercing (4d6) plus an HA +6d6, Armor Piercing does 10d6 Armor Piercing damage. On the other hand, if the Advantages on STR and on the HA/HKA do not match exactly, then STR adds according to the standard rule above.

TAKING DAMAGE



Now that you know how to dish out damage, here's how to take it.

Basically, there are two types of defenses in the *HERO System*:

- Normal Defenses, which only protect against Normal Damage. They include a character's natural PD and ED.
- Resistant Defenses, which protect against both Normal Damage and Killing Damage. They include Resistant Protection, and PD and ED for which a character has bought the Advantage *Resistant* (+½). In Heroic campaigns, Resistant Defense usually indicates some form of worn armor.

Another important distinction is between *physical damage* (such as punches, bullets, swords, falling, clubs, and the like) and *energy damage* (such as fire, lasers, Blasts, acid, and the like). Defenses usually only protect against one type of damage or the other — a character's natural Physical Defense (PD) only works against physical attacks, and his natural Energy Defense (ED) against energy attacks.

Normal Damage Attacks

Both Normal Defenses and Resistant Defenses protect a character from Normal Damage. A character's main form of Normal Defense are his natural PD and ED. These can be supplemented by defenses bought as Powers (for example, Limited forms of PD and ED, or Resistant Protection).

PD (and physical Normal and Resistant Defenses) protects against physical Normal Damage; ED (and energy Normal and Resistant Defenses) protects against energy Normal Damage. Subtract the character's total applicable defense from the total STUN done by the attack, and again from the total BODY done by the attack.

Example: A troll hits Chiron with a club; the attack does 6 BODY and 23 STUN. He has 4 PD plus leather armor with PD 3, so he takes $23 - (4 + 3) = 16$ STUN and $6 - 7 = -1$ or 0 BODY.

Killing Damage Attacks

Only Resistant Defenses offer full protection against Killing Damage. A character's natural PD and ED do not affect the BODY of Killing Damage (unless they're made Resistant with the *Resistant Advantage*).

A character may apply his applicable Resistant Defenses against the BODY and STUN done by a Killing Damage attack. However, even if he has no Resistant Defense, he may *also* apply his Normal Defenses to reduce the STUN of the attack.

Example: A Vegan shoots Andarra (3 ED) with its maser (RKA 2d6) and hits her in a location not covered by her ED 6 body armor. The Vegan rolls 6 BODY and 12 STUN. Since Andarra has no body armor in that area, and thus no applicable Resistant Defense, she takes 6 BODY and 9 STUN — her natural ED offers no protection against the BODY of the Killing Damage, but does reduce the STUN she takes.

The Vegan's second shot does 8 BODY and 24 STUN, but it hits Andarra's body armor this time. Andarra subtracts her body armor's ED 6 from the BODY done: $8 - 6 = 2$ BODY gets through. Then she totals her natural ED 3 and the body armor's ED 6 and subtracts the total (9) from the STUN: $24 - 9 = 15$ STUN gets through.

Minimum Damage From Injuries

Regardless of whether an attack does Normal Damage or Killing Damage, a character automatically takes 1 STUN for every 1 point of BODY damage that gets through his defenses. He can Recover this STUN normally; he doesn't have to heal the BODY damage first.

Example: Ogre has PD 40, but only 5 of it is Resistant. He gets shot by a .44 Magnum revolver and takes 10 BODY, 30 STUN. After applying his defenses, he would normally take 5 BODY, 0 STUN. Because he took BODY damage, he takes a minimum of 1 STUN per point of BODY taken, so he takes 5 STUN regardless of his defenses.

Other than this automatic (and usually temporary) loss of STUN, the loss of BODY doesn't affect a character's STUN. A character can have 0 BODY or negative BODY and still have lots of STUN — he's dying, but awake and active.

TAKING DAMAGE

Here's a summary of the rules on taking damage:

1. If the attack does Normal Damage (fists, clubs, Blasts):

- a. Add all applicable forms of Defense — both Normal and Resistant — together to determine the character's total Defense.
- b. Subtract the character's total Defense from the STUN damage done by the attack. The remainder is how much STUN damage he suffers.
- c. Subtract the character's total Defense from the BODY damage done by the attack. The remainder is how much BODY damage he suffers.

2. If the attack does Killing Damage (claws, blades, guns):

- a. Determine how much of the character's Defense is *Resistant* (meaning it protects against Killing Damage). Resistant Protection and defenses with the *Resistant* Advantage provide Resistant Defense; so does armor the character wears (chainmail or plate armor, for example).
- b. Subtract the character's Resistant Defense from the BODY damage done by the attack. The remainder is how much BODY damage he suffers.

- i. A character's Normal Defenses, including his PD and ED (unless modified by the *Resistant* Advantage), do not reduce the BODY from Killing Damage, even if he has Resistant Defenses.

- c. Add all applicable forms of Defense — both Normal and Resistant — together to determine the character's total Defense. Subtract his total Defense from the STUN damage done by the attack. The remainder is how much STUN damage he suffers.

3. If the attack does No Normal Defense (NND) damage:

- a. If the character has the applicable defense, he takes no damage at all.
- b. If the character doesn't have the applicable defense, he takes all the damage.

Some Advantages, such as *Armor Piercing*, *Penetrating*, or *Hardened*, may affect how damage applies to defenses.

Attack Modifiers

Some Power Advantages enable attacks to ignore (partially or fully) a character's defenses. These Advantages include *Armor Piercing*, *Attack Versus Alternate Defense*, *Penetrating*, and so forth. Similarly, there are a number of Power Limitations (such as *Reduced Penetration*) which affect the amount of damage an attack does. For a full description of how these Modifiers work, see *Power Modifiers*.

EFFECTS OF DAMAGE

There are four major effects of damage. In order of severity, they are Stunning, Knockout, Injury, and Death.

Stunning

If the STUN done to a character (after subtracting defenses) is less than or equal to his Constitution (CON), there's no effect other than the loss of STUN. If the STUN done to a character by a single attack (after subtracting defenses) exceeds his CON, he's *Stunned*.

A Stunned character's DCV and DMCV instantly drop to ½ (as do the modifiers for making Placed Shots against him). At the end of the Segment, any of his Powers that aren't Persistent, and any Skill Levels of any type, turn off. The character remains Stunned and can take no Action until his next Phase (he cannot even Abort to a defensive Action). A character who's Stunned or recovering from being Stunned can take no Actions, take no Recoveries (except his free Post-Segment 12 Recovery), cannot move, and cannot be affected by Presence Attacks. Stunned characters typically retain their grip on objects they are holding, but this may depend on the object being held (heavier ones are dropped more often than light ones) and the nature of the attack.

A character is Stunned by any sufficiently large loss of STUN, no matter how he loses it. STUN damage from a Blast or Killing Attack, reduction of STUN due to a Drain STUN, loss of STUN due to a Dependence or Susceptibility, and the pain of an Mental Blast, to name just a few, can all Stun a target.

At no point does a character suffer BODY damage because of the amount of STUN damage he's taken. STUN is STUN and BODY is BODY, and taking STUN, even in massive amounts, doesn't cause a character to take BODY damage. (But see 6E2 84 regarding choking a character to death.)

A Stunned (or Knocked Out) character doesn't necessarily fall down or collapse. It all depends on the "special effect" of being Stunned or Knocked Out, so to speak. However, the GM may rule that a Stunned character falls down — that's a common sense (and dramatic sense) interpretation of many situations that Stun a character.



RECOVERING FROM BEING STUNNED

A Stunned character must take a moment to clear his head and recover from the effects. This is called *recovering from being Stunned*.

Recovering from being Stunned requires a Full Phase, and is the only thing the character can do during that Phase. A character can recover from being Stunned in the Segment in which he was Stunned if he had a Phase in that Segment and his Phase has not yet occurred (in that case his Constant Powers won't turn off, since he won't still be Stunned at the end of the Segment). If a character becomes Stunned while Holding an Action, he cannot use his Held Action to recover from being Stunned — he simply loses it. A character doesn't recover from being stunned when he takes a Post-Segment 12 Recovery.

In the character's next full Phase after becoming Stunned, he recovers from being Stunned when his DEX occurs in the Segment. He regains his full DCV (and Placed Shot modifiers return to normal), but he still cannot act until his next Phase — recovering from being Stunned is all he can do that Phase. However, after recovering from being Stunned, a character may, if he wishes, Abort to a defensive Action (even in the same Segment in which he recovers from being Stunned).

Example: Andarra (DEX 20, SPD 3) is Stunned by an attack on Segment 6. She must use her Phase on Segment 8 to recover; she recovers on DEX 20 (so an enemy attacking her in Segment 8 with, say, DEX 15 would have to hit her at her full DCV). Andarra cannot take any other Action until her next Phase on Segment 12, but may Abort her Phase in Segment 12 in Segments 8 (after her DEX occurs), 9, 10, or 11 if she so desires.

If Andarra were Stunned in Segment 4 by an opponent who attacked on DEX 24, she would recover from being Stunned on her Phase in Segment 4, since she hadn't yet acted in that Phase.

A character may be hit by an attack in the Phase in which he'll recover from being Stunned before getting to do so (*i.e.*, by another character whose DEX is higher than his). If the character takes no damage from the attack after applying his defenses, he may still recover from being Stunned as normal. However, if the character takes any STUN or BODY damage from the attack, he cannot recover from being Stunned that Phase; he must try to do so on his next Phase instead. (At the GM's option, this also occurs if a character suffers any similar effect, such as losing INT to a Drain INT or taking Knockback.)

STUNNING AND MOVEMENT

Technically, a Stunned character immediately stops moving at the location he was at when attacked. He doesn't take any damage from this, though depending on the circumstances he may soon (for example, a flying character begins to fall). For greater "realism," have the character tumble along the ground in the direction he was moving, decelerating at 1m per 5m moved; if he happens to hit something, he takes velocity/10 in d6 of Normal Damage (to a maximum dice equal to the PD + BODY of the object he slams into).

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If a character is Stunned, and takes enough damage to be Stunned *again* before he gets to recover from being Stunned, he doesn't have to recover twice — he was already Stunned, so he can't be "Stunned more." One recovery from being Stunned takes care of both.

If a character is Stunned by a Constant attack, he can recover from being Stunned if he has a Phase in a Segment in which his attacker doesn't (and therefore in which he doesn't take damage from the Constant attack).

Recovering from being Stunned is *not* the same thing as taking a Recovery. A character regains no STUN when he recovers from being Stunned, he merely shakes off the effects of being Stunned (such as having ½ DCV). A character can recover from being Stunned even if he cannot breathe or holds his breath.

There's no limit to the number of times a character can be Stunned and recover from being Stunned. Nor is there any limit to how much negative STUN a character can accrue, but the GM can establish a reasonable one (such as negative the character's starting STUN, or some multiple thereof) if appropriate or desirable.

Knockout

If a character's STUN total is reduced to zero or below (whether by one attack or multiple attacks), he is *Knocked Out*.

When a character is Knocked Out, his OCV, DCV, and MCV are instantly reduced to zero (Placed Shot modifiers against him are halved), and any attack that hits him does 2x STUN, just as if he were Surprised while out of combat. (The 2x STUN effect applies to any Knockback damage the character takes from the attack that Knocked him Out, unless the GM rules otherwise.) At the end of the Segment, any of his powers that aren't Persistent turn off, and he drops any held objects.

If a character is only barely Knocked Out (down to -10 STUN), he's not completely unconscious — in fact, it's more like he's deeply Stunned. Depending upon the character and the nature of the attack, he may even be on his feet, wobbly but still standing, as he tries to shake off the effects of the attack. He's dimly aware of what's going on around him, but is too woozy and dazed to take any action or maintain any power. He can make a PER Roll to perceive something really important, but otherwise he cannot interact with the world. He can't move, Dodge, take any Actions, or do anything but take Recoveries.

If the character's been Knocked Out further (below -10 STUN), he's completely unconscious and has lost contact with the world around him — he's out cold. He falls down, unable to keep his feet at all. A character in this state of unconsciousness can be killed automatically as a Full Phase Action by any character with the means to do so (a Killing Attack or other powerful attack) who makes a successful Attack Roll against the unconscious character.

Regardless of how severely the character's been Knocked Out, he cannot do anything except take Recoveries. He can take his first Recovery on his next full Phase (unless he's deeply unconscious; see below) at the end of the Segment (after all other characters who have a Phase that Segment have acted). However, he cannot take a Recovery in the Segment in which he was Knocked Out, even if he had a Phase that Segment which had not yet been used. A character who's Knocked Out must take Recoveries every Phase (or as often as allowed to) until his STUN total is greater than zero. When his STUN total is positive, the character wakes up, and can take whatever Actions he wants to.

The body of an unconscious character puts its entire energy reserve into waking up. Because of this, when he wakes up, his END equals his current STUN total. (If a character is "awakened" from being Knocked Out due to the addition of STUN from Aid, Healing, or the like, his END equals his STUN total as established by the Aid/Healing or his END total at the time he was Knocked Out, whichever is less.)

Example: *Andarra was Knocked Out by a plant creature with a stun rod; she was reduced to -4 STUN. She has a REC of 7, so she'll have 3 STUN at the end of her next Phase. Since Andarra was Knocked Out, she awakens with the same END total as STUN, so she wakes up with only 3 END.*

A character who's both Stunned and Knocked Out by the same attack (or who's Stunned by one attack and Knocked Out by another in the same Phase) begins taking Recoveries in his next full Phase; he doesn't have to spend a Phase recovering from being Stunned (that's part of waking up from being Knocked Out).

A character can act at full strength or power as soon as he Recovers from being Knocked Out — he doesn't have to act at partial strength or power for some period of time (though the amount of END he has, as described above, may restrict what he can do). The rules don't limit what a character can do once he's awake, other than restricting the amount of END he has to spend.

TAKING RECOVERIES

A deeply unconscious character may not get a Recovery every Phase. It's up to the GM to determine what qualifies as "deeply unconscious" and how long it takes a character in that state to wake up. As a guideline, the GM can consult the Recovery Time Table for suggestions on how often a character should Recover.

A character can Recover one level better on the table if someone helps him by slapping his face, splashing water on him, or offering similar aid. Helping someone requires a Full Phase Action, and the unconscious character only gets the Recovery benefit as long as someone helps.

Typically, you should only use the guidelines in the Recovery Time Table for PCs, not NPCs. Once an NPC is Knocked Out below the -10 STUN level, even by a little, he should normally remain

unconscious until the fight ends (unless it would be dramatically appropriate for him to wake up). Characters shouldn't have to keep hitting an unconscious opponent "just to make sure he won't wake up"; that's unheroic and undramatic. The GM shouldn't force them to do this by constantly having NPCs wake up and start fighting again.

RECOVERY TIME TABLE

STUN Total	How Often Character Recovers
-0 to -10	Every Phase and Post-Segment 12
-11 to -20	Post-Segment 12 only
-21 to -30	Once a minute only
-31 or more	GM's option (a long time)

Injury

Characters who take BODY damage suffer injuries — cuts, broken bones, wounds, and other such unpleasanties. While this may entail loss of blood, characters won't lose more BODY due to bleeding unless they are at or below 0 BODY (see below) or the GM uses the optional Bleeding rules (see 6E2 113).

The exact nature of an injury depends upon the special effects of the attack that did the damage: fire causes horrendous burns; fists and clubs crush and smash; swords and knives cut; Blasts inflict burns and disrupt tissue; bullets cause puncture wounds, tissue disruption, and hydrostatic shock. At the GM's discretion, this may have effects beyond loss of BODY; for example, a burned character might lose his Striking Appearance (or gain a level, if it represents ugliness) until healed.

Ordinarily, the loss of BODY, or dropping into the negative BODY range, doesn't affect a character's CV, Skill Rolls, or the like. However, the GM may apply any penalties he considers appropriate.

BREAKING LIMBS

Gamemasters may use the following optional rules in place of Impairing and Disabling rules (see 6E2 111) to determine whether an attack breaks a target's limbs.

Generally, a limb can take 1/3 of a character's starting BODY before being severed or breaking (or becoming so damaged or mangled as to be useless). Thus, it requires 3 BODY to break a normal person's arm; at the GM's discretion, 1-2 BODY might cause a minor fracture. If the GM is using the Hit Location Table, the limb must take 3 BODY after the BODY_x from the Table is applied.

Usually you cannot do more than 1/3 of a character's BODY to him by attacking one of his limbs. If, for example, a barbarian PC uses his sword to cut off an enemy's arm, the enemy should take the 3 BODY necessary to cut off the arm, not the full BODY done by the attack (though you should calculate the STUN based on the full BODY). The injured character may pass out and bleed to death, or die of infection in a few days, but the loss of a limb in and of itself shouldn't kill him.

Example: *Sir Gareth uses his broadsword to attack a goblin. He hits his foe in the Arm (the GM is using the Hit Location Table) and does 12 BODY (and 24 STUN, per the Hit Location Table). Even after the goblin subtracts its 3 points of Resistant Defense and halves the damage due to the location, it still takes 5 BODY. The GM rules the goblin actually only suffers 3 BODY because Sir Gareth has hacked off its arm; the STUN damage is unaffected.*

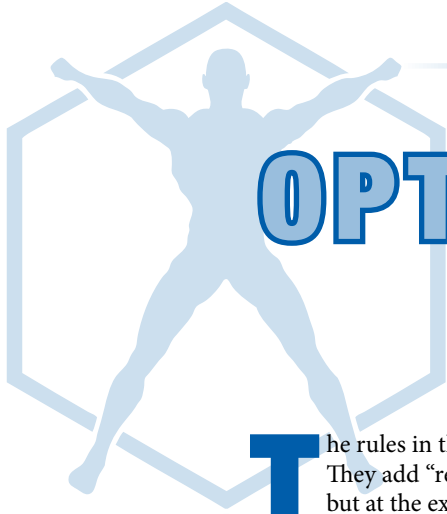
Death

A character at or below 0 BODY is dying. He loses 1 BODY each Turn (at the end of Segment 12). This is usually referred to as "bleeding to death," though it doesn't necessarily involve loss of blood.

Death occurs when, either due to attacks or "bleeding to death," the character has lost twice his original BODY (*i.e.*, when he reaches a negative BODY score equal to his starting positive BODY).

Example: *If a character who normally has 10 BODY reaches -10 BODY, he dies. A character with a lower BODY, say 8, would only have to reach -8 BODY to die. If a character who normally has 10 BODY started the game with 6 BODY due to a previous injury, he still won't die until he reaches -10 BODY.*

This unpleasant fate is not inevitable. Another character can stabilize a character at 0 or negative BODY with a successful Paramedics roll (at -1 for every negative 2 BODY). This doesn't give the wounded character back any BODY, it just stabilizes his condition so he doesn't lose any more BODY. The GM should modify this number for circumstances. With good medical care, good food, rest, and warm and dry conditions, the character's chances are greatly improved (+1 to +3). Poor conditions, such as dirt, additional shocks, and extreme cold, would impose a -1 to -3 penalty. See also *Recovering BODY*, 6E2 130.



OPTIONAL EFFECTS OF DAMAGE

The rules in this section are all optional. They add “realism” and depth to combat, but at the expense of slowing down the action and requiring more effort and time to resolve. It’s a good idea to avoid using these rules if there are a lot of players (more than five or six). If you’re just learning the game, then it’s an even better idea to leave these optional rules for later.

WOUNDING

This option prevents characters from totally ignoring wounds. A character who takes BODY damage for any reason must make an EGO Roll at -1 for every full 2 BODY the character has taken.

If the roll succeeds, there’s no effect beyond the damage normally done by the injury. If the roll fails, the character can’t take any offensive action in his next Phase — he can’t shoot, strike back, or use any offensive Combat Maneuver. He may still move to Behind Cover, Dodge, or use any other neutral or defensive Combat Maneuver. This simulates the instinctive response to being wounded (saying “ouch!”, clutching the wound, and perhaps ducking back behind a wall).

This rule applies more to NPCs than to PCs. Player Characters are assumed to be tough. Sometimes the NPCs don’t have the drive or motivation the PCs have.

The GM should take care not to let Wounding interfere with the game. Wounding tends to come into play much more frequently than Disabling or Impairing, and therefore has a greater potential to disrupt or slow down the game. It also has a higher “frustration potential”: most players can understand having to worry about massive wounds that Impair or Disable them, but no player likes to have his character “nickel-and-dimed” to death by taking a couple of BODY here, a couple of BODY there. Use the rule with discretion and dramatic sense, and it should work fine. Alternately, the GM can change the way the rule works — either just for the PCs (because they’re the heroes, after all) or for everyone — to minimize its impact. For example, maybe the PCs only suffer a -1 to the EGO Roll for every 3 BODY damage taken, instead of every 2 BODY.

The *Resistance* Talent adds to a character’s EGO Roll to resist being Wounded.

HIT LOCATION

You can use the Hit Location optional rule to determine which part of a character’s body is hit by a particular attack or blow. There are two ways to use Hit Location. First, GMs can just use the table to see where an attack hit the target, but not use the location to modify the damage taken. Thus, a blow to the head does the same amount of damage as a blow to the arm, and so forth. This gives combat some extra color, but doesn’t actually affect it in the least. This is the recommended way to use Hit Locations in most Superheroic campaigns.

Second, the GM can use the Hit Location Table to its full effect — that is, to help determine both the location of the attack *and* how much damage the attack does. This is the way the Hit Location table is used in most Heroic campaigns; in fact, using Hit Locations tends to be the “standard” method of determining damage in Heroic games.

HIT LOCATIONS AND KILLING DAMAGE

To use the Hit Location Table for Killing Damage attacks, do the following after an attack hits:

- 1. Determine where the attack hit:** Roll 3d6 and consult the first two columns of the Hit Location Table to find out where the attack struck the target.
- 2. Roll the BODY damage:** Roll the dice to determine how much BODY damage the attack does.
- 3. Determine STUN damage:** Multiply the BODY rolled by the STUNx for the location hit instead of rolling a STUN Multiplier. The result is the amount of STUN done to the target before his defenses are applied. Subtract the target’s appropriate defenses to determine how much STUN he takes.
- 4. Determine the BODY damage the target takes:** Subtract the target’s appropriate Resistant Defense from the BODY of the attack to determine the BODY done. Then multiply that BODY total by the BODYx to find out how much BODY the target actually takes.

Example: *Arkelos hits a goblin (ED 5, PD 3, BODY 15) with his Fire Blast spell (RKA 3d6). He rolls 3d6 to determine Hit Location and gets an 8 — the Arms. He rolls another 3d6 to determine the BODY damage for his spell and gets a 13. Consulting the STUNx column, he finds that the STUN Multiplier for the Arms is x2, so he does 26 STUN to the target. The goblin takes 18 of this after subtracting his defenses. Then the GM subtracts the goblin's 3 PD from the BODY, leaving 10, which is multiplied by the x½ BODYx for the Arms, so the goblin takes 5 BODY (reduced to 3 because it's a limb wound; see Breaking Limbs, 6E2 107). What was once an arm is now a charred stump.*

HIT LOCATIONS AND NORMAL DAMAGE

To use the Hit Location Table for Normal Damage attacks, do the following after an attack hits:

1. Determine where the attack hit: Roll 3d6 and consult the first two columns of the Hit Location Table to find out where the attack struck the target.

2. Determine the STUN damage the target takes: Roll the dice to determine how much STUN damage the attack does. Then apply the target's defenses. Multiply the amount of damage the target takes after applying his defenses by the modifier for that part of the body in the N STUN column.

3. Determine the BODY damage the target takes: Count the Normal Damage BODY as usual. Subtract the target's appropriate defenses from the BODY of the attack to determine how much BODY he takes. Then multiply that BODY total by the BODYx for that part of the body to find how much BODY the target actually takes.

"Vitals" is defined as any particularly delicate or vulnerable area on the body; this can include the groin, the heart, a large artery, or many other areas. The GM should choose whatever effect is most appropriate for the attack and the situation.

Attacks that have the *Area Of Effect* Advantage, or that otherwise affect an entire Area, use the standard Hit Location rules — the character rolls a Hit Location, and the GM applies the damage accordingly. The roll indicates the part of the target's body that's the most directly affected by the blast. Alternately, the GM can dispense with the Hit Location rules for Area-affecting attacks and just apply the damage generally with a rolled STUN Multiplier.

Placed Shots

You can also use the Hit Location Table to determine the OCV modifier for aiming at a particular part of the body. This is known as a "Placed Shot," a "Called Shot," or "targeting."

Consult the *To Hit* column on the Hit Location Table to determine the OCV modifier for targeting a particular part of the body. If a character succeeds with an Attack Roll after applying the OCV modifier, his attack hits the location listed, doing the BODYx and STUNx listed; if he misses, the attack misses altogether. If applicable, the character can even choose the precise number he would have rolled on the Hit Location dice. (This can be important if the target has sectional defenses.)

At the GM's option, when a Placed Shot hits there may be additional effects based upon the special effects of the attack (for example, hitting someone in the face with a blast of fire may cause temporary or permanent blindness).

Examples: *Randall Irons wants to shoot Doctor Fang Shen in the Arms. He suffers a -5 on his OCV to hit, plus any other modifiers for Range, Behind Cover, and so on.*

Chiron is fighting an armored knight. Chiron aims at the knight's Head, which imposes a -8 OCV to Chiron's OCV. Amazingly, Chiron hits anyway. He can choose whether he hit location 3, 4, or 5. Since the knight has armor covering locations 3 and 4, Chiron chooses location 5, thereby avoiding the armor.

PLACED SHOTS AND SURPRISE

Whenever a target is Surprised out of combat (see *Combat Modifiers*), halve the Placed Shot modifiers. For instance, shooting at the head becomes a -4 OCV shot instead of a -8 OCV shot. The same applies to Stunned characters, and in some other situations (see the DCV Modifiers Table on 6E2 37).



HIT LOCATION TABLE

3d6 Roll	Location	STUNx	N STUN	BODYx	To Hit
3-5	Head	x5	x2	x2	-8 OCV
6	Hands	x1	x½	x½	-6 OCV
7-8	Arms	x2	x½	x½	-5 OCV
9	Shoulders	x3	x1	x1	-5 OCV
10-11	Chest	x3	x1	x1	-3 OCV
12	Stomach	x4	x1½	x1	-7 OCV
13	Vitals	x4	x1½	x2	-8 OCV
14	Thighs	x2	x1	x1	-4 OCV
15-16	Legs	x2	x½	x½	-6 OCV
17-18	Feet	x1	x½	x½	-8 OCV

If necessary, roll 1d6 to determine left or right side (hands, arms, shoulders, thighs, legs, feet). If you roll a 1, 2, or 3, the left side is hit; if you roll a 4, 5, or 6, the right side is hit.



4

A character may place a weapon against some specific location on a completely immobile body as a Full Phase Action. He doesn't need to make an Attack Roll to hit the target in the specific location, and can hit that location as an Action which takes no time (consider this the equivalent of having the target Covered).

SPECIAL HIT LOCATIONS

Sometimes a character may want to take a Placed Shot at a group of areas on the target instead of just one area. Or perhaps the target is partly Behind Cover, and only certain parts of his body can be hit. In such circumstances, the attacker should use the Special Hit Location Table. This table lists the different general locations, the OCV modifier to hit those locations, and the dice roll to consult the main Hit Location Table.

Consult the Hit Location table normally. Use the number from the dice roll (indicated in the third column) as the number on the first column of the Hit Location Table.

Example: Andarra (OCV 7) is shooting her blaster at some space pirates (DCV 4) who are using a bulkhead for Behind Cover; she can only see their heads and chests. Preferring not to hit the bulkhead, she opts for a High Shot (-2 OCV). She rolls an 8 and hits! A High Shot requires a $2d6+1$ roll on the Hit Location Table, so she rolls a 2 and a 1 and adds 1, for a 4 — Head shot! One space pirate takes a blaster bolt between the eyes and falls dead.

SPECIAL HIT LOCATION TABLE

General Location	OCV	Dice Roll
Head Shot (Head-Shoulders)	-4	1d6+3
High Shot (Head-Vitals)	-2	2d6+1
Body Shot (Hands-Legs)	-1	2d6+4
Low Shot (Shoulders-Feet)	-2	2d6+7*
Leg Shot (Vitals-Feet)	-4	1d6+12

* Count 19 as Feet

SECTIONAL DEFENSES

If the GM uses the Hit Location optional rule, then defenses can be sectional — that is, they can only protect certain Hit Locations. This can be used to reflect a steel cuirass or bullet-proof vest that only protects the Chest, a riot helmet that only protects the Head, and so forth. If the campaign allows for sectional defenses, characters should keep track of how much armor they have for each location (if any). The defense against an attack depends on the armor covering the location where the attack hit.

Example: *Andarra has bought a vest of reflective armor which provides 5 points of ED Resistant Protection to protect herself against lasers and the like. The vest covers the Chest, Stomach, and Vitals, so it protects Locations 10-13 on the table. This defense applies against any Energy Attack that strikes these locations; the armor has no effect on attacks which hit her in other Locations.*

Sectional defenses are most appropriate for Heroic campaigns. If the GM wants to use this option in a Superheroic campaign, he has two options. First, he can simply use the Power Limitation *Requires A Roll*; this simulates defenses that don't always protect their user. Second, if he would like to use the Hit Location rules, then he should use Activation Roll to determine the Limitation for the sectional defense. Refer to the Armor Coverage Table, 6E2 212, for details and examples.

IMPAIRING EFFECTS

IMPAIRMENT TABLE

1d6	Time Impairment Lasts
1	1 turn
2	1 minute
3	5 minutes
4	1 hour
5	5 hours
6	1 day

HEAD: The character may become unconscious (GM's discretion), and upon waking could suffer from temporary amnesia, dizziness, double vision, or impaired speech. The GM could apply a -1 to -3 penalty on the character's CV, Perception, and Skill Rolls to reflect this.

The GM may also decide that an NPC who has taken an Impairing shot to the Head is dead, dying, or at the very least out of the fight. This is useful for getting unimportant ruffians out of the way. Used wisely, this rule can add to the drama of an adventure. Player characters should almost never die from an Impairing blow to the head.

HANDS, ARMS, AND SHOULDERS: The character loses the ability to perform delicate actions with that hand. He suffers a -3 OCV for any attacks using that arm, and -3 to any Skill Rolls involving that hand or arm. Striking someone with that arm causes the character to take 2d6 STUN, no defense.

CHEST, STOMACH, AND VITALS: The character no longer receives his Post-Segment 12 Recoveries. An Impairing shot to the Vitals may leave an NPC dead or dying, in the GM's discretion (as for Head wounds).

THIGHS, LEGS, AND FEET: Halve the character's Running. The character is -2 DCV because of his reduced mobility.

Impairing

You can use this optional rule in conjunction with the Hit Location optional rule.

Whenever the BODY damage done to an area (before or after the BODYx) is more than half the character's total BODY, that area is Impaired. Consult the Impairment Table to determine the effects of Impairment on different parts of the body, and how long those effects last. The Impairment effect for head and torso areas should only occur if the character fails to make a CON Roll, or at the GM's discretion.

These effects are optional. The GM should use his judgment, with due regard for the nature of the attack that caused the wound and the situation. Sometimes applying these effects strictly is not the way to have the most fun. Feel free to alter the effects according to specific circumstances.

Each part of the body is listed, and possible effects of Impairment are discussed after each listing. If a character suffers multiple Impairing wounds that impose penalties on him, those penalties are cumulative.

Disabling

You can use this optional rule in conjunction with the Hit Location optional rule.

Whenever the BODY damage done to an area (before or after the BODYx) is more than the character's total BODY, that area is Disabled. Consult the text below to determine the effects of a Disabling wound on different parts of the body.

The Disabling effects should occur at the GM's discretion. Generally, unimportant thugs and NPCs could be considered dead for the sake of faster game play. Player characters should receive the benefit of the doubt — after all, they're the focus of the campaign.

IMPAIRING/DISABLING AND INNATE POWERS

If the campaign uses the Impairing/Disabling rules, then an attack made with an Impaired/Disabled arm or hand, whether it's an innate power or a weapon, suffers the appropriate penalty, while attacks made with other parts of the body (head, legs, and the like) do not. An attack made with another part of the body — such as energy beams projected from the eyes or the chest — suffers no Impairing/Disabling effect just because the character's suffered an arm/hand wound. On the other hand, if a character with eyebeams takes an Impairing/Disabling wound to the head, that might prevent him from using his power, while a character with hand-fired energy beams could still attack in that situation. The GM should interpret the situation in light of common sense, dramatic sense, and consideration for game balance.

DISABLING EFFECTS

HEAD: The character will probably suffer a long term effect such as amnesia, impaired speech, partial paralysis, hearing loss, or impaired vision. The GM may decide to reduce some Characteristics such as INT or EGO to reflect this. Roll 1d6 on the Head Disabling Table to determine the type of damage. This could be a useful plot twist. Perhaps the character forgets who his enemies are!

HEAD DISABLING TABLE

1d6	Effect
1	Lose 1d6 EGO
2	Lose 1d6 INT (amnesia, impaired speech)
3	Lose 1d6 COM
4	-½d6 to Perception Rolls (hearing or vision loss)
5	-½d6 to all Skill Rolls
6	Limb paralyzed (see next listing)

HANDS, ARMS, AND SHOULDERS: The character may have -1d6 STR or DEX in that limb, or it may be totally severed depending upon the nature of the attack and the GM's judgment. If the GM rules that the limb remains attached, the character may try to make a CON Roll. If he fails the roll, the limb is permanently impaired, with the same effects as Impairment. A character who makes a CON Roll can retrain the arm to normal with several months of therapy (and possibly paying Character Points).

CHEST, STOMACH, AND VITALS: Long term effects may include the loss of various Characteristics. Roll on the Chest Disabling Table.

CHEST DISABLING TABLE

1d6	Effect
1	Lose 1d6 STR
2	Lose 1d6 CON
3	Lose ½d6 BODY
4	Lose ½d6 REC
5	Lose 2d6 END
6	Lose 1d6 STUN

THIGHS, LEGS, AND FEET: The character may have decreased movement and/or a distinctive limp. The limb may be totally severed, depending on the nature of the attack and the GM's judgement. If the limb is considered to be still attached, the character may try to make a CON Roll. If the character fails the roll, the limb will be permanently impaired, with the same effects as Impairment. A character who makes a CON Roll can retrain the limb to normal with several months of therapy (and possibly paying Character Points).

If the character makes a CON Roll, the long term effects of a Disabling wound should be less severe, and possibly only temporary in nature (roll on the Impairment Table). A character who fails a CON Roll may have to buy back any lost Characteristics, movement, or Perception at the regular campaign price, depending on the GM.

Disabling effects can create story ideas. The roleplaying possibilities are legion for characters who are suddenly blinded, lose an arm, or become paralyzed. But don't spoil the players' fun by applying the rules in a rigid manner — it's not every player who wants to try to roleplay a blinded character, after all. Technology or magic can often fix any disability a character has. Cybernetic replacements might be used, or a new body part regrown, depending on the campaign.

Each part of the body is listed in the accompanying box with possible Disabling effects.

DISABLING IN "LOW HEALING" CAMPAIGNS

Unlike the more merciful Impairing rules, the Disabling rules have the potential to be more dangerous in genres where rapid, easy methods of healing or repairing the body are unavailable. That means a Disabling wound can easily become a permanent facet of a character, and this may ruin a player's fun.

But there are ways to avoid this unpleasant fate. First, as noted above, if a character makes a CON Roll, the Disabling effects he suffers should be less severe, or even temporary (convert them to Impairments instead). Second, the GM could rule that characters with access to immediate medical attention (such as another PC who knows Paramedics) who get treatment quickly suffer an Impairment effect instead of a Disabling one. Third, the GM could grant Disabled characters extra Experience Points they can only use to buy back Characteristics and abilities lost to Disabling wounds. The GM should do this gradually, over many game sessions — but eventually, a Disabled PC will be back to full strength.

If possible, don't let a character suffer from more than one Disabling wound at a time. The GM should let him to heal before severely injuring him again. After all, few players want to play characters who are always walking wounded.

KNOCKDOWN

Weapons, especially big ones, can knock people down; so can powerful attacks of just about any kind. This is simulated by Knockdown, an optional rule used with the Hit Location Table. Whenever a character takes an Impairing wound, he must retreat 2m and make a DEX Roll. If he fails the roll, he falls down. Whenever he takes a Disabling wound, he's automatically Knocked Down, and falls back 1m for every 1 BODY rolled on the dice over the character's starting BODY (*i.e.*, the amount of BODY he has when fully healed, such as 10 BODY for a normal human). A Knocked Down character must use a Half Phase Action to

get to his feet (if he was in midair or midwater, he must spend a Half Phase reorienting himself).

Example: *A gigantic alien with a blaster (RKA 3d6) does 14 BODY to Andarra, who only has 10 BODY. Andarra is Knocked Down and goes flying back 4m.*

Knockdown is recommended only for use in Heroic campaigns. Superheroic campaigns should use Knockback (see below).

At the GM's option, characters might suffer Knockdown not only when they suffer an Impairing or Disabling wound, but whenever they would ordinarily suffer Knockback (*i.e.*, roll as if rolling for Knockback; if any Knockback results, the character suffers Knockdown). Also at the GM's option, characters can convert the *Does Knockback* (+¼) Advantage into *Does Knockdown* — any hit from a weapon with this Advantage automatically does Knockdown, even if it inflicts no STUN or BODY damage past the target's defenses.

BLEEDING

When this optional rule is used, characters may continue to take damage from blood loss after they suffer an injury. Among other uses, this rule allows the GM to have NPCs bleed to death if untended (which is sometimes useful for plot purposes). In situations where a character can get immediate medical care, there's no need to use the Bleeding rules. Generally, you should use Bleeding when a character gets injured, but still wants to keep going.

Whenever a character loses BODY, he will Bleed, thus losing STUN and occasionally some extra BODY. The Bleeding Table lists how much damage characters take from Bleeding. The column *Number of Dice/Turn* is the number of dice of STUN the wounded character takes per Turn. Wounded characters should roll the dice on Segment 1 of each Turn. The STUN lost from Bleeding may be Recovered normally (see *Recovery*). Whenever the character rolls a six on any of the dice, he loses an additional 1 BODY. This may cause the character to Bleed faster. However, the maximum BODY lost from bleeding is 1 BODY per Turn, even if several sixes are rolled.

BLEEDING TABLE

BODY Lost	Number of Dice/Turn	Stop Bleeding
1-5	1d6	1
6-10	2d6	2-5
11-15	3d6	3-9
16-20	4d6	4-13
21-25	5d6	5-17
26 or more	6d6	6-21

Thus, a character who's lost 3 BODY due to a wound would lose 1d6 STUN every Turn.

There is a chance Bleeding will stop of its own accord. The character must be unconscious or resting for a full Turn — he cannot engage in any type of combat or perform any Action which takes a Half Phase or Full Phase in any Segment of that Turn. If he meets these conditions, the Bleeding stops if he rolls a number in the range shown in the *Stop Bleeding* column on his Bleeding dice. Characters still take the indicated STUN damage in the Turn the Bleeding stops.

Characters with Paramedics (even just the Everyman 8- roll) may attempt to stop Bleeding. Appropriate tools (bandages, pressure packs, antiseptics) can add up to +3 to the roll, as can taking additional time. Extremely poor conditions or medical techniques (“bleeding’s good for you”) may warrant a penalty (-1 to -3). The Bleeding stops if the character succeeds with a Paramedics roll, per the rules in the section *Death*, above.

Wounds that have stopped Bleeding may reopen if the character exerts himself. The GM should check on Segment 1 if the character used his STR or made a Full Move at any time during the previous Turn. If the GM rolls less than $(9 + (\text{number of dice character would Bleed}) - (\text{amount Paramedics roll was made by, if Paramedics was used to stop the Bleeding}))$, the wound reopens and the character begins Bleeding again.

Example: *Andarra has lost 6 BODY. She will lose 2d6 STUN per Turn from Bleeding. Andarra stops to rest. On Segment 1, she rolls the 2d6 and gets a 2 and a 1, totaling 3 STUN lost. Because she didn't exert herself, and rolled within the numbers listed under the Stop Bleeding column, she stops Bleeding.*

Andarra finishes resting and runs toward an enemy's spaceship. To check to see if her wound reopens, she rolls 3d6. She rolls a 13. Since the chance for her wound to reopen was $(9 + 2) = 11$ or less, she doesn't start Bleeding again.

Blunt weapons or Normal Damage (from any kind of attack) are less likely to induce Bleeding. Such damage is considered to be -1 level on the Bleeding table. Thus, a character who has taken up to 5 BODY from only Normal Damage will not bleed; at 6-10 BODY, he'll take 1d6 per Phase; and so on.

Regeneration and similar abilities have no effect on Bleeding; characters with those abilities Bleed normally.



KNOCKBACK

In some types of combat, characters deliver such mighty blows that the combatants get knocked all over the battlefield. To reflect this, characters can do *Knockback* (KB). Knockback is most appropriate for Superheroic campaigns; Heroic campaigns generally should use Knock-down (see above) instead.

Of course, not all attacks do Knockback. You should limit Knockback to attacks that do damage by directly striking the target — for example, punches, Blasts, Killing Attacks, and the like. Attacks that don't damage the target through direct force don't do Knockback. This second category typically includes Powers such as Drain, Flash, and Transform.

Since the amount of Knockback a character takes depends upon the BODY damage rolled for an attack that hits him (see below), attacks that don't inflict BODY damage (such as Mental Blasts and Attack Powers bought with the *AVAD* Advantage) usually don't cause Knockback. However, characters can buy them, or any other Power that doesn't do BODY, with the Advantage *Does Knockback*. In this case, count the "Normal Damage BODY" the Power would do if it were a Normal Damage attack, and use that to determine the Knockback.



TOOLKITING: CHANGING THE KNOCKBACK DICE

The standard Knockback rule of subtracting a 2d6 roll from the BODY of the attack works well in most Superheroic campaigns, where attacks are powerful. The average attack in most such campaigns tends to do about 10-15 BODY, so there's a good chance of some Knockback occurring.

But if the average damage in your campaign varies from that, the 2d6 roll might not work so well. For lower-powered campaigns doing any Knockback at all becomes difficult; for higher-powered ones it's virtually guaranteed.

If this is a problem in your campaign, consider changing the Knockback rule to rolling 1d6 for every 30 Active Points in the average attack. Thus, if your campaign tends to feature attacks around 60 Active Points (12d6 Normal Damage), you'd roll 2d6 like usual. If it has attacks with around 30 Active Points, you'd just roll 1d6; if it's closer to 90 Active Point attacks, roll 3d6.

DETERMINING KNOCKBACK

To determine how much Knockback a character suffers from being hit, the attacker rolls 2d6 and subtracts the total from the amount of BODY rolled for the attack. Use the total amount of BODY rolled on the attack dice, regardless of the target's defenses, how much damage the character takes after applying defenses, Vulnerabilities, Hit Location modifiers, or the like. The one exception is if the damage has to first penetrate an obstacle, such as a wall or Barrier. In that case, base the Knockback on the BODY damage that gets through the barrier; if none gets through, there's no Knockback. (If some does get through, the amount that gets through would be doubled for Double Knockback purposes.)

If the result is negative, no Knockback occurs — the defender remains where he was standing before the attack.

If the result is 0, the defender is Knocked Down. A character who is Knocked Down must spend a Half Phase in his next Phase getting to his feet (or reorient himself if he were in mid-air or mid-water).

If the result is positive, the target is Knocked Back 2m times the result. For example, 12 BODY damage minus a 2d6 roll of 7 equals 5, which means (5 x 2m =) 10m of Knockback. He ends up lying on the ground (or imbedded in a wall or other object), and must spend a Half Phase to get up (or getting out of whatever he hit).

If a character is hit by an Autofire attack that does Knockback, the Knockback equals the highest Knockback rolled for any of the attacks that hit, +2m for each additional attack that hit. (The Knockback doesn't protect the character from being hit by any of the Autofire hits.) For a Multiple Attack used to hit a single target multiple times, determine the Knockback for each attack used, and then apply only the best result.

If a character has a power that has the *Does Knockback* Advantage but doesn't roll damage (such as Darkness), the GM can use whatever method he feels is appropriate and won't slow the game down to determine the "Normal Damage BODY" for purposes of calculating Knockback. Some possibilities include: rolling 1d6 per 5 or 10 Active Points and counting the "Normal Damage BODY"; using a flat 1 BODY per 5 or 10 Active Points; or using a defined number of dice or BODY per increment of the power (such as, say, 1 BODY per 1m of Darkness).

If a single attack affects multiple targets (as with, for example, an Area Of Effect attack), and those targets have different Knockback modifiers, roll Knockback for each target separately.



MODIFYING THE NUMBER OF KNOCKBACK DICE

Certain situations modify the number of d6 rolled to determine Knockback. The Knockback Modifiers Table lists the different situations and the modifier to the 2d6 normally rolled (the modifiers are cumulative). For instance, if the target were flying, the GM would only roll 1d6 to determine Knockback; if he were underwater, the GM would roll 3d6. If the attacker used a Killing Strike (a Killing Damage attack and a Martial Maneuver) on an underwater opponent, the attacker would subtract a grand total of 5d6 from his BODY to determine Knockback. Shrinking, Density Increase, Growth, and Knockback Resistance also affect the total Knockback a character takes. The GM can add other modifiers as he sees fit.

Example: *Howler hits Green Dragon with a Blast, doing 31 STUN and 9 BODY worth of damage. Howler gets a 5 on her 2d6 Knockback roll. Green Dragon is Knocked Back away from Howler $((9 - 5) \times 2m =) 8m$ into a wall. He takes 4d6 damage.*

In his next Phase, Green Dragon succeeds with a Breakfall roll and gets to his feet as a Zero Phase Action. He Half Moves to Howler and hits her with a Martial Kick for 29 STUN and 8 BODY damage. He rolls a total of 2d6 (2d6 -1d6 because Howler is flying +1d6 because he used a Martial Maneuver) and gets a 10. Since $8 - 10 = -2$, Howler isn't Knocked Back at all.

KNOCKBACK MODIFIERS TABLE

Circumstance	Number of dice rolled for Knockback
Target is in the air	-1d6
Target Rolled with the Punch	-1d6
Target is underwater	+1d6
Attack was a Killing Damage attack	+1d6
Attack was a Martial Maneuver	+1d6
Target is using Clinging	+1d6
Target is in zero gravity	-1d6

INCREASING KNOCKBACK

In some types of campaigns, such as Ninja Hero games based on Japanese anime, attacks often do tremendous amounts of Knockback — much more than characters normally do with the regular *HERO System* rules. If the GM wants more free-wheeling combat in the campaign, with lots of Knockback, he can do several things. First, he can roll fewer dice — 1d6 instead of the standard 2d6. Second, he can ignore many of the modifiers that decrease Knockback, such as the +1d6 for using Martial Maneuvers. Third, he can encourage characters to add the *Double Knockback* Advantage to their attacks by reducing its value, or even allowing characters to buy it for a large group of attacks at once.

Lastly, the GM can work with a player to decide that a particular maneuver *always* does a set amount of Knockback (no roll necessary). This “free Knockback” usually shouldn't exceed 6-10m, but it's up to each GM to determine what's appropriate and balanced for his campaign.

KNOCKBACK DAMAGE

Knockback can damage a target. A character who is Knocked Back into a wall (or other upright structure) takes 1d6 Normal Damage for every full 2m of Knockback taken (though the durability of the wall may limit how much damage he takes; see below). For instance, a character Knocked Back 12m into a wall takes 6d6 damage. A character Knocked Back into another character damages himself and the character he hits; both characters take 1d6 damage per 2m of Knockback.

To determine if a character hits a structure or other large object when he's Knocked Back, the GM simply needs to know which direction he's moving (*i.e.*, opposite the direction from which the attack came) and what's in his way. If the structure or object is big enough, he'll hit it automatically. If it's small or narrow (for example, a tree or another character), the character who did the Knockback damage should make an Attack Roll using his base CV (*i.e.*, with no CSLs or other modifiers added, except for the Target Size modifier) to see if he Knocked the target Back into the object. Success indicates he did; failure indicates the target misses the object.

If a character hits a structure or other large object, both he and the structure take damage. Regardless of the amount of Knockback rolled, the most dice of Knockback damage a character can take when he hits a structure equals the PD + BODY of the structure. If he's Knocked Back for more meters than two times (2x) the structure's PD + BODY, he takes PD + BODY dice of damage, the structure (or part thereof) shatters, and he continues through the hole (otherwise, he stops). For every PD + BODY total worth of structure a character is Knocked Back through, he flies back 2m less. (See *Breaking Things*, 6E2 170).

Example: *Mechanon is Knocked Back 22m by an attack. Two meters behind Mechanon is a 6 PD, 2 BODY wall. Mechanon flies back 2m and smashes through the wall (because he's been Knocked Back further than 16 [2x the structure's PD + BODY]). Mechanon takes 8d6 damage (6 PD + 2 BODY = 8d6 Knockback damage), blows through the wall, and continues 22-2-8 = 12m more.*

Suppose that the wall was 6 PD, 6 BODY instead. In that case Mechanon would take 11d6 damage from hitting it, and would not shatter it and keep moving — 2x its PD + BODY exceeds the meters of Knockback the evil robot took.

If a character who's been Knocked Back doesn't impact a structure or other large upright surface, he simply hits the ground. He takes 1d6 damage for every 4m he was Knocked Back — half the damage of hitting an object.

A character may take less Knockback damage if he hits something soft, or more damage if he hits something with jagged edges. If he hits something particularly sharp, the GM can convert the damage to Killing Damage of an equal Damage Class.

Knockback damage isn't limited to the amount of dice or damage rolled for the attack that caused the Knockback. It's entirely possible for the Knockback from an attack to do more damage than the attack itself does.

Distance traveled doesn't reduce Knockback damage. For Knockback purposes, there's no "deceleration" or the like. A character impacting an object takes his full Knockback damage whether he hits it after traveling 2m, 16m, or any other amount.

KNOCKBACK DAMAGE SUMMARY

The damage from Knockback depends on two factors: number of meters of Knockback taken and objects impacted.

1. If the meters of Knockback taken are greater than 2x the PD + BODY of the object impacted, the number of dice rolled for Knockback damage equals the PD + BODY (and the character keeps moving backward as described in the text).
2. If the meters of Knockback taken are equal to or less than 2x the PD + BODY of the object impacted, the number of dice rolled for Knockback damage equals half the meters taken.
3. If the character doesn't hit an object (*i.e.*, he hits the ground when he's Knocked Back horizontally), the number of dice rolled for Knockback damage equals one-fourth the meters taken.

DOWNWARD KNOCKBACK

An attacker can, if he chooses, Knock an opponent downward into the earth. He can only do this in HTH Combat, or in Ranged Combat if he can get above his target. To use this option, the attacker must declare his intention before he attacks. He then attacks and rolls Knockback normally. If he rolls any Knockback, the character is knocked prone where he stands. In addition, the target takes 1d6 damage for every 4m of Knockback rolled (if he's attacked directly from above, the GM should treat the ground as a "structure" and have the character take 1d6 per 2m of Knockback). A character who takes downward Knockback can use Breakfall to stay on his feet and avoid the Knockback damage.

AERIAL AND UPWARD KNOCKBACK

A character who's in the air and suffers Knockback typically takes the Knockback damage (if he hits something), not falling damage. However, the GM may, in the interest of common sense and dramatic sense, apply falling damage instead. This makes the most sense when the character falls a long way (particularly if he's also Stunned or Knocked Out). If the character's so high up in the air that he hits nothing, either due to Knockback or because he's able to right himself and fly under his own power before hitting the ground, he takes no damage at all.

If a character takes Knockback in an upward direction (perhaps after being uppercutted by an attacker smaller than he), the meters traveled aren't halved (as they would be for a character using Flight to move straight upward). Calculate the meters traveled using the standard rules. Unless the character happens to hit an object mid-air, he takes no Knockback damage from flying through the air this way, since he doesn't impact anything (even the ground).

OTHER EFFECTS

Being Knocked Back doesn't affect the CV bonuses a character gains from using a particular maneuver. For example, a character using Martial Strike or Dodge retains the DCV bonus he gets from that maneuver even if he's Knocked Back. Nor does being Knocked Back eliminate the DCV penalty from maneuvers like Multiple Attack.

Knockback doesn't cancel out or reduce velocity *per se*. However, since the victim of Knockback is "knocked off his feet," taking Knockback stops him from continuing to move until he gets to his feet again. (If he makes a Breakfall roll to stay on his feet, he continues moving at his current velocity in his next Phase, unless he chooses to slow down or stop using the standard rules for doing so.)

DIRECTED AND RANDOM KNOCKBACK

If a character is Knocked Back through or into an area where there's another character, he's assumed to miss the other character. If the attacking character is trying to hit the other character with the Knockback victim, use the following rules.

Sometimes a character wants to aim his attack so that the Knockback the attack propels the target into a third character, causing both of those foes to suffer the Knockback damage. To do this, the character must do Knockback with his attack against the first target — enough Knockback that he could reach, and hit, the second target. If so, the character must make an Attack Roll using only his base OCV (*i.e.*, DEX, without Combat Skill Levels, maneuver bonuses, or the like) against the second target's DCV. If that roll succeeds, the first target hits the second target, and they both take 1d6 damage per 2m of Knockback.

With some types of attacks (for example, a whirlwind created by an air-manipulating character), the direction of the Knockback is random — it doesn't have any relation to the direction the attack came from. To represent this, a character can take a -0 Limitation, *Random Knockback*. Alternately, the GM may allow a character to take a -0 Limitation, *Variant Knockback*, and define an attack as always doing Knockback in a particular direction other than straight away from the character.

REDUCING KNOCKBACK

Characters have several ways to reduce or eliminate Knockback (see also 6E2 87 regarding Pulling A Punch).

KNOCKBACK AND MASS

Characters or objects that are lighter or heavier than normal ("normal" being 100 kilograms) often take more or less Knockback.

For every 2x mass, a character takes -2m Knockback. Thus, a character who weighs 400 kilograms takes -4m KB. The Density Increase Table (6E1 189) and the Vehicle Size Table (6E2 187) provide easy references for increased mass.

For every ½ mass, a character takes +2m of Knockback. Since a character's weight decreases to 1/8 normal for every halving of his height, every level of Shrinking causes a character to take +6m Knockback (see the Shrinking Table, 6E1 281).

These and other modifiers don't affect the damage done by the Knockback, just the distance (although this might change the likelihood of the character hitting a structure). (On the other hand, the Power *Knockback Resistance* reduces both the distance and the damage, and the reduction of Knockback gained from Density Increase functions similarly.) For example, if a character who massed 800 kg was Knocked Back 20m by an attack, he'd only go back 14m; but if he hit a wall at that point, he'd take 10d6 of damage.

KNOCKBACK AND BREAKFALL

A character who's not unconscious or Stunned may attempt a Breakfall roll at -1 per 4m (or fraction thereof) of Knockback to avoid taking damage from Knockback. If the roll succeeds, the character takes no damage. He also lands on his feet, so he doesn't have to waste a Half Phase Action to re-orient himself. Breakfall doesn't help a character who hits a wall or other object, however.

RESISTING KNOCKBACK

A character can use his STR or Flight (if he has it) to resist Knockback. In either case, he must declare in advance of an attack that he's resisting Knockback. Doing so is a Half Phase Action and halves his DCV, regardless of how much STR or Flight the character uses (in other words, characters can't use their Casual STR to brace against Knockback "for free"). A character may Abort to resist Knockback.

Any character can use his STR to prevent Knockback from a given direction (if he's hit from an unexpected direction, he takes normal Knockback). This requires a reasonably stable ground surface for the character to "dig in." Each 5 points of STR reduces the Knockback by 2m.

A character with Flight may declare that he's using part of his Flight to root himself to a single spot (or to remain at a specific location in mid-air, if he's already flying). For every 2m of Flight used to stabilize him, he takes -2m of Knockback. He must declare which direction he's bracing against. If he's hit from an unexpected direction, he takes normal Knockback.

If a character attempting to resist Knockback takes Knockback despite his efforts, he takes full Knockback, just as if he'd done nothing.





OTHER DAMAGE EFFECTS

Here are some additional optional rules regarding damage that may be appropriate for some campaigns.

CRITICAL HITS

Gamemasters who want combat to be more unpredictable and dangerous should consider instituting a *critical hit* rule. A “critical hit” is a blow so accurate it does maximum damage. One occurs when a character’s roll to hit is less than half of what he needed to hit the target.

Examples: *An OCV 6 character shoots at a DCV 5 character. He needs a 12 or less to hit. To make a critical hit, he needs less than a (12/2) 6 to hit — i.e., he must roll a 5 or below.*

An OCV 7 character attacks a DCV 5 character. He needs a 13 or less to hit. To make a critical hit, he needs less than a (13/2) 6.5 to hit — he must roll a 6 or less.

If a character makes a critical hit, he does maximum damage for the attack. Therefore, a Killing Attack 2d6 does 12 BODY, 36 STUN. An 8d6 Normal Damage attack does 48 STUN, 16 BODY. A 2d6 NND attack does 12 STUN.

If the campaign uses the Hit Location rules, a Killing Attack uses the normal STUN Multiplier for the location — 12 BODY to the Vitals does 48 STUN, for instance. If those rules are not in use, a Killing Attack does the maximum possible STUN (3x BODY for most Killing Attacks).

Characters may only do critical hits to living targets. Ignore critical hit results against targets like doors and walls (it would be far too easy to get a critical hit on a DCV 0 door, for instance).

FUMBLES

Related to critical hits are fumbles — disastrous occurrences that sometimes afflict combatants. After all, if characters can score high levels of success with excellent rolls, as a balancing factor they should suffer some problem if they roll very poorly.

Any roll of 18 on an Attack Roll constitutes a fumble (a fumble should also occur if the character ever gets a 1 on any of his Unluck dice rolled during combat). If you want fumbles to occur

more frequently, set a threshold based on how badly the attacker misses. For example, perhaps any attack that rolls an 18 or misses by 4 or more results in a fumble.

The GM determines the exact effects of a fumble. Some possibilities include:

- the character suffers a reduced DCV (maybe even half DCV) until his next Phase
- the character loses his weapon: it slips from his grasp and goes flying into the street, it jams so badly it needs out-of-combat repairs, it breaks, or the like
- the character may hit one of his friends; he must make an attack at his base OCV against the friend’s DCV (a Surprised penalty may apply)
- the character stumbles and falls, suffering penalties for being prone until his next Phase

MYSTERY DAMAGE

This is an option which only works for GMs willing to keep track of more details in combat. It’s not recommended for any GM unless he likes being the one to keep track of character damage, or has a special reason in a one-shot game to keep his players off-balance.

In real life, a person can’t suffer an injury and know “Ah-ha, I’ve taken 4 BODY, it hurts but I’m not in any danger yet.” He just knows he’s hurt, and may have some vague idea of the wound’s severity, but can’t be confident in his ability to shrug it off.

If you want to simulate this in the game, the GM himself must keep track of all BODY damage done by Killing Attacks; he can let the players keep track of their own STUN damage from Killing Attacks, and of STUN and BODY damage from Normal Damage attacks. He’ll have to know how much BODY the characters start with, and their Resistant Defenses (and what parts of the body they protect). He must make sure the players tell him about any BODY their characters take from Normal Damage attacks, and must record that BODY with the Killing Damage they’re taking.

MYSTERY DAMAGE WITHOUT HIT LOCATIONS

Whenever an NPC hits a PC with a Killing Attack, the GM rolls the damage, rolls the STUN Multiplier, and announces something like this: “Ed, he’s stabbed you in the chest, right below the ribs. It hurts a lot: take 12 STUN.”

Now, Ed knows only that it “hurts a lot” from the STUN total he took; he doesn’t know how bad the injury is. He doesn’t know if the GM rolled 3 BODY and a 4x STUN Multiplier; perhaps it was 6 BODY and a 2x STUN Multiplier; maybe it was 2 BODY and a 6x STUN Multiplier (from the *Increased STUN Multiplier Advantage*) or even 12 BODY and a 1x STUN Multiplier.

To get an idea of how bad the wound is, he must use a Half Phase Action to look at it. At that point, the GM should say nothing more than: “It looks shallow,” or “It looks deep but you’ve had worse,” or “It’s deep and nasty-looking.” Thus, characters won’t know when they’re mortally wounded, though the GM can tell them how they’re bleeding like stuck pigs and swiftly growing weaker and weaker.

MYSTERY DAMAGE WITH HIT LOCATIONS

When you use Hit Locations in your game, mystery damage becomes a bit more complicated. A character who’s stabbed in the stomach and takes 12 STUN automatically knows he took 3 BODY. Therefore, in campaigns using Hit Locations, you have to do things a little differently.

In this sort of campaign, you don’t just use the STUNx column from the Hit Location chart. You use that column, but also make two quick rolls. First, make a 1d6 roll for subtract/add: a 1-3 means subtract, and a 4-6 means add. Second, roll 2d6 to determine how much STUN to add or subtract to the STUN done by the attack.

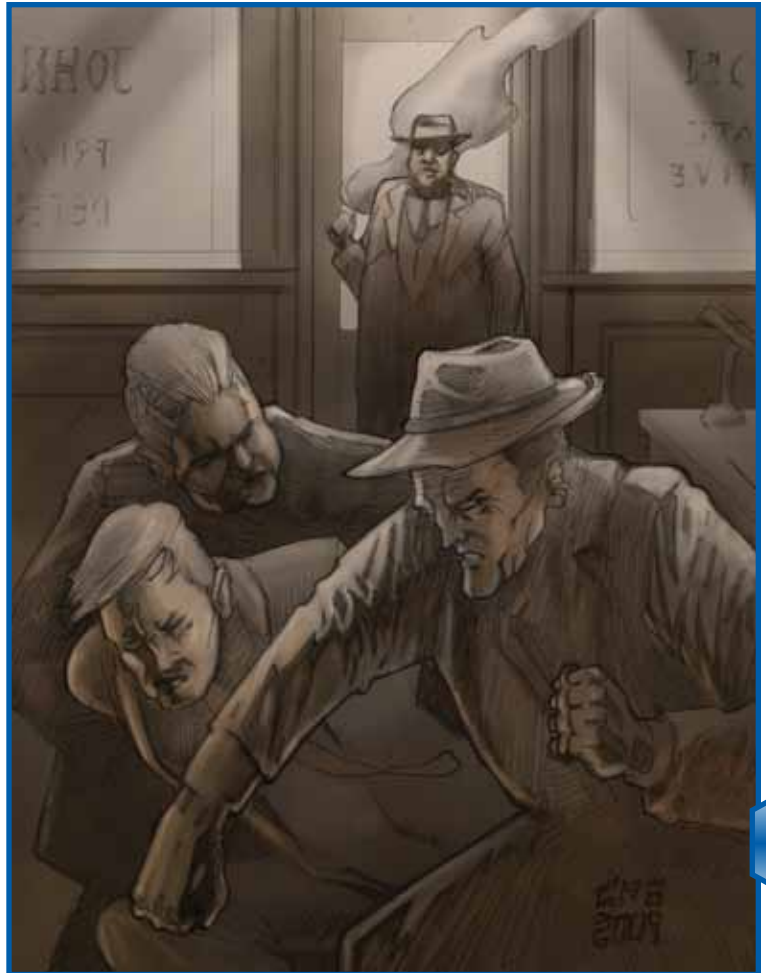
Alternately, the GM can simply keep track of the STUN of the attack, along with the BODY.

STUN DAMAGE IN HEROIC CAMPAIGNS

The *HERO System* rules reflect “dramatic reality” — the “reality” depicted in genre novels, movies, comic books, and television shows. This has many implications for Heroic game play, such as the fact that it’s easier to Knock Out an enemy than to kill him.

One of the most important aspects of dramatic reality is this: heroes don’t die. They may get beaten, battered, bruised, and even crippled, but they don’t die. They’re a hardy bunch — and they’ve got to be, considering the opposition they face and the fact that they’re on “center stage” throughout the entire story. The *HERO System* rules reflect this by making it relatively difficult to kill Player Characters. They often get Stunned or Knocked Out, but they rarely die.

But since all characters, Player and Non, are built using the same rules and procedures, this “hard to kill” effect carries over to enemies and villains. It’s usually not quite as stark, because the



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PCs are the heroes and therefore built on more Character and Experience Points than many of their adversaries, but it does exist.

The result is that, at the end of a combat, the PCs often face a battlefield littered with as many unconscious opponents as dead ones. This leads to a major dilemma: what to do with the surviving foes? In some cases the PCs can just walk away, but all too often that’s not an option. Player Characters who don’t want to burden themselves with lots of prisoners (in other words, almost all PCs in many genres and settings) are left with one unpleasant option — putting a bullet in the head of each unconscious enemy (so to speak).

In the darkest campaigns, this is perfectly acceptable behavior: never leave a living enemy behind, as they say. But in others, particularly more lighthearted genres, having to slaughter a bunch of unconscious people simply for the sake of convenience destroys the mood of the setting and the game. After all, can you imagine Aragorn or James Bond walking around the field of combat after every battle and killing off all the survivors? Of course not, because it’s completely contrary to the sense of drama and heroism inherent to such stories. The author either arranges things so the hero escapes from the fight somehow, or he has the enemies conveniently die of the wounds they suffered in honorable, dramatic combat. Killing an enemy in battle is highly appropriate; having to kill one in cold blood after the battle is not.

Of course, novels and movies aren't games, and games aren't novels and movies — although they have many similarities, they function differently and you have to approach them in slightly different ways. What works in a novel or movie doesn't necessarily work in a game. In a novel, the author can ensure that all the enemies die in battle, thus sparing the hero the need to kill them afterwards. A roleplaying game can't do that — it's a mutually-crafted story told by the GM and players together, which means there must be rules to define what characters can do and how events unfold. And unfortunately, rules don't always quite portray dramatic reality the way you'd like it to — a poor die roll, or the like, cheats you of a dramatically appropriate moment or event.

However, it's possible for a GM and players to adapt the rules, or their approach to combat, to make a game a little more like novels and movies by using some or all of the following optional rules. They should only apply to minor or trivial NPCs; major enemies and villains should function in combat just like PCs do.

IGNORE STUN DAMAGE

The first, and perhaps most drastic, option is to ignore the STUN damage caused by Normal Damage and Killing Damage attacks altogether. STUN would still matter for Drain STUNs, knockout poisons, the *Club Weapon* Maneuver, and the like, but not for purposes of typical combat attacks. Once a minor enemy hits 0 BODY, he falls over dead.

In addition to eliminating the “coup de grace dilemma,” this optional rule has a useful side effect: it speeds up combat. It removes the need to count STUN damage or roll a STUN Multiplier. However, it may also make fists and Normal Damage weapons (such as clubs) less effective; if you find this to be the case, consider converting them to Killing Damage attacks with the same number of DCs of damage.

STUNNED = DEAD

With this option, any time a minor NPC becomes Stunned by a Normal Damage or Killing Damage attack, he's not Stunned — he's dead. This may make PCs *too* powerful, as they dispatch minor NPCs like flies (though that would certainly make many combats go quicker). If you find that's the case, consider changing the rule so that only Knocked Out enemies automatically die.

ONE-HIT WONDERS

Gamemasters using this option don't worry about the exact STUN and BODY a minor enemy has — they simply decide how many hits it takes to kill him. The weakest are one-hit wonders: a single successful Attack Roll against them kills them. Stronger foes require more, or better, hits. For example, a two-hit foe takes two successful Attack Rolls to kill, or only a single Attack Roll that's made by 2 or more; a three-hit foe needs three hits, or one hit made by 3 or more; and so on. To disguise what he's doing, the GM should still have the players roll damage dice; if a character gets an especially good roll, the GM may treat that as the equivalent of having made the Attack Roll by 1 or 2 points more.

MAJOR WOUNDS

Sometimes it's not quantity that counts, but quality. With this optional rule, any time a character inflicts a single wound on a foe that does half or more of the foe's normal full positive BODY (after the foe applies defenses), that foe dies. For example, if Sarge fights a Mafia gunman (BODY 10) and inflicts a single wound that does 5 BODY or more (after the Mafiosi applies his defenses to reduce the damage), the Mafiosi dies. Note that it doesn't matter if the gunman had already taken 7 BODY damage so that he only had 3 BODY left; it's his regular BODY (10) that counts for this rule.

ALTERED BLEEDING RULES

A character injured so that his BODY falls below 0 bleeds to death at the rate of 1 BODY at the end of each Turn. A foe with positive BODY never bleeds (unless you use the optional Bleeding rules). Altering the bleeding to death rules may eliminate the *coup de grace* problem in your game. Some possibilities include:

- Minor characters at 0 BODY or below bleed at the rate of 1 BODY per *Segment*.
- Minor characters at 0 BODY or below bleed at the rate of 1 BODY per Turn per *wound*.
- Minor characters who are Knocked Out bleed at a rapid rate (1 BODY per Phase or per Segment, for example), even if they still have positive BODY
- No bleeding to death — any minor character who reaches 0 BODY dies.

INCREASED BODY DAMAGE

Lastly, you can solve this problem by increasing the BODY damage of weapons relative to the STUN damage. That improves the chances a minor NPC dies in battle. For example, maybe you could halve all STUN damage rolls without changing the BODY rolled. Or you could give all weapons another die or two of damage only for BODY, rolled after the character determines the STUN and BODY from his “main” damage dice.

STUN DAMAGE AND DEFENSES

One of the reasons the “Stunned, but not dead” problem arises in Heroic games is the comparative level of attacks versus defenses. Most Heroic characters have relatively low personal defenses, and the heaviest body armor (which characters often don’t have access to) only adds about 13 PD at most (and often less). Many Heroic characters also have fairly low STUN scores.

On the other hand, just about everyone has access to fairly powerful weapons. Between weapons, STR, Combat Skill Levels, Martial Maneuvers, Haymakers, and other options, many characters can get up to the point where they dish out seven or more Damage Classes’ worth of damage without too much trouble. The result is large STUN totals applied to comparatively paltry defenses — which leads to lots of characters getting Stunned and Knocked Out.

If this causes problems in your game, but you don’t want to increase defenses overall (Heroic characters aren’t supposed to be walking tanks, after all), consider applying a “reversed” form of Reduced Penetration to weapons damage (or at least to Normal Damage weapons, which do more STUN damage on the average). When a character is hit, roll the STUN and BODY damage of the attack normally. The character applies his defenses against the full BODY damage of the attack, but splits the STUN in half and applies his defenses separately to each portion. After he determines how much STUN he takes from each attack, he adds the taken damage together and compares it to his CON to determine if he’s Stunned. This keeps BODY damage about the same, but reduces the frequency with which characters become Stunned or Knocked Out. (Naturally, you probably don’t want to apply this rule to minor NPCs, though important NPCs should use it.)

HEALING AND RECOVERING DAMAGE

Combat inevitably leads to characters getting injured, or even killed. That raises the issue of what they can do to heal the wounds they sustain.

The Role And Place Of Healing

Before deciding what optional rules (if any) to adopt for healing (see below), the GM needs to decide what role healing plays in the campaign.

In many Heroic campaigns, healing is rare. It’s restricted to “realistic” methods such as drugs, surgery, and hospital care. There are no magic spells, wonder technology, or healing potions to patch a character up in just a few seconds or minutes. If a character suffers BODY damage, particularly in significant amounts, it’s likely to be with him for quite a while.

The GM may need to compensate for the lack of quick-and-easy healing methods in the way he designs and runs scenarios. It’s common, in many Heroic adventures, for the PCs to go through a series of encounters, each more difficult or deadly than the last, until they reach the climax of the story (which often features a major battle of some sort). If the PCs get “nicked” a little here and there along the way, by the time they reach the big finale they’ll be so close to dead that they may have trouble triumphing. The situation gets worse if a few unlucky dice rolls leave the heroes badly injured before the climactic encounter. If the GM wants to avoid this (which he may not, in some highly “realistic” campaigns), he has several possible options.

First, he can arrange the scenario and its encounters to de-emphasize or eliminate most combats and other potentially injurious encounters in the early stages of a scenario. Instead of battles, he puts the PCs in situations where they have to conduct investigations, engage in diplomacy, foil or avoid security systems, and so on. However, this method may prove difficult to use frequently, or make things seem “too easy” for the adventurers.



Second, he can interpret his dice rolls “creatively.” As long as he keeps them secret (as most GMs do), he can convert hits into misses, high damage rolls into low damage rolls, and so forth — all in the interest of making the story flow in a more appropriately dramatic fashion. If handled properly, this method works very well, though some GMs find it a little distasteful.

Third, he can find substitutes for injuring the PCs. For example, if the dice indicate a character’s about to suffer a bad wound, the GM might choose to damage one of the character’s weapons or some of his equipment instead. He might even give the player the choice: “OK, you can either take a 5 BODY hit, or your assault rifle can be so badly damaged it won’t work until repaired — your decision.”

Fourth, he can use some of the optional rules described below to let mundane healing methods have more effect than they “realistically” ought to. In many adventure stories and movies, often all a character needs to get back into fighting trim is a little “patching up,” so it’s perfectly appropriate to use the *Paramedics* Skill and other rules to keep the heroes in relatively good repair.

Optional Healing Rules

Here are some optional rules to help GMs deal with healing issues in their Heroic games. To make use of these methods, players should keep track of their characters’ individual wounds. Rather than simply knowing his character’s lost 6 BODY, a player needs to know his character has suffered three wounds of 1 BODY, 3 BODY, and 2 BODY.

These rules tend to make body armor even more valuable to characters, since it increases the likelihood a wound only does low BODY damage. The GM should consider them carefully before deciding to implement them, and be prepared to withdraw them from the campaign if they prove too effective.

ENHANCED HEALING

At the GM’s option, the *Paramedics* Skill can fix minor wounds completely and make major wounds a little less painful. For each wound a character takes, another character with *Paramedics* can make a roll to restore 1 BODY of damage. To do this, the character must succeed with a roll at a penalty of -1 per 2 BODY of the wound; this takes at least 1 Minute per BODY of the wound (and of course requires appropriate doctoring supplies, such as bandages, painkillers, and surgical needle and thread). If he succeeds, he heals 1 BODY of the damage. If he fails, he restores no BODY; if he fails by 4 or more, he inflicts another 1 BODY of damage.

A character may only have one character apply *Paramedics* to each wound in this fashion. Once a wound is treated, further treatment (even by another character with *Paramedics*) cannot benefit it any. However, if a character fails his *Paramedics* roll for a particular wound; another character can try his own *Paramedics* roll. Generally, a character cannot perform this type of *Paramedics* on himself, but the GM may allow it for some types of wounds. If so, the character takes double the penalty described above for his roll.

MINOR WOUNDS

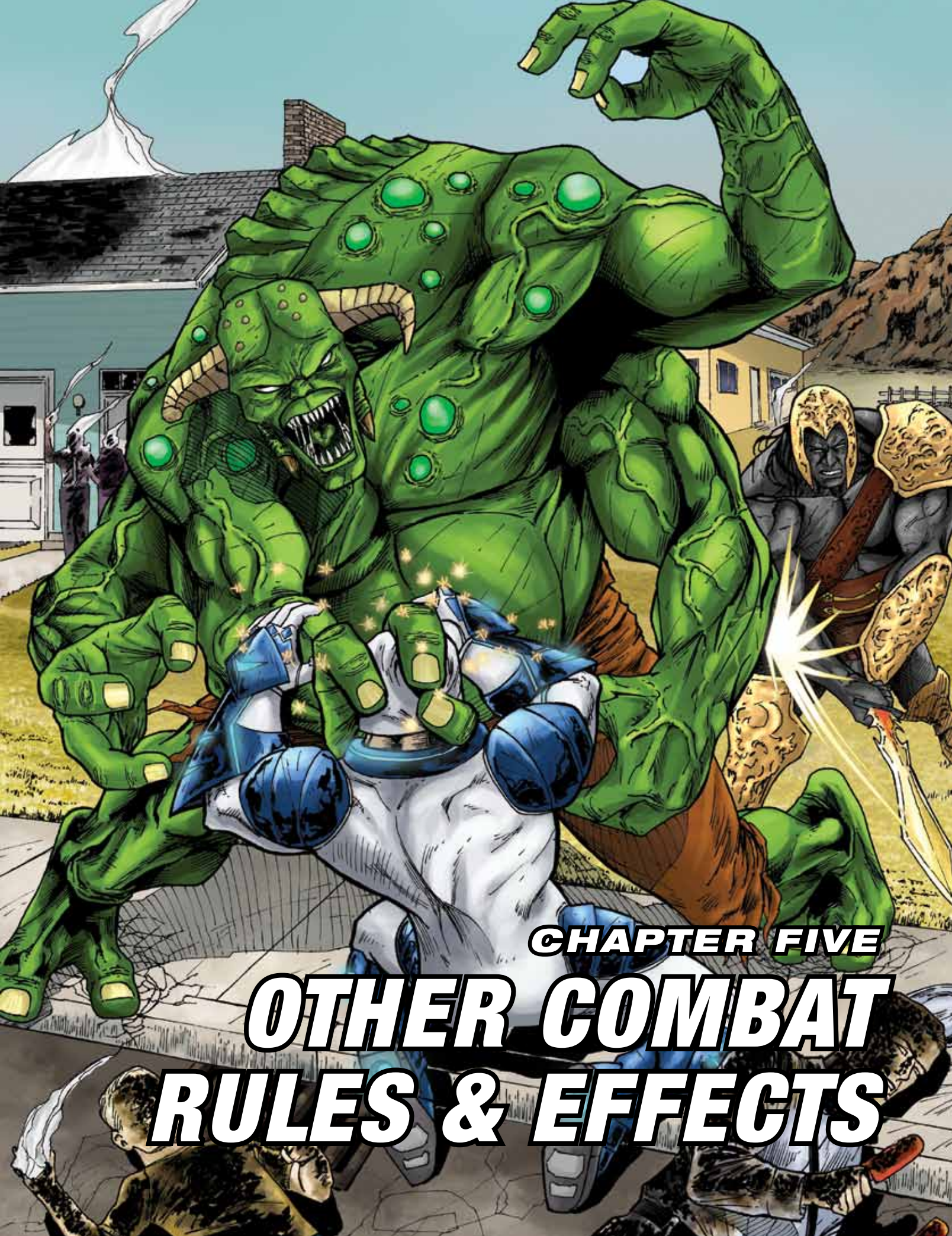
If the GM chooses to use this optional rule, characters automatically “heal” minor wounds after they finish a battle. This represents the fact that the wounds weren’t as bad as they first seemed — even a little bandaging repairs them just fine, the character has the willpower to ignore the pain and keep functioning, and so forth. The rule doesn’t help a character at all during combat, but it helps keep him going through a series of encounters.

A “minor wound” is any wound of 1 BODY. If the injured character, or any other character, makes a *Paramedics* roll to treat the wound (no penalty to the roll, no significant supplies required, and takes 1 Turn), then the lost point of BODY is restored to the character in just a few minutes (the GM decides exactly when). Even if the character has no way to use *Paramedics* on his minor wounds, he automatically heals up to his REC worth of minor wounds per day. The GM may apportion the healing over the course of the day if desired, restore all the lost BODY to the character when he rests for the night, or the like.

If combined with the enhanced *Paramedics* rule, the minor wounds rule means any wound of 2 BODY can be treated down to 1 BODY, then healed as a minor wound. (This requires a second *Paramedics* roll, of course.) Thus, only wounds of 3 BODY or greater have any long-term effect on characters.

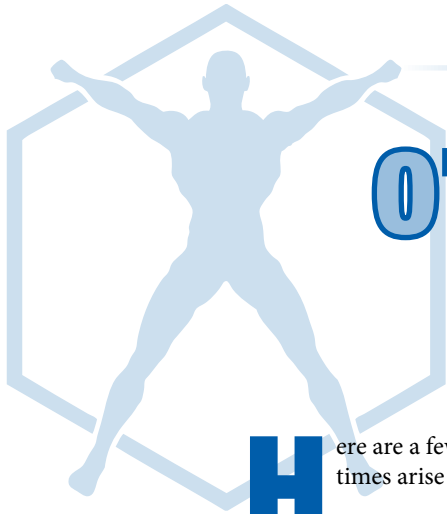
Recovery

Closely related to healing in general is REC and the character’s ability to Recover lost STUN, END, and BODY. Gamemasters who want to run more “realistic” games may find that REC allows characters to keep functioning a little too long — particularly when it comes to Recovering END. To shorten battles a little, GMs may want to restrict characters’ ability to Recover. Some possibilities include eliminating the Post-Segment 12 Recovery, and forbidding characters to take Recoveries in the middle of combat.



CHAPTER FIVE

**OTHER COMBAT
RULES & EFFECTS**



OTHER COMBAT EFFECTS

Here are a few more situations that sometimes arise in combat.

Breaking Out Of Entangles And Grabs

If a character who's trying to break out of an Entangle (which doesn't require an Attack Roll) does twice the remaining BODY of the Entangle or more, he's free and has a Full Phase in which to act (*i.e.*, it takes no time at all to break out of the Entangle). If an attack against an Entangle does the remaining BODY of the Entangle or more (but less than twice the remaining BODY), the character is free and may perform a Half Phase Action. If an attack against an Entangle does less than the remaining BODY of the Entangle, the character is still Entangled and may take no more Actions that Phase. (The same applies if a character uses an innate ability, such as a Blast, to try to destroy the Entangle.)

If a character uses an attack to break out of an Entangle with enough force that he gets a Half Phase or Full Phase Action, he can use that same attack again in that same Phase. Of course, except for STR he has to pay END for each use, and any other relevant rules may apply. For example, if the attack takes Extra Time (Full Phase) to use, it doesn't matter how much time he "gets back" for breaking free by a large margin, because he's just used up his entire Action for the Phase.

If a Grabbed character's attempt to break out of a Grab does twice as much BODY on his STR Roll as the BODY rolled for the Grabber's STR Roll, the Grabbed character frees himself and has a Full Phase in which to act. If the Grabbed character's attempt to break free does enough BODY to break free (*i.e.*, more BODY than rolled by the character Grabbing him), but less than twice the BODY on the Grabber's STR Roll, the Grabbed character is free, but may take no more Actions that Phase.

At the GM's option, a character doesn't have to make a complete escape from a Grab or Entangle. Instead, he can try to free only one limb, which he can then use as he sees fit. This allows +5 STR

on the attempt to escape or break free, since he can concentrate his efforts on freeing just one limb. (This rule only applies to Grabs that target more than one limb; if Grabbed with a Maneuver that by definition only Grabs one limb, such as a Choke Hold, characters have to break out using the regular rules.)

Characters As Weapons

Characters often like to pick up an opponent and use him as an impromptu club or missile with which to attack another foe. This has the benefit of hurting both enemies.

Before a character can use another character as a club/missile, he must Grab the club/missile. If the club/missile is conscious (even Stunned), this requires the normal Attack Roll and imposes the normal penalties to the character's OCV and DCV. If he's unconscious, the character still has to make a Grab, but suffers only the standard -1 OCV and -2 DCV penalties (he doesn't have the usual halved DCV in general, and halved OCV against other targets, if his Grab succeeds).

Once the character has successfully Grabbed the club/missile, he may use the victim as a club against any target in HTH Combat range, or as a missile against any target within range of his Throw (see *Throw*, 6E2 80). To do this, he must make a separate Attack Roll against that target. Unless the GM rules otherwise, this is a separate Attack Action, so it cannot be performed in the same Phase when the character performs his Grab. The standard CV modifiers for Grab apply, and the GM may impose other modifiers to reflect the circumstances. If the attack succeeds, both the club/missile and the target take the character's STR damage. (See 6E2 82 for rules regarding missed Throws.)

Using another character as a club entails a weapon Size/Shape penalty of -2 OCV (if the "club" is unconscious) or -4 OCV (if he's awake). A character used as a missile is neither balanced nor aerodynamic (minimum of -4 OCV). These penalties are in addition to any the character suffers for performing a Grab.

Crushing Damage

Sometimes characters get crushed under heavy objects (or enemies using Density Increase). To calculate the effects of crushing, determine the STR required to lift the heavy object. Then use that STR to apply damage to whatever it's crushing (to save time, you may want to apply the Standard Effect Rule and have the STR do 1 BODY and 3 STUN damage per d6). As always, the GM may modify this rule to prevent abuse, or in the interest of game balance, common sense, and/or dramatic sense.

FREQUENCY OF CRUSHING DAMAGE

If a character does crushing damage (typically because he has Density Increase and stands on top of another character), the crushing damage applies on each of his Phases. The character has to take an Attack Action and succeed with an Attack Roll to maintain the crushing each Phase after the Phase in which he first crushes the character. If the Attack Roll fails, the victim has somehow resisted being crushed that Segment, but hasn't gotten out from underneath the character crushing him (the GM may rule that a badly failed Attack Roll *does* mean the victim wins free).

Since applying crushing damage this way is an Attack Action, doing it ends the character's Phase, and if the character decides to attack someone else he cannot make an Attack Roll to crush the victim. If a character wants to be able to crush people and still do other things, he should buy a Damage Shield that does damage equivalent to his crushing damage, with appropriate Limitations.

If it's an object or phenomenon doing the crushing (for example, if a landslide covers up a character, or a safe falls on him and pins him), the character takes the crushing damage in the Segment when he's first crushed, and then every Turn thereafter. For ease of bookkeeping, the GM can just apply the damage every Segment 12; for greater complication, apply it every Turn in the same Phase when the character was first crushed. (Alternately, the GM could impose crushing damage per Segment, like damage from chemicals, if that seems more appropriate given the circumstances.)

Dragging

Characters may sometimes find themselves dragged along the ground behind galloping horses, fast-moving chariots or stagecoaches, motorized vehicles, or the like. In that situation, the dragged character typically takes velocity/6 in d6 of Normal Damage. The GM can change some or all of this to Killing Damage if the surface is particularly sharp, abrasive, or the like; he can reduce the damage if the surface is soft. A dragged character can make a Breakfall roll at -1 per 2d6 of damage he'd otherwise take to reduce the damage by half.

Disguising Damage

Sometimes a character wants to “disguise” the sort of damage he's doing — usually to keep Killing Damage from looking like Killing Damage, so onlookers won't suspect the level of force he's using on his opponent. Another possible use is to make a Nerve Strike look like a Normal Damage attack, so observers don't realize the attacker's reluctant to use more damaging maneuvers.

To do this, the attacker must make his Attack Roll at -1 OCV for every 2 Damage Classes in the attack — thus, an HKA 2d6 would impose a -3 penalty. If the Attack Roll succeeds, the target takes the damage in the usual method for that type of damage, but to anyone else observing the attack, it looks like a Normal Damage attack.

Inability To Sense An Opponent

A character who cannot perceive his opponent(s) or target(s) with a Targeting Sense (because he's been attacked with a Flash, is in a Darkness field, is otherwise “blinded,” or his opponent is Invisible) suffers the following penalties:

- In **HTH Combat**, the character is at ½ OCV and ½ DCV. This applies both to when he makes attacks in HTH Combat, and is attacked in HTH Combat.
- In **Ranged Combat**, the character is at 0 OCV and ½ DCV. This applies both to when he makes attacks in Ranged Combat, and is attacked in Ranged Combat.

If a character can make a PER Roll with a Nontargeting Sense (a Half Phase Action) to perceive a particular target, then against that target only he is at -1 DCV, ½ OCV when attacked or attacking in HTH Combat, and full DCV, ½ OCV when attacked from or attacking at Range. Against all other targets he is affected by the standard “lack of Targeting Sense” modifiers described above. The benefits of making this roll last until the beginning of the character's next Phase; if he wants them to continue through his next Phase, he has to use another Half Phase Action in that Phase and succeed with another PER Roll. Even if a character has Invisibility to all Sense Groups and No Fringe, characters fighting him or trying to perceive him still get to make Nontargeting Sense PER Rolls to perceive him.

INVISIBILITY IN COMBAT

At the GM's option, Invisible characters may get Surprise bonuses when they attack — even if another character knows there's an invisible enemy skulking about, he's still going to have a hard time figuring out exactly where the Invisible character's attack is coming from or getting out of its way. Since being Invisible already confers certain combat benefits (see above), the Surprise bonus should be limited to +1 OCV at most.

When facing an Invisible opponent in combat, a character can try to make a new PER Roll with a Nontargeting Sense once per Phase to find the Invisible target until he succeeds. As described above, this is a Half Phase Action, and the benefits of making this roll last until the beginning of the character's next Phase (if he wants them to continue through his next Phase, he has to use another Half Phase Action in that Phase and succeed with another PER Roll).

If an Invisible character makes a visible attack, the target of that attack (and anyone else who succeeds with a PER Roll to spot the attack) only suffers a -1 to his OCV to attack back, even at Range, until the Invisible character moves. Once the Invisible character moves out of the area where he was standing when he made the visible attack, his Invisibility affects OCVs as normal.

As discussed on 6E1 240, a character's weapons are covered by his Invisibility except in the Phases he uses them to make attacks, and there are many ways to negate the benefits of Invisibility in combat.

ATTACKING AN INVISIBLE OPPONENT

If a character knows there's an Invisible opponent in the area, it's up to the GM how to handle a character's reaction. Some GMs assume that the OCV penalty for being unable to sense the Invisible target takes into account actions like firing blindly around the area or other attempts to hit the target despite not knowing where he is. They just let the character make an Attack Roll, and if it succeeds, he hits the target. Other GMs prefer that a character indicate at least the general direction or area he's attacking, and if the Invisible target's not in that area, the attack automatically misses (though the GM usually still has the character roll so he remains unaware of the target's general location).

GRABBING A TARGET

At the GM's option, if a character Grabs his opponent, he gets a bonus in HTH Combat to overcome the restrictions of being unable to perceive that opponent with a Targeting Sense. Grabbing the foe automatically gives the attacker a successful PER Roll with a Nontargeting Sense (Touch) against that foe. However, he's still at ½ DCV against the person he has Grabbed, and other Grab rules apply. In other words, if a blinded character can Grab his foe, he'll be only at -1 OCV and ½ DCV when fighting his opponent. He's at 0 OCV against anyone he's not Grabbing, and is at 0 DCV at range.

Large Targets

Normal-sized characters sometimes find themselves fighting much larger opponents — giants, enormous dragons, building-sized killer robots, necromantic colossi, and so forth. The default rules for the *HERO System* don't make any allowance for this in the interest of speedy and simple game play. Thus, even though a swordsman may only be able to reach a giant's feet and ankles, he can still hack him to death with enough blows. Of course, larger creatures have more BODY than human-sized ones, but in the end enough damage gets the job done. That's certainly fitting for the "dramatic heroism" the rules favor.

Gamemasters who find this "unrealistic" should consider implementing an optional rule to fix the problem. Some possibilities include:

- Use the Hit Location rules, if you're not doing so already. If a human-sized character can only attack a larger foe's feet and lower legs, the Hit Location penalty reduces the damage considerably. Roll all HTH attacks as Low Shots.
- Reduce the damage that a smaller creature's attacks do to a larger creature. To some extent, the rules for different weapon sizes (6E2 203) take care of this; a sprite's tiny sword does very little damage to begin with. But for human-sized and larger creatures, you could reduce the damage an attack does by -1 point of BODY per Size/Weight category the target is above the character. (Thus, a human's attacks would do -3 BODY to Huge creatures.) Alternately, you could rule that for any target creature more than one Size/Weight category larger than the attacker, the *Reduced Penetration* Limitation automatically applies to the attack.
- Give large creatures extra defenses that only apply to attacks made by smaller creatures. One to three points of Resistant Defense per Size/Weight category above "Human-sized" should suffice.

Missed And Random Shots

If a character misses with a Ranged attack, generally that's all that happens — the missed attack doesn't hit another character. If an attack would ricochet off some surface or is Deflected, it's assumed not to hit any other target.

At the GM's option, if a character misses his target with a Ranged attack, and there's another potential target it could hit (for example, another goblin standing just a few feet behind the goblin he shot an arrow at), there's a possibility the second, unintended, target gets hit instead. The character should make another Attack Roll, using his base OCV at -3 (*i.e.*, no Combat Skill Levels or weapons modifiers apply). If he succeeds, he hits the unintended target — not necessarily a good thing, since the unintended target might be a friend.

The GM may, if he chooses, decide that a missed attack ricochets and hits something significant. Generally this should not be another character or target, but instead some feature of the environment that makes the situation more dramatic — a barrel that begins leaking a flammable liquid, the safety switch on the nuclear reactor, a fire alarm, a rope holding up a chandelier, and so forth. Characters cannot Deflect an attack into a potentially useful "target" this way; that requires Reflection.

If a character chooses to fire randomly into a crowd hoping to hit someone (not any target in particular, just anyone who happens to be in the way), roll his base OCV (no modifiers) against an appropriate DCV to determine if he succeeds. The DCV should normally be 3 for a relatively tightly-packed crowd; thinner or more spread out crowds should have a higher DCV.

In some cases NPCs will try to use a crowd as "cover" from a character's attacks. If a character insists on trying to hit the NPC anyway, use the normal Behind Cover rules (6E2 43); a missed shot generally means the person being used as cover, or a random person in the crowd, gets hit instead.

OPTIONAL COMBAT RULES

This section includes some optional rules for combat in unusual situations. The GM decides whether they apply in his campaign.

Groundfighting

Sometimes fights end up with two characters struggling on the ground, rather than standing up trading blows. In other cases, a character gets knocked down and has to keep fighting from the ground because he doesn't have the time or opportunity to stand up safely. Unfortunately, "groundfighting" can be difficult.



First, characters on the ground (*i.e.*, who are "prone" in game terms, even if they're not lying flat on their backs) are at half DCV when attacked by non-prone characters. They have their full DCV against attacks from other prone characters.

Second, attacking from the ground imposes a -2 OCV penalty on both HTH and Ranged attacks, regardless of whether the target is prone or standing. The GM may decide not to impose this penalty on Ranged attacks, if appropriate.

Third, groundfighting affects the weapons a character can use easily. No weapon suffers a penalty against a standing target. Against other prone targets, Small weapons suffer no penalty, Medium weapons suffer a -1 OCV, and Long weapons suffer a -2 OCV (and may not be usable at all if the target is too close; see 6E2 201-02).

Fourth, groundfighting has several effects on the use of Martial Maneuvers. First, it restricts the Maneuvers a character can use. Obviously he cannot use many kicks, and all maneuvers which damage a character by causing him to fall are useless; characters are often limited to punches, grappling, and similar maneuvers. Second, a character not trained in groundfighting suffers a -2 OCV and ½ DCV penalty.

At the GM's option, a character can eliminate groundfighting penalties as to his groundfighting opponent if he makes a PS: Groundfighting roll (or, for Martial Arts, has a special Element, *Use Art while Prone*). The ½ DCV penalty normally applied to prone characters targeted by non-prone characters still applies even if the character makes his roll (or has that Element).

INTERPOSING EXAMPLE

Sir Gareth tries to defend his injured squire, Roderick, from the attacks of an assassin. He moves between Roderick and the assassin, Interposing himself. He puts his Skill Levels into DCV and has a base DCV of 8; he opts to reduce it by 5, to 3. This tells the assassin he's going to have to expose himself to Sir Gareth's attack if he attacks Roderick — Sir Gareth gets a +5 OCV on attacks against the assassin (which he could use for a Block or an offensive attack). His base OCV is 6; it's 11 versus the assassin only, and only if the assassin attacks Roderick instead of him.

Guarding Areas And Ignoring Opponents

In the *HERO System*, a character can run right past and ignore an opponent standing in his way, even if that opponent has Held an Action — the character suffers no penalty at all. If that's inappropriate for your campaign, or you want to make it easier for a character to guard a location or object, use the following optional rule instead:

A character may Hold his Action and declare that he's "guarding" or "covering" a 2m radius area around himself. (That's an area twice a typical character's Reach. If a character has a longer Reach due to a weapon, Stretching, or the like, the GM can choose to increase the size of the "guarded" area to match the character's Reach.) If anyone moves into or through that area, the character may use his Held Action to attack that character, who only has ½ DCV against the attack. (Of course, making that attack uses up the character's Held Action, so someone else could then move through the guarded area without risk.) However, the target character retains his full DCV if he moves into the area specifically to attack the character who's guarding it and does so. After making some sort of attack against the guarding character, on his next Phase the target character can continue moving through the guarded area without penalty.

Interposing

In the *HERO System*, it's difficult for one character to defend another. He can attack his friend's attacker, or use a Block to parry the attacker's blows. He could even Dive For Cover in front of the attacker's blow, automatically taking the damage his friend would have suffered. Players and GMs who want another way to defend other characters can use this optional rule, which only applies to HTH Combat.

To *Interpose* himself into a fight, a character moves in between the attacker and the person he wants to defend. (This requires a minimum of a Half Move, and thus a Half Phase Action. Assuming the character doesn't need to use a Full Move to position himself, he Holds his remaining Half Phase in case he needs to attack the attacker.) Then he tells the GM what sort of a DCV penalty he wants to take. Every -1 he takes to his DCV is a +1 to his OCV if the attacker again attacks the person he's defending. (He can apply the OCV bonus to Block, if desired. If he had to make a Full Move, the OCV bonus applies on his next Phase.) The attacker knows this; he can tell what the character's doing and the potential consequences. The DCV penalty and OCV bonus apply only against that one attacker; against all others, the character has his usual OCV and DCV.

A character who doesn't want to be defended can cancel the Interpose attempt by moving 1m in the direction of his attacker or otherwise declaring that he chooses not to be defended. If the Interposing character is aware of the decision, the Interposing effects go away; he gets his full DCV back. If the Interposing character is not aware of the decision, his DCV stays reduced... but he does not get an OCV bonus if the other person attacks the person the character thinks he's defending.

A character can Interpose to protect a doorway or window, to keep someone from getting through it. If the attacking character tries to get past him, the interposing character gets his OCV bonus.

Sucker Attacks

Sometimes characters want to trick an enemy into attacking them in such a way that the attack misses and accidentally hits one of the attacker's comrades. Usually this involves tricking one foe into shooting another foe with a gun or blaster, but it may mean sidestepping so that two characters trying to perform a Move Through on the same target run into each other instead.

To make a sucker attack, the character has to have a Held Action available. He waits until the first attacker is just about to attack, then Dodges so the second attacker takes the hit instead. First, he must succeed in a DEX Roll Versus DEX Roll Contest against the first attacker to time his Dodge just right — if he fails, the first attacker's attack goes off before he Dodges. Second, the first and second attackers must be properly "lined up" for one to have a chance to hit the other. If so, the first attacker must make an Attack Roll using only his base OCV (*i.e.*, without Combat Skill Levels, maneuver bonuses, or the like) against the second attacker's DCV. If that roll succeeds, the second attacker takes the damage intended for the character.

RECOVERY



During combat, a character may temporarily lose both STUN and END. To reflect the body's recuperative capacity, each character has a *Recovery* (REC) Characteristic.

Characters use REC to regain STUN and END. This is known as “Recovering” or “taking a Recovery.” When a character Recovers, add his REC to his current STUN and END totals. Characters may Recover STUN and END lost due to injuries, using one's Powers, being attacked with a Mental Blast, or any other cause (unless the rules indicate otherwise — for example, STUN lost to a Drain STUN returns to the character according to the rules for Drain, it's not Recovered).

Characters get to Recover in two situations: Post-Segment 12; and when they choose to do so as a Full Phase Action.

POST-SEGMENT 12 RECOVERY

After Segment 12 each Turn, all characters (even Stunned ones) get a free Post-Segment 12 Recovery. This Recovery occurs automatically (unless the character's holding his breath [see below] or is deeply unconscious). Characters get a Post-Segment 12 Recovery even if they're taking damage from a Constant attack.

Example: *At the end of Segment 12, Chiron has only 4 END and 13 STUN left. Fortunately, the Turn is over and he gets a Post-Segment 12 Recovery. He has a REC of 5, so he regains 5 STUN and 5 END, for a total of $13 + 5 = 18$ STUN and $4 + 5 = 9$ END. As the next Turn begins, Chiron has 18 STUN and 9 END.*

Other game events that occur in Post-Segment 12, such as the fading of an Adjustment Power or the gaining of BODY from Regeneration, take place before the Post-Segment 12 Recovery.

TOOLKITING: REMOVING THE POST-SEGMENT 12 RECOVERY

For “grittier” or more “realistic” games, or just games where the GM wants combats to end more quickly, eliminating the Post-Segment 12 Recovery is an option. This makes characters tire swiftly and feel the effects of their enemies' attacks more strongly — or at the very least, it forces them to take Recoveries as Actions more frequently.

TAKING A RECOVERY AS AN ACTION

Second, a character may choose to take a Recovery as his Action in any of his Phases. Taking a Recovery is a Full Phase Action and occurs at the end of the Segment (after all other characters who have a Phase that Segment have acted, including characters using Haymakers begun in the previous Segment).

A character who Recovers during a Phase may do *nothing else*. He cannot even maintain a Constant Power (even if it only costs END to activate) or perform Actions that cost no END or take no time. However, he may take a Zero Phase Action at the beginning of his Phase to turn off a power, and Persistent Powers that don't cost END remain in effect. A previously-used Uncontrolled power (or power on Damage Over Time, Time Limit, or Continuing Charges) that's still functioning doesn't affect and isn't affected by taking a Recovery. (Typically this rule also applies to powers fueled by an Endurance Reserve, but the final decision is up to the GM based on the special effects, powers involved, and other considerations.)

While Recovering, a character is at $\frac{1}{2}$ DCV, and all modifiers for Placed Shots made to hit him are halved as well. A character who Recovers during Segment 12 also gets the Post-Segment 12 Recovery.

A character cannot Hold his Action (or voluntarily lower his DEX) and then Recover. A character cannot Abort to a Recovery, nor can he “abandon” a declared Recovery to perform any action unless the GM permits him to.



BEING ATTACKED WHILE TAKING A RECOVERY

A character may be hit by an attack while taking a Recovery (either as an Action, or because he's unconscious and can do nothing else). If he takes no damage from the attack after applying his defenses, he may take his Recovery as normal. However, if the character takes any STUN or BODY damage from the attack, his Recovery has been interrupted. He doesn't get back any END or STUN and may take no Actions — he's just wasted a Phase. (At the GM's option, this also occurs if a character suffers any similar effect, such as losing INT to a Drain INT or taking Knockback.)

If a character takes damage in a Segment in which he has a Phase, but prior to his DEX in the initiative order (in other words, before he has had a chance to act or declare an Action), he may declare a Recovery when he gets his Phase. The Recovery occurs at the end of the Segment, per the usual rules. If he takes damage *after* declaring his Recovery, the Recovery is spoiled, as described above.

HOLDING BREATH AND DROWNING

A character who holds his breath does not get to Recover, even on Post-Segment 12. He also expends a minimum of 1 END per Phase. He may lower his SPD to 2 (see 6E2 17) to reduce the amount of END he uses.

A character who runs out of END while not breathing expends STUN as END (see 6E2 131). A character who runs out of STUN then loses BODY, drowning at -1 BODY/Phase. (If a character is already at 0 STUN or below when he runs out of END, he starts burning BODY right away — he's got no STUN to go through, so he "skips" that step and begins using BODY up quicker.)

All characters drown at a minimum SPD of 2; so even a SPD 1 character must expend 2 END per Turn. (Low SPD individuals react more slowly, but they still have to breathe!)

RECOVERING BODY

Generally, a character Recovers a number of BODY in one month equal to his REC. The GM can apportion this BODY over the course of the month (or even speed it up, if that's appropriate for dramatic purposes). For instance, Chiron of the preceding example could Recover 5 BODY in a month, or approximately 1 BODY every 6 days. This rate of healing assumes the character takes it easy.

If the character moves around, fights, travels, or engages in similar strenuous activity, the healing rate is halved. If the conditions are very poor, unsanitary, overly cold or hot (he's in jail, perhaps), or otherwise unfavorable for healing, the healing rate is also halved. If a character is suffering from any Impairing or Disabling wounds, that may also double the normal healing time, at the GM's discretion.

On the other hand, hospital care can halve the time needed to heal (thus doubling the amount of BODY a character can Recover in a month). Modern (or even more advanced) medicine may greatly speed up the character's healing rate. If the campaign is high-tech, then the GM may want to adjust the healing rate for characters receiving medical attention. Similarly, in some campaigns healing magic can speed a character's progression back to full health.



TOOLKITTING:

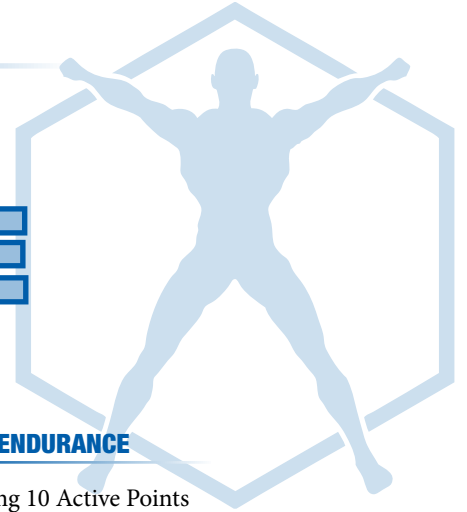
CHANGING THE HEALING RATE

The default *HERO System* rule that characters Recover their REC in BODY per Month works well for most genres. However, in some games the GM may want to emphasize "dramatic realism" even more strongly by allowing characters to Recover lost BODY more quickly. This is most appropriate for campaigns where the GM keeps strict track of day to day time and is aware of exactly how much time passes between adventures.

To get the characters back in fighting shape at a faster pace, change the BODY Recovery period to REC in BODY per Week. To *really* minimize the effects of injuries, increase it to REC in BODY per Day. That way characters can get really battered, bruised, and shot up during one adventure, yet be fully healed and raring to go just a day or two later.

On the other hand, in some games the GM may feel that the standard BODY Recovery rate is already too fast. If you want to make the effects of injuries linger, increase the Recovery period to REC in BODY per Two Months, or even REC in BODY per Season.

ENDURANCE



Actions require some energy. The *HERO System* reflects this by requiring characters to use Endurance (END) to perform physical feats. The general rule is that 10 Active Points' worth of a Power or STR cost 1 END each Phase to use. Thus, a character using a Blast 2d6 would use 1 END. Characteristics other than STR do not cost END to use, unless noted otherwise.

Of course, a character doesn't have to use all of his STR, or use a Power at full power if he doesn't want to. Using STR and Powers at partial power is a good way to conserve END.

Some Maneuvers and other Actions don't have a listed STR value. In such cases, a character spends 1 END (unless the GM rules otherwise). This includes Combat Maneuvers such as Block, Dodge, or firing a weapon. Martial Maneuvers do not cost END (but see 6E2 91).

Characters regain at least some of the END they've expended when they get a Recovery (see *Recovery*).

USING STUN FOR ENDURANCE

A character who runs out of END — *i.e.*, who reaches 0 END, or is reduced into 0 END through a Drain or similar attack — and still wishes to perform Actions may use STUN as END. The character takes 1d6 STUN Only damage for every 2 "END" (or fraction thereof) used, and no defense is allowed against this damage. Yes, characters can Knock themselves Out using this rule. Isn't it wonderful to be heroic?

Characters cannot spend END below 0. Once they reach 0 END, they can only spend STUN in place of END, as described above. A Drain or similar Power can reduce END below 0 for recovery purposes, but characters can't spend END into the negatives.

SUPERHEROIC AND HEROIC ENDURANCE

Superheroic Campaigns: Using 10 Active Points of STR or a Power costs 1 END per Phase.

Heroic Campaigns: Using 5 Points of STR costs 1 END per Phase; using 10 Active Points of a Power costs 1 END per Phase.

In Superheroic campaigns, many characters pay END just to maintain their Powers, so END is very important. Superheroes tend to have mighty powers that use up huge quantities of END, and rationing power can be an important consideration in a long battle.

Although END use is usually less of a factor in Heroic campaigns than in Superheroic campaigns, the importance of END varies greatly from campaign to campaign. In modern-day or Science Fiction campaigns, characters use self-powered weapons and devices, and thus rarely run out of END. But in Swords And Sorcery Fantasy, characters typically engage in more HTH Combat, so END is more important.

In most Heroic campaigns, END costs are 1 END for every 5 Active Points of STR, which simulates the prevalence of HTH weapons and combat better, but 1 END for every 10 Active Points of Powers (such as magic spells in a Fantasy campaign). As noted on 6E1 41, character only has to spend END once for his STR in a Phase, no matter how many different ways he uses it (attacks excepted); this doesn't apply to any other abilities or powers.

The GM should feel free to adjust, or even ignore, END costs. He should never require players to keep track of END unless it's important.

OPTIONAL LONG TERM ENDURANCE LOSS

This optional rule involves the use of END over long time periods. It reflects the fact that characters become more and more fatigued if forced to continuously exert END. The Long Term END (LTE) rules are complicated; you should only use them the GM feels they'll enhance the adventure. This rule is particularly useful to keep wizards from casting spells too frequently.

THE BASICS OF LONG-TERM ENDURANCE

At the beginning of a game session, adventure, or the like (GM's decision), a character starts with his full Endurance (END). He also starts with Long-Term Endurance (LTE) equal to his END. The difference between the two is that END reflects the power, stamina, or "fuel" the character needs to use his abilities, STR, powers, and the like in combat or crisis conditions, while LTE reflects his fatigue over the long term, when he's having to exert himself on a continuous or frequent basis.

During the game, a character's END falls and rises during combat as he spends END to power his abilities, then takes Recoveries to get it back. It can fall and rise as often as necessary, and it can get as low as zero or even into the negatives before returning to full. LTE is lost at a much slower rate, but is also Recovered at a much slower rate, as discussed below.

LTE AS A RESTRICTION ON END

A character's END cannot exceed his LTE except through artificial means, such as Aid and the like. In other words, when a character loses LTE, it affects how much END he has available to use — every point of END lost to LTE means one less point of END for a character to use during combat and other situations. If a character's LTE reaches 0, he must stop and rest and cannot take further action until he has at least 1 positive LTE (and thus 1 positive END). Characters cannot use STUN for LTE as they can for standard END.

Example: *Master Hawk, a wizard, has 30 END, and thus 30 LTE. During the course of a long day's journey he loses 5 LTE. That means his END is now effectively 25 as well — no matter how many Recoveries he takes, he can't raise it above 25 until he also raises his LTE above 25. However, he could use artificial means, such as a Spell of Great Stamina (Aid END) or a Potion of Energization (+20 END for 1 Turn or until used) to give himself more than 25 END for a while.*

CALCULATING LONG-TERM ENDURANCE LOSS

To calculate LTE loss, the GM needs to determine whether the situation is one where the character uses a consistent amount of END every Turn, or his END usage is staggered or inconsistent over the course of some period of time.

CONSISTENT END USAGE

If END use is consistent Turn after Turn for a long period of time, the character should compare the amount of END he used in a Turn to his REC. If the END used in a Turn is less than half the character's REC, he loses no LTE. If the character uses greater than half his REC, then he begins losing LTE, as indicated by the Long-Term Endurance Table. At a minimum, the character loses 1 LTE. As long as he maintains a more or less consistent usage of END Turn after Turn, he loses LTE at the rate specified in the Table. This most commonly occurs in situations where a character is on an arduous journey, is fleeing from someone, or the like. You could also use it to determine the fatiguing effects of being in a long battle where the GM isn't keeping track of Turn-by-Turn END usage but it's easy to figure out how much END a character would typically use per Turn based on his SPD and preferred Actions.

Example: *Arkelos and his companions are fleeing from some nomads across a desert. Each of them is spending half his REC in END per Turn to move as fast as he can through the arid landscape. As a result, each of them is losing 1 END to LTE every Five Minutes. Arkelos normally has 40 END when fully rested. After an hour of this pace, he has lost 12 END to LTE, so he only has 28 END to spend when the nomads bring them to bay at an oasis. If Arkelos has to spend more than 28 END, he will have to start using STUN in place of END (although taking Post-Segment 12 Recoveries may delay that unfortunate eventuality for a Turn or two).*

STAGGERED OR INCONSISTENT END USAGE

Not all situations are so predictable, however. For example, it's possible a character with REC 6 might spend 15 END per Turn for a while, then 20 END per Turn, then 8 END, and so on. There are several ways the GM can handle this situation to suit the practical and dramatic needs of the situation.

First, if the character's END usage is consistent over small periods of time, you can determine LTE loss for each period separately. You calculate a new rate of LTE loss when the character's END usage increases or decreases for another period.

Example: *Master Hawk has REC 6, 30 END, and 30 LTE. For an hour he spends 3 END per Turn, which means he loses 1 LTE per 5 Minutes, putting him at -12 LTE (18 LTE total) after an hour. For the next hour he spends 6 END per Turn, which means that during that hour he loses 1 LTE per Minute... so after 18 minutes, or 90 Turns, of spending END at that rate he's at 0 LTE and must stop doing anything.*

Master Hawk realizes he's tiring too quickly, and after 15 Turns (3 minutes) of spending 6 END per Turn he slows down to only 2 END per Turn. At that point he has 15 LTE, and thus 15 END, since for three minutes he was spending END at the LTE loss rate of 1 per Minute. 2 END per Turn is less than half his REC, so he stops losing LTE as long as he maintains that pace.

Second, if the character's END usage varies wildly by Turn during a given time period, the GM can simply determine the average END/ Turn spent during that time and determine LTE loss from that. Typically the GM just adds up the total amount of END spent and divides it by the number of Turns of activity to calculate the average.

Example: *Master Hawk is performing an hour-long ritual during which he casts numerous spells and performs many activities. During the course of the 300 Turns during the hour, his END usage varies from 1 per Turn to as many as 18 per Turn. The GM determines that Master Hawk's average END usage per Turn during that hour is 3 END. That's half of his REC 6, so he loses 1 LTE per 5 Minutes during that hour, for a total of -12 LTE.*

Third, if appropriate the GM can take the largest amount of END used in any Turn during the period of activity and consider that the amount of END used per Turn over the entire time period.

LONG-TERM ENDURANCE TABLE

(END in Turn)/REC	END lost to Long Term
less than ½	0
½	1 per 5 Minutes
1	1 per Minute
2	1 per Turn
3	2 per Turn
4	4 per Turn
5	8 per Turn

RECOVERING LONG-TERM ENDURANCE

A character does not regain spent LTE with normal Recoveries; Recovering LTE requires longer resting periods. A character Recovers his REC in LTE for every full Five Hours of rest. If a character does not or cannot rest, he only Recovers his REC in LTE once per Day. The GM can apportion this over the course of the day if he wants.

Example: *Pulsar (REC 10) tries to blow his way out of his prison cell with his Blast. Since this will take a long time, the GM decides to use the LTE rules. Pulsar's Blast 12d6 costs 6 END to use. Pulsar has a 5 SPD, so he uses 30 END per Turn, assuming he doesn't use any other Powers. 30 is 3x Pulsar's 9 REC, so Pulsar loses 2 LTE each Turn. If he stays active, he'll be able to Recover 9 Long Term END per day, or approximately 1 every 2 hours. If he rests, he can recover 9 LTE every 5 Hours, or 2 LTE per Hour.*

AFFECTING LONG-TERM ENDURANCE

At the GM's option, characters can buy Adjustment Powers and other abilities intended to affect only a character's LTE, not his regular END. This simply involves declaring that the power works against LTE rather than END; this does not entitle the character to a Limitation (or require an Advantage), but once this decision is made it can't be changed. Consider LTE to cost 3 Character Points per point for purposes of Adjustment Powers and the like.

PUSHING

Occasionally a character needs to exceed the normal limits of his abilities to perform a noble, heroic, or life-saving action. This is called *Pushing*.

GENERAL RULES

Although Pushing differs slightly in Heroic and Superheroic campaigns (see below), some general rules apply to both types of campaigns.

First, a player must declare that his character is Pushing *before* he makes an Attack Roll (or other appropriate roll). If the Attack Roll misses, the character still must expend the full END cost for Pushing.

Second, Pushing is very tiring. When a character Pushes, he must spend 1 END for every Character Point by which he Pushes his STR or Power, in addition to the normal END cost for the un-Pushed ability. For example, a character who Pushes for 10 points of STR spends the usual END for his STR *plus* 10 END for Pushing. Generally, characters can only Push Powers that cost END. They cannot Push powers that never cost END, that are bought to 0 END, or that have Charges (but can Push powers bought to ½ END). A character can Push abilities that draw END from an Endurance Reserve, but the GM may forbid this if it would be inappropriate or seems abusive.

Third, a character cannot more than double a Power's Active Points by Pushing — he can only add as many Active Points to a Power by Pushing as the Power already has. For example, if a character has Swimming 8m (4 Active Points), he can only add 8m (+4 Active Points) to that Power by Pushing it — he can't exert himself and suddenly Swim 28m per Phase. For attacks, the extra damage obtained by Pushing an attack counts as base damage.

Fourth, any Advantages on the Pushed ability automatically apply to the dice or effect gained from Pushing — the character doesn't have to reduce the Pushing effect to account for the Advantages. For example, if a character has a Blast 8d6, Armor Piercing and he Pushes it for 10 Character Points, he fires a Blast 10d6, Armor Piercing. A character cannot increase the extent of his Push by applying Limitations to it, nor does Pushing have a greater effect on a Limited ability.

Fifth, a character normally cannot Push to obtain extra Noncombat Movement or apply an Adder to a Power. However, the GM may, in *rare* circumstances, allow this (see below).

Sixth, *Pushing is only for heroes and important NPCs.* The average man — even the best athletes and warriors — can *never* Push. Pushing is something only heroes (including all PCs) and their enemies can usually do. For example, an Olympic weightlifter cannot Push his STR to lift more weight and win the gold medal — he's not a hero, so he can't Push, even though this is a crucial activity for him. Only in situations requiring true heroism and sacrifice can a normal person Push, and only then at the GM's discretion. For example, a GM might allow a normal person to Push his STR to lift a burning car off of someone who's trapped beneath it, since that's a situation where lives are at stake and the character is putting his own life at risk to save others.

Seventh, *characters can only use Pushing for crucial, heroic, or life-saving actions.* Characters, even heroes and PCs, cannot Push whenever they want to just to look impressive. Pushing is a last-ditch effort to save the day when all else fails, an enemy has to be Knocked Out *now*, regular-strength attacks aren't getting the job done, or something terrible will occur if a character doesn't stop it. Generally, characters should not be allowed to Push every Phase as a matter of course, even if they have the END to do it. The GM determines whether a character can Push in a given situation.

PUSHING IN HEROIC CAMPAIGNS

A character in a Heroic campaign may push his STR or abilities up to 5 Character Points with a successful EGO Roll, +1 Character Point for every 1 point by which he makes the EGO Roll.

The GM may provide a bonus to the character's EGO Roll, or even forego the roll altogether, based on how important the Push is. If Andarra's trying to pull a lever to save the planet Theris from being devoured by a giant space amoeba, the GM might give her a bonus to her EGO Roll. On the other hand, the GM can discourage more casual uses of Pushing by applying a negative modifier to the character's EGO Roll (assuming the GM allows Pushing at all; see above).

PUSHING IN SUPERHEROIC CAMPAIGNS

Pushing in Superheroic campaigns is a much more common occurrence. A Superheroic character can Push the limits of an ability by up to 10 Character Points. This doesn't require an EGO Roll.

Example: *Defender has to stop a wall from falling down on a helpless old lady. The GM determines that his STR 30 isn't enough to hold up the wall. Defender Pushes his STR for 10 Character Points up to 40 STR, enough for him to hold up the wall long enough for the lady to escape. The END cost for this heroic feat is 3 for a 30 STR and 10 for Pushing the STR to 40 for a total of 13 END.*

The GM may allow Pushes greater than 10 Character Points in unusual circumstances, such as saving the universe.

OTHER RULES

Some Powers are bought with multiple “components.” For example, Change Environment is bought with various combat effects, Tunneling with both velocity and the PD Tunneled through, Darkness with the Sense Groups affected and the size of the Area covered, and so on. Similarly, many Powers have Advantages that significantly affect their performance (such as Area Of Effect, Armor Piercing, or Increased Mass). If a character wants to Push a Power that has “components,” or that has an Advantage, the GM has to decide how the points gained from Pushing apply. In most cases the best option is to apply the points as “evenly” as possible over the entire ability. However, in some cases the GM may allow a character to apply most or all of the Pushed points to a specific aspect of the Power (such as increasing the size of an Area Of Effect, or increasing just the PER Roll modifier of a Change Environment with multiple combat effects).

As discussed above, typically characters can only Push abilities that cost END. At the GM's option, a character can Push an ability that doesn't cost END by paying STUN instead: they take 1d6 STUN Only damage (no defense) per 2 Character Points (or fraction thereof) Pushed for.



TOOLKITING:

DAINGEROUS PUSHES

For some campaigns, the basic Pushing rule — that the character pays lots of extra END for the Pushed points — may not be enough. The GM might want to truly test the limits of characters' heroism and willingness to sacrifice for the greater good by making Pushing more harmful or inconvenient. Some possibilities include:

- Pushing also causes the character to lose STUN — he takes 1d6 STUN Only damage (no defense) per 2 Character Points (or fraction thereof) Pushed for.
- Pushing tires the character out so much that it reduces his CON — each 5 Character Points Pushed for (or fraction thereof) inflicts a Drain CON 2d6 on him. The Drained points return at the normal rate.
- Pushing actually draws on the character's life force; doing it too often can kill him. Each 5 Character Points Pushed for (or fraction thereof) causes him to take 1 BODY damage (no defense).
- Pushing an ability weakens it for future use. For example, it may acquire a Required Roll 14- (or lower) for the rest of the combat, or be Drained (like CON, above).

PRESENCE ATTACKS



Powerful individuals are impressive. Some can be so overwhelming that they can make others stop and listen, or even obey commands. The *HERO System* simulates this with *Presence Attacks*.

A Presence Attack is an attempt to influence the target(s), and can have very useful effects. It affects everyone who can hear the character performing it (or sometimes just see him, depending on the Presence Attack), provided it's intended for them. For example, a Presence Attack made by one of the PCs against Ogre might also affect Ogre's henchmen, but wouldn't affect the other PCs at all. Furthermore, the effects of a Presence Attack are reduced by one level when applied to anyone against whom the attack isn't specifically directed.

Although Presence Attacks are most often used in combat (to make an opponent hesitate or surrender), they have plenty of other uses as well. Out of combat, characters can use them to persuade, inspire, or interrogate NPCs. Villains can use them to terrify innocent people or cow victims. Priests and religious characters can use them to proselytize. The possibilities are virtually endless.

To perform a Presence Attack, a character rolls 1d6 for every 5 points of PRE he has. The GM should modify this roll heavily based on the situation (the Presence Attack Modifiers Table lists some modifiers the GM can apply). Compare the total of the Presence Attack to the defender's PRE, then check the Presence Attack Table. (See the text below for expanded explanation of the Table entries.) The effects of a Presence Attack last as long as the GM deems appropriate (but see the text below for suggested guidelines).



PRESENCE ATTACK TABLE

Presence Attack is	Effect of Attack
Target's PRE	Target is impressed. He hesitates enough so that the attacker may act before him this Phase, or receives +5 PRE only for purposes of resisting contrary Presence Attacks made that Phase.
Target's PRE +10	Target is very impressed. He hesitates as above, and only performs a Half Phase Action during his next Phase. He considers very deeply what the attacker says, and may comply with requests or obey orders which seem worthwhile to him. He receives +5 PRE only for purposes of resisting contrary Presence Attacks made that Turn.
Target's PRE +20	Target is awed. He will not act for 1 Full Phase, is at ½ DCV, and possibly will do as the attacker commands. If he's friendly, he's inspired and may follow the character into danger; he will comply with most requests and obey most orders. He receives +10 PRE only for purposes of resisting contrary Presence Attacks made that Turn.
Target's PRE +30	Target is cowed. He may surrender, run away, or faint. He is at 0 DCV, and will nearly always follow commands. If he's friendly, he becomes inflamed, and will follow character into any danger, comply with virtually any request, or obey virtually any order.

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TOOLKITING: DEFENDING AGAINST PRESENCE ATTACKS

The default *HERO System* rule is that characters use their PRE to resist the effects of Presence Attacks, since PRE tends to reflect a character's forcefulness, charisma, bravery, confidence, bearing, self-esteem, and so on. However, there may be situations where GMs want to offer characters the option to use another Characteristic instead (or even require them to do so). Some possibilities include:

- as a representation of a character's will-power, EGO might be a good choice to resist Presence Attacks that try to persuade a character to do something he'd be opposed to doing.
- as a representation of intellect, insight, and the ability to think quickly, INT might be a good choice to resist Presence Attacks that appeal to logic, common sense, and similar qualities
- as a representation of hardiness and durability, CON might be a good choice to resist Presence Attacks that depend largely on pain, such as attempts to torture information out of a character (though EGO also works well in those situations)

PRESENCE ATTACK MODIFIERS TABLE

Modifier	Situation or Character's Action
-1d6	Inappropriate setting
-2d6	Very inappropriate setting
-1d6	In combat
-1d6	At a disadvantage
-3d6	Covered
<i>Presence Attack conflicts with target's Psychological Complication</i>	
-1d6	Moderate Psychological Complication
-2d6	Strong Psychological Complication
-3d6	Total Psychological Complication
<i>Negative Reputation (6E1 424) relevant or contrary to Presence Attack</i>	
-1d6	8- Reputation
-2d6	11- Reputation
-3d6	14- Reputation
-4d6	Extreme Reputation
-1d6 to -3d6	Presence Attack runs against existing moods
Varies	Character has an appropriate <i>Positive Reputation</i> Perk (6E1 106)
<i>Presence Attack agrees with target's Psychological Complication</i>	
+1d6	Moderate Psychological Complication
+2d6	Strong Psychological Complication
+3d6	Total Psychological Complication
+1d6	Character makes appropriate Interaction Skill Roll
+2d6	Character makes appropriate Interaction Skill Roll by half or more
+1d6	Target is Surprised
+1d6	Exhibiting a Power or superior technology
+1d6	Violent action
+2d6	Extremely violent action
+3d6	Incredibly violent action
+1d6	Good soliloquy
+2d6	Excellent soliloquy
+3d6	Incredible soliloquy
+1d6	Appropriate setting
+2d6	Very appropriate setting
+2d6	Target is in partial retreat
+4d6	Target is in full retreat/has been captured
+1d6	Need (character appealing for help genuinely seems to need it)
+1d6	Logic (statements are extremely logical and well thought out)

PRESENCE ATTACK EFFECTS

Here's an expanded description of what each level of Presence Attack can achieve.

ATTACK EQUAL TO PRESENCE

If the total on the Presence Attack dice at least equals the target's PRE, the target is impressed. He hesitates enough so that the attacker may act before him that Phase, or receives +5 PRE only for purposes of resisting contrary Presence Attacks made that Phase.

Aside from the combat effects described above, a typical "equal" Presence Attack's effects remain for no more than 1 Turn (and often much less). In some cases the GM might allow the character to make an EGO Roll or other roll to at least partially resist the Presence Attack's effects.

PRE +10

If the total on the Presence Attack dice at least equals the target's PRE +10, the target is very impressed. He hesitates just like he does for an "equal" Presence Attack, and only performs a Half Phase Action during his next Phase. He considers very deeply what the attacker says, and may comply with requests or obey orders which seem worthwhile to him. He receives +5 PRE only for purposes of resisting contrary Presence Attacks made that Turn.

Aside from the combat effects described above, a typical PRE +10 Presence Attack's effects last for no more than about 1 Minute. If the GM permits the target a chance to make an EGO Roll or the like to resist the Presence Attack's effects, there's a -1 penalty on the rolls.

PRE +20

If the total on the Presence Attack dice at least equals the target's PRE +20, the target is awed. He will not act for 1 Full Phase, is at ½ DCV, and possibly will do as the attacker commands. If he's friendly, he's inspired and may follow the character into danger; he will comply with most requests and obey most orders. He receives +10 PRE only for purposes of resisting contrary Presence Attacks made that Turn.

Aside from the combat effects described above, a typical PRE +20 Presence Attack's effects last for no more than about 5 Minutes. If the GM permits the target a chance to make an EGO Roll or the like to resist the Presence Attack's effects, there's a -2 penalty on the rolls.

PRE +30

If the total on the Presence Attack dice at least equals the target's PRE +30, the target is cowed. He may surrender, run away, or faint. He is at 0 DCV, and will nearly always follow commands. If he's friendly, he becomes inflamed, and will follow character into any danger, comply with virtually any request, or obey virtually any order.

Aside from the combat effects described above, a typical PRE +30 Presence Attack's effects last for no more than about 20 Minutes. In effect this level of Presence Attack imposes a *Strong* Psychological Complication on the target. However, if the GM permits the target a chance to make an EGO Roll or the like to resist the Presence Attack's effects, there's a -3 penalty on the rolls (unlike a standard Psychological Complication, which has no penalty for Strong).

PRE +40

At the GM's option, if the total on the Presence Attack dice at least equals the target's PRE +40, the target experiences the same combat effects as a PRE +30 attack, but the effects on his mind and/or personality are much more severe: mind-blasting horror; sanity-wrenching revelations; awe so strong it inspires fanatical devotion; fear so intense it breaks even the most hardened man.

Aside from the combat effects described above, a typical PRE +40 Presence Attack's effects last for no more than about 1 Hour (though dramatically speaking, the Attack may continue to affect the target for a much longer time, perhaps even the rest of his life). In effect this level of Presence Attack imposes a *Total* Psychological Complication on the target, with the attendant -5 penalty to any EGO Rolls (or the like) the GM permits the character to make to resist the Presence Attack's effects.

EXTENDING THE DURATION

At the GM's option, for every +5 points beyond the "target level" described above, the duration of a Presence Attack's effects doubles. However, to take advantage of this rule, a character typically must declare the "level" of Presence Attack effect he wishes to achieve (for example, "I want to get a PRE +20 result so I can scare this guy into telling me where to find Big Eddie"). He cannot achieve a higher level of effect no matter how well he rolls, and if he doesn't achieve his target level he accomplishes nothing at all — but he stands a chance of being able to impose much longer-lasting effects on the target.

Example: *Dr. Terror wants to scare Randall Irons so badly that Irons won't bother him for hours. He declares that he's trying to achieve a PRE +30 effect. Thanks to the fact that Dr. Terror (a) has used his Fear Aura power to reduce Randall's PRE to 10, and (b) has bought lots of extra PRE only for scaring people, he gets a whopping PRE +45 result on his Presence Attack roll! That's 15 more than he needed to achieve his declared effect, so the duration is doubled three times (in other words, it's eight times as long). That means Randall remains terrified of Dr. Terror for (20 Minutes x 8 =) 160 minutes, or nearly three hours!*

OTHER RULES

A character's Reputation (Positive or Negative) is extremely important when he makes a Presence Attack. If the target of the Presence Attack knows of the Reputation (determining this may require a roll), it may help or hinder a Presence Attack. If the Reputation supports, or agrees with, the Presence Attack, the Reputation adds bonus dice; if the Reputation and the Presence Attack conflict, it subtracts dice. For example, a character with a negative Reputation for being *Cruel* (11-) will suffer a -2d6 modifier to a Presence Attack to "Surrender and you'll be treated well" — anyone who's heard of the character isn't going to trust that promise. Someone with a Positive Reputation for being *Honest* (+2d6) is much more likely to succeed with that Presence Attack. Of course, a Reputation doesn't affect Presence Attacks at all if the target of the attack is unaware of the Reputation.

Example: *Arkelos, surrounded by four giant trolls, shouts "Surrender or die!" and shatters a tree with his Fire Bolt spell. He has a PRE of 15 (15/5 = 3d6). He's exhibiting a violent action (+1d6), but is in combat and at a disadvantage against 4 opponents (-2d6). He has three levels in the Perk Positive Reputation: Powerful Wizard (this adds +3d6), and the trolls know of him. He gets a total of 3 + 1 - 2 + 3 = 5d6 for a Presence attack. Arkelos rolls a total of 17. The trolls have PREs of 15. Arkelos's Presence Attack equals their base PRE, so the trolls hesitate and Arkelos can act first.*

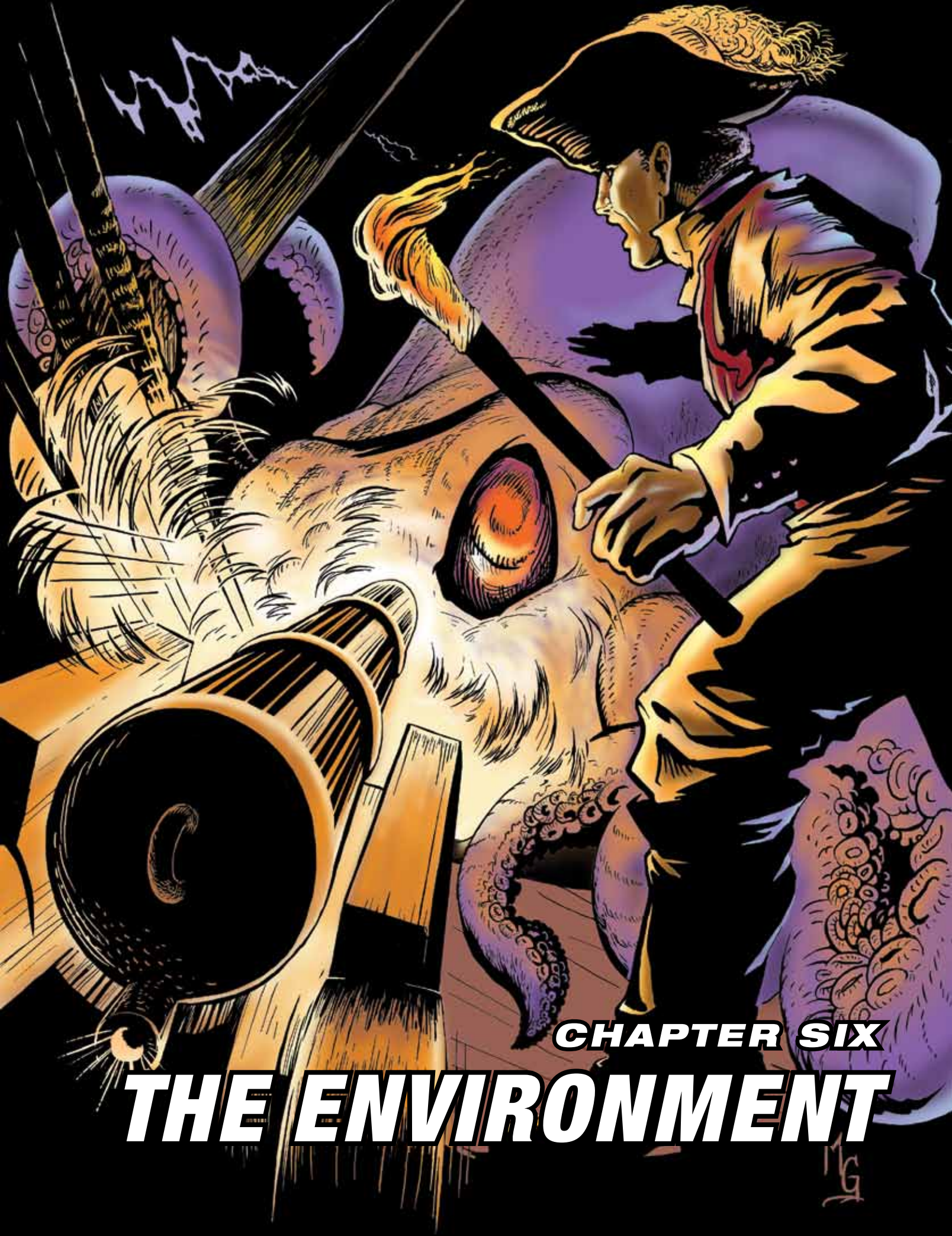
Most Presence Attacks are based on intimidation or fear ("Surrender or die!" is a perfect example). However, characters can use them to evoke and manipulate emotions other than fear. A character could use a Presence Attack to command respect, impress an onlooker, get a crowd's attention, or persuade someone to help him. A character could also use a Presence Attack to inspire friendly listeners, thereby improving their morale.

Example: *Howler and her thugs are losing a fire-fight with some UNTIL agents. Her demoralized henchmen are about to run. Howler, not wanting to face the agents alone, attempts to improve her minions' morale. "Don't worry, we can beat them!" she says. She attacks one of the UNTIL agents with a scream, knocking him through a window and into the street.*

This is a combat situation (-1d6), and one of the thugs has been hurt (-1d6). However, Howler has the Positive Reputation Powerful Supervillainess (+1d6), and she exhibited her powers (+1d6) in a violent manner (+1d6). Howler, with her 18 PRE, adds a total of 1d6 to her natural 3½d6 to achieve a 4½d6 Presence Attack. Howler rolls a 21. Since this is equal to the thugs' PRE +10, they are inspired and return to the fight.

Don't overuse Presence Attacks — repeated ones against the same targets are less effective. Each time a character repeats a Presence Attack, he gets -1d6 of effect (-1d6 on the second attack, -2d6 on the third attack, and so forth).

A Presence Attack is an Action which takes no time. However, if the character wishes to perform an Action along with the Presence Attack (like Arkelos blasting the tree, above), that Action typically takes the amount of time it normally does.



CHAPTER SIX

THE ENVIRONMENT



FALLING

THE ENVIRONMENT

It's a tough world out there.

The environment is often a source of danger for daring characters. They can fall off cliffs, be struck by lightning, get mauled by wild animals, and so forth. However, characters can affect the environment, too — primarily by breaking and smashing things that get in their way.

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This chapter provides rules for these situations. Of course, the multiverse is a big place, so it's not possible to cover all the objects and circumstances that characters could encounter or which occur in a campaign. If necessary, the GM should use the rules in this section as guidelines to help him adjudicate situations which aren't specifically covered.

Occasionally a character may suffer the misfortune of falling from a great height. Falling itself does no damage whatsoever to a character — but the impact with the ground can be mighty painful.

Falling objects have a downward velocity based on how long they've been falling. They move every Segment at the DEX on which they started to fall; thus, the object falls its velocity in meters each Segment.

On planets with a gravity similar to Earth's, an object's velocity increases by +10m each Segment due to the acceleration of gravity. The additional acceleration is applied before the character moves. Thus, when an object begins to fall, it starts with a velocity of 10m. An object beginning its fifth Segment of falling has a velocity of 50m (the 40m from the fourth Segment, plus an additional 10m). The maximum velocity based on gravity is 60m/Segment.

If someone attacks a falling character, the character has his base DCV. He can't apply Combat Skill Levels, Maneuvers, or the like to increase his DCV unless the GM permits him to.

Damage From Falls

When a character hits the ground, he takes damage from his fall. Falling damage is usually physical Normal Damage. However, at the GM's option, falling onto sharp objects may convert the damage to Killing Damage (1 DC per 2m fallen for short falls; 1 DC per 2m of velocity for long falls). Conversely, falling into softer surfaces such as tree branches, snowbanks, or awnings could decrease the damage done to the character.

Gamemasters using the Hit Location optional rule can roll on the Hit Location Table to find out which part of the character's body strikes the ground first, and apply the majority of the damage to that body part. Generally, you should only use the Hit Location rules for short falls (for example, that's how a character might suffer a severe head injury from just a minor fall); for long falls, apply the damage to the whole body.

The damage from a fall depends upon whether it's a short fall (20m or less) or a long fall.

Short Falls (20m or less): A character who falls 20m or less takes 1d6 damage per full 2m fallen. For example, a character falling off a four-story building 16m high would take 8d6 Normal Damage.

Long Falls (21m or more): A character who falls 21m or more takes 1d6 Normal Damage for every 2m/Segment of velocity he has at the time he strikes the ground (see the Falling Table). For example, a character hitting the ground at a velocity of 50m takes 25d6 damage.

Avoiding Falling Damage

Regardless of which system you use to determine falling damage, there are several ways to avoid the full effects of a fall.

BREAKFALL

A character with Breakfall can use it to reduce or eliminate falling damage (see *Breakfall*). Of course, given the standard -1 per 4m fallen modifier to Breakfall, this method is rarely of much help for long falls.

CATCHING A FALLING CHARACTER

One way to save a falling character is to catch him. The character who attempts the catch must make an Attack Roll to Grab the falling character (who typically has a base DCV of 3 for these purposes). If the Grab fails, the falling character is not caught, but the character trying to catch him takes no damage. If the Grab succeeds, the falling character has been caught. The falling character may subtract 1d6 from his falling damage for every 5 points of STR the character Grabbing him has; if the damage is reduced to 0d6 or less, neither character takes any damage. Any dice of velocity damage remaining after the Grabbing character's STR are taken by both characters. (If appropriate, the GM may use not just the velocity of the falling character, but the relative velocity of the two characters, to calculate the damage.)

If the rescuer attempts the catch in midair and is Stunned or Knocked Out by the impact, both characters fall (or keep falling). Their velocity equals the falling character's velocity minus 2m per 5 STR used to try to catch him.

Example: *Defender (STR 55) tries to catch Ironclad (who will, if he completes his fall normally, take 30d6 damage). Defender succeeds with an Attack Roll to Grab Ironclad. However, his STR only subtracts 11 dice from the damage, so he and Ironclad both take 19d6 from the maneuver. The damage rolled is 76 STUN, 21 BODY. After subtracting his PD (total of 26), Defender is Knocked Out by the impact. He and Ironclad are now both falling at the rate of (60m - (11 x 2m)) = 38m per Segment. They will accelerate at 10m per Segment, per the normal falling rules.*

REDUCING VELOCITY

A falling character can try to lower his falling velocity by grabbing onto or falling through something. At the GM's option, he must make an Attack Roll using his base OCV (no CSLs or other modifiers apply) to grab or hit the object.

If a falling character grabs or falls through something (such as a tree branch or flagpole), he subtracts from his falling velocity 2m times the total PD + BODY of the object he grabbed. (When you use the standard system for a short fall, the character's velocity is assumed to equal the total number of meters he will fall.) If the character has more meters of velocity than the object's PD + BODY, the object breaks and the character keeps falling (at a slower velocity, fortunately — but, at the GM's option, after taking falling damage from hitting the object he fell through!). If the character has fewer meters of velocity than the object's PD + BODY, the object does not break. The character may make a STR Roll (at -1 per 4m of velocity) to hold on to the object and stop falling entirely. If he fails the roll, he keeps falling, but at reduced velocity. At the GM's option, an Acrobatics roll can be substituted for a STR Roll.

Example: *As he's falling, Ironclad spies a flagpole (PD 4, BODY 2). He tries to use it to break his fall. Ironclad makes a successful Attack Roll and catches the flagpole. The flagpole snaps (Ironclad's 60m velocity exceeds its PD + BODY), but it slows Ironclad's descent by 12m. He slams into the ground at 48m.*

LEAPING

As an optional rule, GMs can allow conscious characters to use their ability to leap to reduce the damage they take from a fall. The character must Hold an Action, and then leap “upwards” at the moment when he hits the ground (this simulates a character absorbing the damage when he lands). For every 2m of vertical leap the character can subtract 2m of velocity. A character who can leap 120m (60m vertically) thus takes no damage from a landing he can prepare for. Characters can only use their Combat Movement Leaping to do this, not Noncombat Leaping.

Falling On Other Planets

If a planet's gravity differs from Earth's, falling speeds there will be proportionately higher or lower. Similarly, the maximum falling velocity is affected by the density of the planet's atmosphere — it will be faster than 60m/Segment in atmospheres thinner than Earth's, slower than 60m/Segment in thicker atmospheres. Since few characters survive a long fall in any case, GMs should set the value which seems to fit the situation.

Example: *While Andarra skulks about on Alpha Talos VII, someone pushes her off a kilometer-high atmosphere reprocessing center. Since the planet has an extremely high gravity and thin atmosphere, the GM decides Andarra accelerates downwards at 12m per Segment with a maximum velocity of 80m per Segment (which would inflict 40d6 if Andarra hits the ground). Andarra earnestly hopes she remembered to recharge the battery on her jetpack.*

FALLING TABLE

Segments Since Fall Began	Current Velocity	Total Distance Fallen
1	10m	10m
2	20m	30m
3	30m	60m
4	40m	100m
5	50m	150m
6	60m	210m
7	60m	270m
8	60m	330m

...and so forth

Dropped Objects

If someone drops an object (such as a piano or an anvil) on a character, the GM should determine how many dice of damage that object would take if it fell to the character's location using the standard system. The character takes that many dice of damage, to a maximum of the object's PD + BODY.

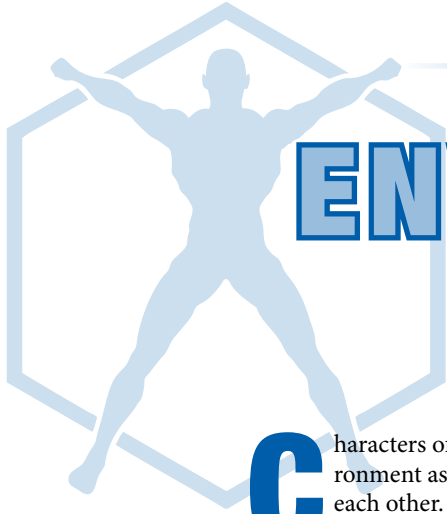
If a heavy object is dropped from a short height, the GM may wish to impose a minimum of dice of damage equal to the STR needed to lift the object — an anvil dropped on one's head *hurts*, even if it only falls for 2m.



TOOLKITING: “REALISTIC” FALLING DAMAGE

The HERO System falling damage rules are designed with dramatic realism in mind, to give characters some chance of surviving most falls. If the GM wants to be more “realistic” about falling damage, he may want to change the rules to make falling damage more dangerous. Some possibilities include:

- make all falling damage Penetrating
- only allow characters to apply their innate PD (and any similar Powers, such as Resistant Protection representing durable flesh) to falling damage; worn armor and the like do not apply (or apply at a reduced rate)
- convert the damage for long falls into the equivalent DCs of Killing Damage



ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

Characters often interact with their environment as much as they interact with each other. Even relatively insignificant factors, such as temperature or rainfall, can cause serious problems in certain situations. This section contains optional rules for modeling environmental effects and using them in your game.

Since these rules generally require more book-keeping, you probably won't want to use them all the time. One of the best uses is for the GM to determine just how long characters can survive in certain conditions; he can then use this information for dramatic effect. For instance, the GM can

determine how far characters can walk across a desert after they run out of water, and then make sure he puts an oasis at just the right spot. In an exploration scenario, a mysterious stranger can arrive in time to rescue the characters from the freezing blizzard. Similarly, these rules make it easier for players to determine whether their characters have adequate supplies for a journey.

Environmental effects can (and often do) affect characters simultaneously. For instance, a character could be dehydrated, starving, and crossing a hot desert all at once. He'd suffer the listed effects for all of these conditions, which would put him in pretty bad shape fairly quickly.

Remember, in non-combat situations, everyone is considered to act at SPD 2 at all times. This is important when evaluating the long term effects on an environment. Also, even in a combat situation, characters may elect to act at a lower than normal SPD, down to a minimum of SPD 2. This significantly reduces the effects of the environment on a character.

DARKNESS

Adventurers often get into situations where the lighting is poor... or non-existent. The Sight Modifiers Table on 6E2 12 lists the standard Sight Group PER Roll modifiers for conditions of less than optimal lighting, including -2 for nighttime and -4 for a dark night (such as might occur on a moonless night way out in the country, far from any of the lights of civilization). Those penalties do not apply to characters' CVs, but the GM may want characters to make PER Rolls each Phase to determine what they can accurately perceive, and impose non-perception penalties (6E2 7) if they fail. (Characters with Nightvision, which cancels out the PER penalty for dark conditions, don't suffer these problems.)

DEHYDRATION

Normal people die in about two to three days without water at normal temperatures. Since there's water in food, eating can help a character last longer. The appropriate *Survival* Skill, along with related Knowledge Skills (for the area, plant and animal life, geology, and so on), can help a character find water. If he finds water, he can postpone or counteract these dehydration effects — at least temporarily.

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After a character has not drunk any water for 24 hours, the basic level of dehydration sets in. This means he suffers 1d6 Normal Damage (no defense) every 6 hours. The character Recovers the lost STUN normally. The GM can consider this STUN loss to be a dizzy spell or period of light-headedness (occurring, of course, at an appropriately dramatic moment during the six-hour period of effect); or it can occur gradually over the time period. The character regains his BODY through the normal healing process. Once he reaches 0 BODY, he loses 1d6 BODY every hour until he dies.

High temperature hastens the effects of dehydration. Each Temperature Level above the Comfort Zone (see *Temperature*, below) adds 1d6 to the dehydration effect; for instance, Temperature Level 3 would mean 4d6 of dehydration every 6 hours. Of course, Temperature Level usually varies throughout the six hour time; if necessary, the GM should establish an average Temperature Level for each 6 hour period.

While this may not seem like too much of an effect, it's important to note that the effects of dehydration are in addition to the effects of high temperatures. The combination of the two can kill a man in hours. See the *Temperature* section for more information on Temperature Levels.

FROSTBITE

Extreme cold causes *frostbite* — an unpleasant condition in which the flesh actually freezes and dies. The dead flesh can become gangrenous if not removed. Typically it affects the extremities (fingers, toes, limbs, ears, nose). Some of the BODY damage caused by low Temperature Levels (see below) can be frostbite. Frostbite isn't a particularly dramatic or interesting condition to inflict on PCs; it's useful to point out as a danger in extreme cold conditions, and as a spur to action for the heroes, but isn't really a fun thing to have happen to a hero.

STARVATION

Normal people die after about two weeks without food. Of course, a lot depends on the initial health and weight of the starving person, and the amount of activity he experiences while starving. Starvation takes a long time to occur, and thus rarely factors into a roleplaying game. However, the occasional desert expedition or a prisoner locked in a dungeon may experience some starvation. An appropriate *Survival Skill* helps a character find food in the wilderness, if that happens to be his situation.

Starvation doesn't begin to have effects until a character hasn't eaten for about two to three days (the GM can adjust this period to account for activity and other conditions). After that time, he suffers 1d6 Normal Damage per day (no defense). He Recovers the lost STUN normally, and heals the lost BODY normally as well (but he won't get his monthly BODY Recovery until the starvation ends). The GM can use the STUN loss as a dizzy

spell or light-headedness for dramatic purposes, as mentioned under *Dehydration*, above.

In addition to the STUN and BODY lost through starvation, the starving character also loses STR, DEX, and CON at the same rate as BODY. For simplicity, you can just roll one die and use that to determine the amount of all Characteristics lost (e.g., if you roll a 3, you lose 3 STUN, 3 BODY, 3 STR, 1 DEX, and 3 CON). For more variable results, you can roll a separate die (looking for Normal Damage BODY) for STR, DEX, and CON. The STR, DEX, CON, and BODY are recovered at the normal rate for lost BODY (1 point per point of REC per month). Poor conditions double or triple this recovery time; excellent conditions halve it. Of course, characters cannot Recover this lost STR, DEX, CON, and BODY until the starvation ends.

Unless the GM rules otherwise, Regeneration has no effect on starvation damage, nor do Healing powers, Paramedics, or the like. (However, a character could easily buy a "starvation healing" power with Transform defined as "I create food so the victim can eat it.")

SUNBURN

Sun exposure can cause bad burns on exposed skin; the degree of sunburn depends on the character's skin tones, amount of exposure, and the latitude he's at. The equatorial sun is much fiercer than the sun at high latitudes, which is why people who live near the equator have dark skins and dwellers at high latitudes have light skins.

Sunburn causes Normal Damage (no defense); the amount of damage depends on the amount of skin affected. One way to decide this is by Hit Locations. The head is 1d6, each arm is 1d6, the legs are 2d6 apiece, and the torso is 3d6. (If multiple locations are exposed to the sun, add the dice of damage together.) Those figures are for the entire body, front and back. The GM determines the amount of body exposure and the time of exposure. The damage listed is for the worst possible exposure, which results in second degree burns. For milder cases of sunburn, take no BODY damage, just STUN. Use half the amount of dice for even milder cases. (Note that even these "mild" cases are more severe than most people would ever get.)

Hours of exposure are usually necessary to cause severe sunburn, though once again this depends on many factors. In a roleplaying game situation, this is most likely to occur during long journeys outdoors (especially in deserts or the like), or when a character is Knocked Out and left in the sun. In such a circumstance, a fully clothed character would only be burned on his face and maybe hands, which would cause ½d6 or perhaps just 1 point of STUN.

Once treated, a sunburned character can take a Recovery once per day for the STUN loss. *Paramedics Skill* reduces this time, or with modern painkillers you could remove the STUN loss entirely. Recovering the BODY from sunburn takes the normal amount of time.



Change Environment

Characters can create environmental effects using several Powers, primarily *Change Environment* (see 6E1 174). That Power includes guidelines for how to build a particular effect, and how long that effect lasts. Characters can use the *Extra Time* and/or *Damage Over Time* Modifiers to simulate environmental changes that take a long time to build up to full strength, and the *Long-Lasting* Adder for Change Environment to keep the effects from dissipating quickly.

Here are some guidelines on other environmental conditions, and how characters might simulate them with Change Environment:

FOG

Basic fog causes a -1 to Sight Group PER Rolls for anyone inside, or looking into, the affected area (characters can make thicker fogs, which impose greater modifiers on Sight Group PER Rolls, if they wish). Fog affects most forms of Sonar the same way.

HIGH PRESSURE

Higher than normal atmospheric pressure is not immediately dangerous as long as the pressure is equalized internally and externally (if not, treat this as an attack). When a character moves suddenly from a high-pressure environment to a lower-pressure environment, though, he suffers from the bends — bubbles of nitrogen gas in the blood that can cause excruciating pain, severe injury, and death. (See *The Bends*, 6E2 158, for more information.)

Basic high pressure causes 1 point of NND Killing Damage (the defense is LS: Safe Environment: High Pressure) (characters may cause more damage by spending more points, if they're creating this as an attack via Change Environment or the like). The damage occurs not when the high pressure field is imposed, but when the pressure suddenly returns to normal. Halve the damage for every time interval over 1 Turn that the affected characters remain in the field (*i.e.*, halve the damage at 1 Minute, halve it again at 5 Minutes, and so forth). Thus, if a character wanted to use a High Pressure Change Environment as an attack, it would take one Phase to impose the High Pressure and his next Phase to drop it; the damage would occur on the second Phase.

LIGHT, SHADOW, SOUND, AND SILENCE

Use Images or Darkness, not Change Environment, to create light, sound, and silence. Images can be bought with a -1 Limitation (such as *Only To Create Light*) to reduce the cost; use the standard rules for those Powers to expand the area affected.

Shadow typically imposes a -1 Sight Group PER Roll for anyone inside, or looking into, the affected area (characters can make gloomier shadows, which impose greater modifiers on Sight Group PER Rolls, if they wish). Light can impose similar penalties by making an area so bright that characters cannot see clearly.

LOW PRESSURE

Reducing the pressure to less than atmospheric normal (which occurs on Earth at heights above 5,000 feet) has several interesting effects, most relating to the relative lack of oxygen in such environments. First, characters must spend a minimum of 1 END per Phase, even if not active; if they're active, this loss is in addition to any they spend to perform actions. Characters who run out of END burn STUN and then BODY, just like drowning.

Second, fire does not burn as well under low pressure. Such environments can simply reduce damage from fire by a point or two, or the air can become so thin that fires go out (or cannot be lit). Similarly, sound does not carry as well in low pressure, and sonic-based powers may suffer from reduced effectiveness.

Third, characters have a harder time taking Recoveries in low pressure. Depending upon how low the pressure becomes, reduce REC to three-fourths, half, or one-quarter of normal — or even all the way to zero.

Due to these varying effects, the easiest way to simulate low pressure is not with Change Environment alone, but Change Environment Linked with Drain. Use CE to force characters to spend 1 END per Phase. Use Drain with an *Expanded Effects* Advantage to reduce a character's REC and any Powers with a fire special effect simultaneously.

MAGNETIC FIELDS

At low levels of effect, you can simulate magnetic fields with Change Environment, using Telekinesis STR in place of causing damage or Skill Roll modifiers. At high levels of effect, buy magnetic fields as Telekinesis, Area Of Effect, that *Only Works On Ferrous Materials* (-½). Either type of field suffices to trigger Susceptibilities or Limitations based on powerful magnetic fields.

RADIATION

Characters can create low-intensity radiation with Change Environment causing minor levels of NND damage (Normal or Killing). Often the character applies a *Damage Over Time* Power Modifier so the victim only accumulates the damage once per day after lengthy exposure. Higher intensity forms of radiation are bought as Drains, RKAs, or other Attack Powers. See *Living In A Dangerous World*, below, for further guidelines on radiation.

RAIN/SNOW

Basic rain and snow are Change Environment which causes a -1 PER Roll for Sight and Hearing in the affected area. Characters can increase the effect to lessen visibility, to cause minor NND damage due to freezing cold, or to reduce CV to simulate the slippery conditions (at least in some places; slippery asphalt won't affect CV much). Rain may also act as a Drain for fire-based powers.

Of course, creating rain or snow often depends, in part, on the local environment and conditions. Summoning rain in a desert may be difficult; making it snow in such a high-temperature region would be virtually impossible (the snow would turn to rain instantly as it appeared).

TEMPERATURE

Extreme temperatures can have many effects. The rules below merely indicate general effects; the actual ambient temperature could be quite different. The important thing for the GM to determine is the Temperature Level, which defines the effects. The exact temperature, wind speed, humidity, and other factors are more of a special effect, which the GM should feel free to specify or not, as he sees fit.

The normal range of temperatures in an environment depends on a variety of factors, including wind, sun, humidity, and other environmental conditions. In the temperate regions of an Earth-like planet, the temperature generally ranges from around 4° Celsius (40° Fahrenheit) to around 32° Celsius (90° Fahrenheit). In equatorial or arctic regions, hotter and lower temperatures prevail.

ESTABLISHING THE TEMPERATURE LEVEL

To gauge the effects of temperature, the GM must determine the current *Temperature Level* at the characters' location. Temperature Level is a way of measuring the effects of temperature on characters in game terms. Temperature Levels are rated in numbers — negative numbers represent cold temperatures, positive numbers hot ones.

Both high and low Temperature Levels can adversely affect characters. To determine when these effects start to occur, the GM must establish a *Comfort Zone* of temperatures in which characters suffer no measurable negative effects. For campaigns featuring human or near-human characters, the GM can assume that the Comfort Zone ranges from about 10° Celsius (50° Fahrenheit) to around 27° Celsius (80° Fahrenheit). At colder or hotter temperatures, characters lose REC and END (see below).

Typically, each Temperature Level represents about 3°-5° Celsius (10°-20° Fahrenheit) difference, though the GM should set the exact parameters based on the campaign, the environment, and other factors.

On Earth, the actual Temperature Levels a character might encounter range from about -6 to +3 (though a raging Antarctic blizzard might be colder than -6). In a desert setting, the Temperature Level might only hit +3 (or, rarely, +4) for a couple of hours at midday; it's cooler

earlier or later in the day, and at night can dip down to -1. The GM can define areas by the range of Temperature Levels that occur in that area.

CHANGING THE TEMPERATURE LEVEL

At its base level, Change Environment can alter the Temperature Level by +/-1. For every 3 additional Character Points spent, the character can alter it by +/-1 level. Note that this alteration could be up (hotter) and/or down (colder), depending on the nature of the power. For purposes of Change Environment, consider the Comfort Zone to be a single "level," no matter how large it is in comparison to true Temperature Levels.

A Change Environment power has to work with the Temperature Level of the environment — it alters the existing temperature, it doesn't establish an all-new temperature. For example, if the GM says a desert is Temperature Level 2, then a Change Environment (raise the Temperature Level) for three levels adds to that, resulting in a Temperature Level of 5. Using the same power in an extremely cold area (Temperature Level -4) would warm things up to -1. On the other hand, a Change Environment (reduce the Temperature Level) with three levels of effect creates a Temperature Level of Comfort Zone.

If appropriate, a character with a Change Environment power can specify the exact temperature he creates within a given Temperature Level or the Comfort Zone.

THE EFFECTS OF TEMPERATURE

Characters who are in the Comfort Zone suffer no adverse effects from temperature. They might be chilly or hot, but in game terms the temperature doesn't inhibit or harm them.

Once the Temperature Level rises or falls above the Comfort Zone, this changes. At a given Temperature Level, characters lose some of their REC and a certain amount of END every 20 minutes. Reduce the character's REC and END by the value of the Temperature Level until the character leaves the area or alters the Temperature Level in his favor somehow. For example, Temperature Level 2 and -2 both reduce a character's REC and END by 2. The END lost is Long Term END; the character must rest for 5 hours to Recover it.

When a character is at 0 END, any action he tries to take burns STUN points (see 6E2 131). When his REC reaches 0, he may soon find himself burning STUN to act. The STUN is, of course, not Recovered, since at that point he no longer has REC. And when his STUN is gone, he uses BODY as END to stay alive. At that point, death isn't far away.

TEMPERATURE LEVELS

Temperature Level	REC Lost	END Lost per 20 minutes
Comfort Zone	—	—
1 (-1)	-1	-1
2 (-2)	-2	-2
3 (-3)	-3	-3
4 (-4)	-4	-4
5 (-5)	-5	-5
6 (-6)	-6	-6
...and so forth		



LIFE SUPPORT

The various “Safe Environment” forms of Life Support provide broad protection from most environmental effects, whether they’re natural or created with Change Environment. Safe Environment: Intense Heat and Intense Cold provide immunity from the effects of high and low Temperature Levels, respectively. Safe Environment: High Pressure provides immunity to the damage and other effects caused by high pressure; Low Pressure/Vacuum does the same for the opposite condition. Safe Environment: Radiation allows the character to wander around in nuclear wastelands without fear of genetic damage or other ill effects (rampaging packs of mutants are, of course, another matter entirely).

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Note that the immunity to damage which Life Support provides applies *only* to damage caused by Change Environment, ambient conditions, and the like — environmental effects that take time to harm the character in most circumstances. Life Support offers *no* protection from damage caused by other Powers using similar special effects, such as a Blast defined as a “heat wave” or “radiation bolt.”

PROTECTION FROM TEMPERATURE

Characters can do several things to reduce the effects of temperature, such as wearing appropriate clothing and taking shelter.

Activity: The Temperature Level rules assume the characters are active. Resting lowers the Temperature Level by 1. In other words, it’s a good idea to rest in the heat, but staying still and not moving in the cold can make things worse.

Clothing: The Temperature Level rules assume the character wears normal clothing for average weather. Appropriate clothing reduces the Temperature Level by 1, or even 2 (in the case of cold, the Temperature Level moves toward the Comfort Zone; for instance, a character wearing Level 2 arctic gear in Temperature Level -3 conditions is effectively at Temperature Level -1). Cold weather gear is far more effective than hot weather gear — modern clothing can provide up to Level 5 protection from cold, but only Level 2 protection from heat. Characters can buy better clothes as Life Support through a Focus, if you want to use high-tech solutions.

With no clothing at all, or clothing designed for hot weather, being in the cold is one Temperature Level lower (wearing a swimsuit makes Temperature Level -1 into Temperature Level -2; Temperature Level 2 becomes Temperature Level 1).

Shelter: Shelter makes a big difference, too. Characters in a modern climate-controlled environment can completely ignore the outside temperature. For a character stuck out in the wilderness, some shade can reduce the Temperature Level by 1. Building a snow cave can improve the Temperature Level by 1-2. The GM should provide modifiers like these to improve the survival chances for the heroes and make the story more interesting.

Survival Rolls: A successful Survival roll provides the character making it (and possibly his comrades) with a 1-step Temperature Level shift

in a beneficial direction; a half roll creates a 2-step Temperature Level shift. Only one Survival roll per day per group is allowed (although the GM can treat other characters’ *Survival* Skills as Complementary Skills).

Wetness: Being wet shifts the Temperature Level down one — it’s helpful in a hot climate but bad in a cold one.

Wind: The wind also affects Temperature Levels, especially when it’s cold (“wind chill”). Reduce the Temperature Level by 1 to 3 depending upon the strength of the winds.

UNDERGROWTH

When adventuring in wilderness regions, characters may find themselves in areas with thick brambles, thickets, brush, and other undergrowth. This makes it hard to move or fight. Characters in thick undergrowth suffer -2 DCV and -1 OCV, and usually cannot move more than 4m per Phase (at most) on the ground. The *Thicketmaster* form of Environmental Movement (cost: 4 Character Points) negates all these penalties, allowing the character to move and fight without hindrance.

WIND

Wind can have several effects, which are summarized in the accompanying Wind Table. The effects increase as the speed of the wind (in miles per hour) increases.

First, wind is rated as having a STR. The GM can use this STR to do Normal Damage to structures, determine if the wind can knock over (or even pick up) large heavy objects, or “Throws” objects as missiles. (Of course, the GM should use common and dramatic sense when applying wind damage; some objects are more likely than others to be damaged or moved based on their size, shape, and other factors.) A strong wind, particularly one that’s sustained over a long period of time, can be dangerous and deadly.

Second, wind can interfere with Perception. Primarily the penalty applies to Hearing PER Rolls, but if there’s enough dust, sand, smoke, or similar particulate debris, the penalty (or some fraction of it) may also apply to Sight PER Rolls.

Third, strong winds can interfere with missile weapons. The effect is strongest on muscle-powered weapons, such as thrown knives, arrows, and the like. For bullets, halve the listed penalty. Energy beams and the like usually aren’t affected at all, though if there’s enough debris in the air the GM might impose part of the penalty to represent the chance that the beam is “soaked up” or deflected somehow.

The Wind Table lists twelve “Wind Levels,” ranging from no wind to a Force 5 tornado on the Enhanced Fujita Scale. To raise or lower the Wind Level by one step on the table using Change Environment is a combat effect worth 5 Character Points (and almost always requires the *Area Of Effect Advantage*).

WIND TABLE

Wind Level	Wind Speed (MPH)	STR	PER Rolls	Missile OCV
None	0	0	-0	-0
Very Light	4-17	3	-0	-0
Light	18-30	5	-0	-1
Moderate	31-44	8	-1	-2
Heavy	45-57	10	-2	-4
Very Heavy	58-64	15	-3	-6
Storm Force	65-72	20	-4	-8
Hurricane/Tornado 1	73-110	25	-5	-10
Hurricane/Tornado 2	111-135	30	-6	-12
Hurricane/Tornado 3	136-165	35	-7	-14
Hurricane/Tornado 4	166-200	40	-8	-16
Hurricane/Tornado 5	201+	45	-9	-18

LIVING IN A DANGEROUS WORLD



Here are descriptions of a few common circumstances and the damage (or other effects) characters might suffer from them.

Acid

Here are some expanded rules for acid. If you prefer a simpler approach, just use the rules for Chemicals (see below); conversely, if you'd like more detailed rules for other dangerous chemicals, you can adapt the acid rules.

ACID IN GAME TERMS

The basic damage caused by Acid is RKA 1d6, Penetrating, Constant, and Uncontrolled, and works against Energy Defense. Stronger acids could do 2-4d6 damage, while weaker ones would be ½d6 or 1 point RKA.

The Constant and Uncontrolled effect of acid means the substance keeps damaging an affected target for a specific period of time. This lasts until one of either two things happens: the END allocated to the power runs out (or 1d6 Phases, if it costs 0 END); or the power reaches a defined damage threshold. The latter condition means the acid keeps damaging the target until the BODY damage rolled on the dice equals twice the BODY damage possible on a single attack. So, a basic Acid RKA 1d6 keeps attacking until the END allocated for it runs out, or until it inflicts a total of (2 x 6 =) 12 BODY. (This means the damage rolled on the dice, regardless of how the target's defenses apply.) Against a target with no Impenetrable rED, the maximum BODY typically occurs first.

At the GM's option, if a character exposed to acid is wearing heavy clothing, physical armor, or the like, the acid may have to "eat" its way through those materials, damaging them until they're destroyed, before it affects the character himself. This may give the character a Phase or two of "breathing room" to shed the acid-affected garments before the acid affects his flesh. But of course, that may leave him without any defenses against other attacks...

NEUTRALIZING ACID

A victim can stop an Uncontrolled acid attack by applying the appropriate base (see below), or by immersing himself in water. Immersion in water puts out the acid on the victim's next Phase (the immersion gets rid of the acid immediately, but the reaction also inflicts an additional immediate attack on the victim).

Example: *The Lord of Acid (SPD 4) hits Witchcraft (10 rED, not Impenetrable) with an Acid Cloud (RKA 1d6, Penetrating, Constant, Uncontrolled). On Segments 3, 6, 9, and 12 (her attacker's Phases), Witchcraft takes 1d6 Killing damage. On Segment 3, when she first gets hit, The Lord of Acid rolls 4 BODY and 12 STUN. Since the attack is Penetrating, she takes 1 BODY and 1 STUN from the attack. On Segment 6, the attack continues, and this time rolls 6 BODY and 24 STUN. Witchcraft takes 2 BODY from that one (since the 6 that was rolled had two "BODY pips," and got them through her defenses as a minimum). If Witchcraft were to do nothing, the attack would keep whittling her down until 12 BODY was rolled on the acid's damage dice (or until the attacker's Uncontrolled END pool ran dry, but she doesn't know how much longer that might be). On Segment 8, however, she casts a Create Water spell directly over herself. That removes the acid, but the explosive reaction caused by dousing the acid also triggers one final attack on the Lord of Acid's next Phase. He rolls another 2 BODY and 10 STUN, which does 1 BODY and 1 STUN after she applies her defenses.*

ACIDS AND BASES

An acid can be neutralized by a base (a substance that accepts protons, whereas an acid donates them). A base raises the pH of a substance toward 14 (an acid being roughly defined as a substance with a pH less than 7.0). Typically a weak base, for example egg whites or soda, is used to counteract an acid, since strong bases (like alkali or many hydroxides) are caustic (and thus as likely to damage flesh or objects as acid) and can react exothermically (*i.e.*, generate heat and thus fire) when mixed with a strong acid.



6

In game terms, applying a base to an acid acts as a Drain against the attack (though unlike an ordinary Drain the points “lost” to the Drain don’t return, they’re permanently removed from the acid’s effect). A weak base in equal amounts to the acid involved acts as a Drain 8d6; lesser amounts have proportionately fewer dice of effect, greater amounts have no greater effect. A strong base in equal amounts to the acid involved acts as a Drain 12d6; lesser amounts have proportionately fewer dice of effect, greater amounts have no greater effect. However, strong bases may themselves affect a character just like an acid does, and using them to stop acid has an 11- chance to cause an exothermic reaction that generates extreme heat. This heat does $\frac{1}{2}d6+1$ Damage Classes of Killing Damage to whatever was affected by the acid, and may set flammable materials on fire.

Chemicals

Caustic chemicals can be found in factories, the laboratories of alchemists and scientists of various sorts, the blood of aliens or demons, and many other places. The number of dangerous chemicals is nearly infinite, but their basic combat effects — which depend on whether the chemicals are weak or strong, diluted or undiluted — are simple.

The damage listed in the Chemicals Table assumes the character has been splashed with or exposed to about one quart of the substance. For much larger quantities, add 1-2d6; if the character is immersed in the chemicals, add 2 or more dice.

The damage indicated on the table is Normal Damage, NND, Does BODY. The defenses are to be covered by a substance the chemicals cannot affect (like a chemical-proof sealed suit) or to have a form of ED Resistant Protection or other Power that keeps the chemicals from touching the character. At the GM’s discretion, chemical damage may be Penetrating. Some chemicals also cause or emit fumes; these do 2d6 NND damage (STUN only); the defense is appropriate Life Support.

A character takes damage from chemicals for every Segment of exposure until the chemicals are washed off of him or otherwise removed. Sometimes a chemical can only be removed with special chemicals designed to neutralize it; in such cases, exposing the chemical to water may actually worsen the problem (an explosion of 2-12d6 Normal Damage can sometimes result). Appropriate safety measures are usually located near where dangerous chemicals are stored.

Damage from chemicals may result in scars and disfigurement. Consider this a Cosmetic Transform that can only be reversed via plastic surgery, some types of healing magic, or similar methods.

CHEMICALS TABLE

Type Of Chemicals	Damage
Diluted, Weak	$\frac{1}{2}d6$ per Segment
Diluted, Strong	2d6 per Segment
Concentrated, Weak	1d6 per Segment
Concentrated, Strong	4d6 per Segment

Electricity

Electricity — be it a lightning bolt spell cast by a mage, a discharge of sparks from a malfunctioning device, an electric “zap” from a frightened robot, or a blast of pure electricity fired by a supervillain — is one of the most common forms of energy characters can encounter.

ELECTRICITY TERMS

Since electricity is such an important energy in real life, many of the terms that have arisen to describe it are well-known.

The rate at which a device produces or uses electric power is measured in *watts*. Typically a power plant produces electricity in megawatt (millions of watts) amounts, then transmits it through conductive wires to devices that use it at specified rates. For example, a 60-watt light bulb converts electricity to light at the rate of 60 watts.

Electric current, or the amount of electric charge per second, is measured in *amperes*, or “amps.”

Electrical impedance or resistance is measured in *ohms*. If 1 volt of electricity causes a current of 1 ampere to flow in a device, that device has 1 ohm of resistance. Similarly, a device that uses 1 ampere of current to dissipate 1 watt of electric power has 1 ohm of resistance.

Electric potential difference, or electromotive force — the ability of electricity to “do things,” so to speak — is measured in *volts*. When a 1 ampere current releases 1 watt of power, you have 1 volt of electricity. The accompanying Voltage Table lists examples of voltage using figures for the United States (typical household voltage may vary in other countries, for example).

For game purposes, voltage is the easiest way to determine how much damage electrical current does to a target — the more volts, the more damage. Alternately, you could rule that a low ampere, high voltage attack does Normal Damage, and a high ampere, high voltage attack does Killing Damage.

ELECTRICITY IN THE REAL WORLD

There are many ways for characters to get electrocuted — being Knocked Back into a junction box, accidentally touching a live wire, or being struck by a random lightning bolt, for example. Three factors determine how much damage results:

- the voltage of the electricity;
- the current from the attack; and
- how well grounded the character is.

The voltage and current of most common wires are standardized (see the Voltage Table). Therefore the Electricity Table below suffices for most situations. In unusual circumstances, the GM can use the information here as guidelines for coming up with consistent damage and other effects. Alternately, the Optional Electricity Table provides different figures derived from the Voltage Table. These may be more “realistic,” but possibly also less dramatic and more potentially game-unbalancing.

GROUNDING

Grounding — how easily electricity can flow through the character and into the ground — can vary. Characters who are well-grounded have more electricity flow through them, and thus are more powerfully zapped.

For game purposes, you should define characters as Well Grounded, Poorly Grounded, or Insulated. Well Grounded includes such states as standing in water or holding onto a metal pipe stuck into the ground. Insulated includes flying, standing on a rubber mat, or wearing a special insulating suit. The rest of the time, the character can probably be considered Poorly Grounded.

VOLTAGE TABLE

Source Of Electricity	Typical Volts
Automobile electrical system	12
Battery, alkaline	1.5
Battery, rechargeable lithium	3.75
Battery, single-cell NiMH/NiCD	1.2
Electrical train overhead lines	25,000 (25 kV)
Electrical train/subway “third rail”	600-700
Household electrical outlet	120
Lightning	100,000,000 (100 MV)
Power transmission lines	110,000 (110 kV) to 1,150,000 (1.15 MV)

kV: Kilovolt (thousands of volts) **MV:** Megavolt (millions of volts)

ELECTRICITY TABLE

Power Type	Insulated	Poorly Grounded	Well Grounded
Automobile Spark Plug	2d6 S	5d6	2d6 K
Electric Train			
Overhead Line	5d6 S	8d6	3d6 K
Third Rail	3d6 S	5d6	2d6 K
Household Current			
Standard	1d6 S	2d6	1d6 K
Heavy	3d6 S	5d6	2d6 K
Industrial Current			
Light	5d6 S	8d6	3d6 K
Heavy	7d6	11d6	4d6 K
Lightning Bolt	5d6 S	10d6	4d6 K+
Power Transmission Line	9d6	14d6	5d6 K

S: STUN only damage **K:** Killing Damage



OPTIONAL ELECTRICITY TABLE

Power Type	Insulated	Poorly Grounded	Well Grounded
Automobile Spark Plug	½d6 S	1d6	1 point K
Electric Train			
Overhead Line	6d6	8d6	2½d6 K
Third Rail	3d6 S	4d6	1d6 K
Household Current			
Standard	1d6 S	2d6	½d6 K
Heavy	2d6 S	5d6	1d6-1 K
Industrial Current			
Light	4d6 S	6d6	2d6-1 K
Heavy	6d6	8d6	2½d6 K
Lightning Bolt	20d6	30d6	20d6 K+
Power Transmission Line	15d6	25d6	10d6 K

S: STUN only damage **K:** Killing Damage

This table derives its damage figures from the Voltage Table, with the assumption that 10,000 volts does approximately 1d6 Killing (3 DCs). Some adjustments are made on the upper and lower ends of the scale for ease of use (since a lightning bolt that does 1,000d6 Killing Damage would put a damper on most campaigns).

ALTERNATING AND DIRECT CURRENT

The attacks listed on the Electricity Table are all alternating current (AC). When a character is hit with an AC charge, his muscles spasm and throw him away from the source of the attack. If the character wants to hold on to the source (perhaps to prevent it from touching someone else), he must succeed with an EGO Roll (at -1 per 5 STUN which he takes after applying defenses) to keep his grip; furthermore, he continues to take damage from the electricity every Segment.

In some strange laboratories, or perhaps at a power plant, characters might encounter direct current (DC). When a character touches a source of DC power, his muscles tend to lock themselves onto the source, thus causing him to take damage every Segment until he dies. To pull away, the character must succeed with an EGO Roll (at -1 per 5 STUN which he takes after applying defenses).

REAL ELECTRICITY (-¼)

Players and GMs interested in creating “realistic” electrical attacks should consider adding a -¼ Limitation, *Real Electricity*, to appropriate offensive powers. A power with this Limitation does its listed damage to targets defined as Poorly Grounded. It does only half damage to Insulated characters, and converts to the equivalent DCs in Killing Damage against Well Grounded characters (if it’s already a Killing Attack, the GM may add 1-2 DCs, if he wishes). Alternately, the GM may simply impose this rule on Electricity attacks as a campaign ground rule, for no Limitation.

Fire

Fire is one of the most spectacular and destructive forces characters can encounter or wield. (In some genres it’s the only type of energy damage they’re likely to encounter.) Raging fires and devastating blasts of heat can emanate from many sources — bonfires, blast furnaces, torches, a house on fire.

Fire is a chemical reaction between oxygen and some sort of fuel (a flammable material, such as wood, gasoline, paper, or the like). For combustion to occur, oxygen and fuel must be present, and the fuel has to be heated to its *ignition temperature* (the temperature at which it catches fire). In short, to have a fire, you need three things: fuel, oxygen, and heat. One of the reasons fire’s so dangerous is that it’s self-perpetuating: once a fire starts, it supplies enough heat to keep itself going as long as there’s fuel and oxygen available.

Putting out a fire involves depriving the fire of one of those three elements. Water can be used to remove the heat and/or raise the ignition temperature of substances; chemicals or smothering a fire with sand can remove the oxygen from the area and thus snuff the fire. Characters with powers based on manipulating air, chemicals, fire, matter, or telekinetic force may be able to find all sorts of ways to extinguish a fire.

On Earth and other planets, gravity determines how a flame burns. Since the hot gases in a flame are lighter than the surrounding air, they rise. That’s why most fires spread in an upward direction, and flames tend to look “pointed” at the top and thicker at the bottom. In a microgravitic environment, fire forms a sphere.

FIRE DAMAGE

For large fires, assume the listed damage occurs per 1m radius area. Thus, if a character runs through a bonfire 8m wide, he takes fire damage for each 1m area (each attack applies to his defenses separately). Of course, the damage can vary from area to area; a raging fire may do 2d6 K at its center, but only ½d6 K near the edge. The damage from fire or heat is Energy damage. See the Fire Table for suggested amounts of damage for different sources of fire.

AMBIENT HEAT IN FIRES

Even an area that’s not on fire can be harmful if it’s in the midst of a fire — the heat alone can burn and blister skin, dehydrate and exhaust people, and so forth. A 1m radius that’s surrounded by fire on three or more sides does one-quarter damage if a character stands in one place, and half damage if he attempts to move through the fiery area (standard rounding rules apply). Characters with Life Support (Safe Environment: Intense Heat) do not suffer this damage.

6**FIRE TABLE**

Fire Type	Heat Damage	Other Damage
Blast Furnace	6d6 K	12d6 Normal (physical), if in furnace
Boiling Oil or Tar	2-4d6 K	May have Sticky effect
Electric Burner/Heater	½-1d6 K	
Lantern, Flaming Oil	1 pip to 1d6+1 K	
Molten Metal	4d6 K	14d6 Normal (physical)
Oil or Chemical Fire	1 pip to 3d6 K	Possible smoke damage (see text)
Rocket Exhaust	6-8d6 K	18d6 Normal (physical)
Superheated Steam	2-3d6 K	10d6 Normal (physical), if in blast
Torch	1 pip to 1d6 K	+2d6 HA if used as a club
Torch, Welding/Industrial		
■ Acetylene	2d6 K AP	
■ Oxy-Hydrogen	2½d6 K AP	
■ Laser	3d6+1 K AP	
■ Plasma	4d6 K AP	
Wood or House Fire	1 pip to 2d6 K	Possible smoke damage (see text)

AP: Armor Piercing **K:** Killing Damage **NND:** No Normal Defense (STUN only)

SMOKE AND GASES

Fire creates smoke, and in a confined space it can build up to the point where it inflicts harm on living beings. It does NND Normal Damage; the defense is Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing). Treat this as a Constant Area-affecting attack, but characters caught in a smokey area only take damage once in each of their Phases, not once per 1m area they move through. The accompanying Smoke Damage table indicates the amount of smoke damage.

It takes a fire time to fill an area with smoke. Assume that one 1m radius of fire generates a 1m radius worth of smoke per Turn, with lesser fires filling proportionately smaller volumes.

Smoke isn't the only dangerous gas a fire can produce. Fires that burn some types of plastics, chemicals, and the like may produce fumes that can be sickening, or even fatal. In this case convert the NND damage on the Smoke Damage take to Normal Damage, NND, Does BODY damage; the defense is Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing or appropriate Immunity).

IGNITING THINGS

One of fire's most deadly characteristics, and also one of the things that's most difficult to model in game terms, is its capacity to set things on fire that aren't already on fire. If the temperature rises to the "fire point" or "ignition temperature" of a substance (either because the heat itself increases, or direct exposure to fire does the trick), that substance catches on fire. The accompanying Ignition Table lists the temperatures of common types of fire and the ignition points of many objects. This may become important during play when characters use Change Environment to raise the Temperature Level (see 6E2 145) — it takes a lot of increased Temperature Levels to cause fires to spontaneously break out, but it is possible.

In game terms, think of fire as having properties similar to the *Sticky Advantage*. (In fact, many fire powers are built with this Advantage, and if a character wants to use this property of fire in combat/crisis situations, he should pay Character Points for it.) When an object's ignition point is reached, it catches on fire and takes 1 BODY damage per Phase (assume fire has SPD 2 for these purposes). As discussed above, the fire keeps burning until it uses up the fuel or oxygen available, or is extinguished. While it's still burning, if it comes into contact with other flammable substances, it sets them on fire as well.

Alternately, instead of worrying about ignition temperatures and the like, the GM can use the accompanying Catching Fire Table to determine if something catches fire after being hit with a fire attack. The GM can adjust the suggested rolls based on the circumstances. For example, paper is rated as "Highly Flammable" — but a thick ream of paper is less flammable than a few loose sheets, so the GM might reduce the roll by 1-2 points for a ream. Once an object catches fire, use the rules above to determine what happens.

SMOKE DAMAGE

Conditions	NND Damage
Confined area	
Trace of smoke	1 point
Moderate amount of smoke	½d6
Large amount of smoke	2d6
Open area, large amount of smoke	1 point
Chemical fire	+1d6

Characters who breathe through a filter (such as a wet cloth) take half damage from smoke inhalation (no damage in the case of "1 point").

IGNITION TABLE

Type Of Fire	Temperature (C)	Temperature (F)
Blowtorch	1800°	2370°
Campfire	400-600°	750-1112°
Candle flame	760°	1400°
Cigarette	400-700°	750-1290°
Cigarette lighter	700°	1290°
Fireplace fire	400-600°	750-1112°
Match	700°	1290°
Oxyhydrogen flame	2000°	3645°
Torch	400-600°	750-1112°

Substance	Ignition Point (C)	Ignition Point (F)
Coal	300°	572°
Coal-tar oil	580°	1076°
Fuel oil	210-262°	410-505°
Gasoline	257°	495°
Kerosene	210°	410°
Magnesium	473°	883°
Natural Gas (methane)	580°	1076°
Paper	233°	451°
Propane	480°	842°
Wood	277-500°	530-930°

CATCHING FIRE TABLE

Category	Chance To Catch Fire*	Examples
Highly Flammable	16-	Paper, gasoline, gunpowder, matches
Flammable	14-	Cloth, hair, fur, twigs/kindling/small wooden objects
Mildly Flammable	10-	Large wooden objects, many plastics
Inflammable	6-	Earth/stone, brick, most metals

*: Chance to catch fire assumes the Fire attack does at least 1 BODY damage after the object's ED is applied. If not, reduce the roll by 3 or more.



OXYGEN DEPRIVATION

Fires require oxygen to burn... which means they use up oxygen just like they use up fuel. In most cases this has no game effect (though it causes air to flow into the areas losing oxygen) — but in situations where characters are in an enclosed space, using fire powers could deprive the space of oxygen and cause everyone in side to suffocate (see 6E2 130 for suffocation rules). In most situations it's simplest for the GM to use oxygen deprivation as a dramatic device, but if you want more precise rules use the following.

Calculating the exact rate at which a fire uses up oxygen is difficult and depends on many factors, including the size and intensity of the fire. A cubic meter contains 1,000 liters (about 350 gallons) of air (which on Earth is 78% nitrogen, 21% oxygen, and 1% other gaseous substances; in some cases this is adjusted to allow for water vapor). That means there are approximately 210 liters of oxygen in a cubic meter. Assume that any Fire-based power uses 1 liter of oxygen per 10 Active Points per Phase of use. The GM can increase or decrease this rate to allow for area-affecting powers and the like.

LIMITATIONS FOR FIRE ATTACKS

The Limitation *No Knockback* is appropriate (if not, “realistically,” mandatory) for most Fire attacks in genres that feature Knockback. Fire has almost no forceful impact to Knock anyone Back, particularly for several meters.

Players and GMs desiring more “realism” in their games should apply the $-\frac{1}{4}$ Limitation *Requires Oxygen* to virtually all Fire powers (powers involving pure heat don't require the Limitation). This means the powers won't work underwater or in a vacuum, and also deplete the available oxygen in the area (see above). However, many characters find ways to overcome these “realistic” restrictions (particularly in the Superheroes genre), so it's perfectly appropriate not to apply this Limitation if you prefer not to. Conversely, in games that involve spending a lot of time in the water (or other areas that lack sufficient oxygen to support fire), you should increase the Limitation's value to $-\frac{1}{2}$.

LAVA

Lava — molten, liquid stone forced up from the depths of the earth by geologic pressure — appears in many adventure stories. More than one master villain has chosen a (supposedly dormant) volcano as his lair, and volcanic islands litter the scenic South Seas in Pulp tales.

A character immersed in lava takes 4d6 Killing Damage (energy), Armor Piercing, every Phase he remains in it. If only part of a character's body suffers exposure — such as a hand or a foot — use the Hit Location table to adjust the damage accordingly.

LIGHT

Besides generating heat, fire also creates light. The GM can allow Fire-using characters to generate useful light as a “side effect” of their powers, or if he prefers he can keep this to a minimum and require them to buy usable amounts of light as an Images-based power. Here are some guidelines for how much light fires of different sizes provide:

Candle: A candle provides full illumination (no Sight PER Roll penalties for darkness) in a 1m radius. For the next 1m beyond that, it reduces the darkness penalty to -2. For the next 2m beyond that, it reduces the darkness penalty to -1. Beyond that distance (a total of 4m from the candle), it provides no meaningful illumination.

Torch: A torch provides full illumination (no Sight PER Roll penalties for darkness) in a 3m radius. For the next 4m beyond that, it reduces the darkness penalty to -2. For the next 4m beyond that, it reduces the darkness penalty to -1. Beyond that distance (a total of 11m from the torch), it provides no meaningful illumination.

Lantern: When lit, a standard lantern provides full illumination (no Sight PER Roll penalties for darkness) in a 1m radius. For the next 2m beyond that, it reduces the darkness penalty to -2. For the next 2m beyond that, it reduces the darkness penalty to -1. Beyond that distance (a total of 5m from the lantern), it provides no meaningful illumination.

Campfire, Hearth Fire: An average-size campfire provides full illumination (no Sight PER Roll penalties for darkness) in an 8m radius. For the next 8m beyond that, it reduces the darkness penalty to -2. For the next 8m beyond that, it reduces the darkness penalty to -1. Beyond that distance (a total of 24m from the fire), it provides no meaningful illumination.

Quicksand

Quicksand is a mixture of sand (or grainy soil) and water that may appear solid on the surface, but is actually incapable of supporting any significant weight. It can occur anywhere with the proper soil conditions, though in adventure fiction it's most common in tropical and jungle areas, swamps, and above or next to bodies of water. Realistically, quicksand is rarely deeper than a few feet (at most), and escaping from it usually isn't too difficult. But *HERO System* campaigns depict *dramatic* reality, where quicksand tends to be the potentially lethal natural trap depicted in movies and fiction. These rules simulate that sort of quicksand.

When characters first fall into quicksand, they usually sink in about half to two-thirds of a meter. Because quicksand is denser than water, characters can float on it if they're (a) not too heavy, and (b) don't panic and start thrashing around.



To determine if a character panics, he must make an EGO Roll. If he succeeds, he remains calm and can act normally. If he fails, he cannot make a STR Roll to escape and sinks 0.5m per Phase into the quicksand. He may attempt a new EGO Roll every Phase, at -1 for each previous missed roll, to collect himself. Once he succeeds with a roll, no further rolls are necessary.

To determine if a character can float, he must make a STR Roll. Apply the Encumbrance penalty to DEX Rolls to this roll, and a -2 penalty for every 0.5m the character has sunk into the quicksand. Additionally, for every doubling of the character's own weight above 100 kilograms (200 kg, 400 kg, 800 kg, and so forth), the STR Roll suffers a -2 penalty. If the roll succeeds, the character counteracts 0.5m worth of sinking; if that brings him to 0m, he's floating on top of the quicksand. If the roll fails, the character sinks 0.5m into the quicksand. The character must make a STR Roll each Phase to remain afloat; for every 0.5m he's sunk, he suffers a -2 to the roll.

If the character has a long, narrow object (such as a polearm, wooden pole, or quarterstaff), he gets a +2 to his STR Rolls to float. Of course, if he can grab hold of a branch, vine, or rope tossed to him by his comrades, he can pull himself out fairly easily (he only has to make a DEX Roll to grab the object, and a STR Roll with no penalties at all to pull himself out).

A character floating in quicksand, or trapped in quicksand as deep as his knees or deeper, can move a maximum of 0.5m per Phase (even if pulling himself out); if other people are pulling him, they can pull him at 4m per Phase.

If a character sinks deeper than 2m into quicksand, he starts to drown, per the rules on 6E2 130. He may continue to make STR Rolls every Phase to try to counteract sinking and float.

If appropriate, you can alter the sinking rate of quicksand to simulate thicker or thinner types.

Radiation

In many genres — Post-Apocalyptic, Science Fiction, and even some Superhero stories — characters can encounter radiation, which can be extremely dangerous.

Technically speaking, “radiation” can be divided into two types: non-ionizing and ionizing. *Non-ionizing radiation* cannot damage organic molecules by impacting them and imparting energy to them. This includes microwaves, radio waves, and infrared radiation. Thus, a microwave oven or infrared-based remote control device cannot make someone “radioactive” or cause cancer. *Ionizing radiation* is much more dangerous, and *can* damage organic molecules by impacting them and imparting energy to them (which makes the target radioactive, can cause cancer [or make it more likely to occur], and so forth). Solar and cosmic radiation in outer space, alpha and beta particles, some ultraviolet radiation, x-rays, and gamma rays are all ionizing forms of radiation. The rest of the discussion in this section generally refers to ionizing radiation, since that's what PCs in a roleplaying game setting tend to be concerned about.

“Realistically” a person exposed to ionizing radiation rarely becomes radioactive, he simply suffers the burns and other effects of exposure. But for dramatic and cinematic purposes radiation attacks and other forms of exposure can make someone radioactive.

REALISTIC RADIATION

The following general rules explain how radiation works “realistically” in game terms.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Radiation harms living things as by delivering intense amounts of energy to a small area. It can damage individual cells' DNA (which can lead to cancer); at higher doses it can cause cataracts, burns (either skin burns or deep tissue/organ burns), permanent sterility, and other effects.

RADIATION LEVEL TABLE

Source	Rads
Occupational Safety Limit	5 per year
Medical X-Ray	0.01 to 0.05 per shot
X-Ray Laser	1 per die of Killing Damage
Cosmic Rays (in space)	30 per year
(Lunar surface)	15 per year
(Earth surface)	0.03 per year
Jovian Radiation Belt	1,000 per hour
Solar Flare (Earth orbit)	100-1,000 per event
Nuclear Fallout (within plume)	240 per year
Plutonium (1 gram)	1 per second
Reactor Core (unshielded)	7,000 per second

RADIATION EFFECTS

Exposure (Rads) is...	Effect
Greater than 5 x CON	Radiation Sickness: Individual loses 1d6 CON. Victim loses 1 point of CON in the Segment when his exposure reaches this limit, and the rest (if any) at the rate of 1 point of CON per Hour. This loss of CON heals at the rate of REC per Month.
Greater than 10 x CON	Serious Sickness: Lose 2d6 CON. Victim loses 1-3 points of CON in the Segment when his exposure reaches this limit, and the rest (if any) at the rate of 1 point of CON per Hour. This loss of CON heals at the rate of REC per Month.
Greater than 20 x CON	Internal Damage: Lose 2d6 CON and 1d6 BODY. Victim loses 1 point each of CON and BODY in the Segment when his exposure reaches this limit, and the rest (if any) at the rate of 1 point of CON and BODY per Hour. This loss of CON and BODY heals at the rate of REC in CON and BODY per Month.
Greater than 30 x CON	Lethal Threshold: Lose 3d6 CON and 2d6 BODY. Victim loses 1-3 points of both CON and BODY in the Segment when his exposure reaches this limit, and the rest (if any) at the rate of 1 point of CON and BODY per 20 Minutes. This loss of CON and BODY heals at the rate of (REC/2) in CON and BODY per Month.
Greater than 50 x CON	Fatal Dose: Lose 4d6 CON and 3d6 BODY. Victim loses 1-6 points of both CON and BODY in the Segment when his exposure reaches this limit, and the rest (if any) at the rate of 1 point of CON and BODY per 20 Minutes. This loss of CON and BODY does not heal; if the character survives, both Characteristics are permanently reduced (though he may spend Character/Experience Points to buy them up from their new amounts).

Resistant Protection and other defenses do not reduce BODY damage from radiation; consider it as NND Does BODY damage, with the defense being Life Support: Safe Environment (High Radiation).

If a character wants to make an area radioactive using the *Change Environment* Power, or use it to reduce the radioactivity of an area, each +/-50 rads costs 4 Character Points as a combat effect.

Radiation exposure is measured in *Rads*, short for “Radiation Absorbed Dose.” One rad is defined as 100 ergs of energy per gram of material. The Radiation Level Table lists the radiation level of various sources of radioactivity; the Radiation Effects table describes the effects of exposure. Radiation, like all forms of energy, is subject to the inverse square rule — so divide the rad level given on the table by the square of the distance to the source to determine a character’s exposure.

FALLOUT AND HALF LIFE

Fallout is radioactive material released by nuclear weapons explosions. Typically, a nuclear bomb going off scatters bits of radioactive material high into the atmosphere. This creates a plume hundreds of miles long where the radiation levels are temporarily higher than normal. The radioactive material then settles onto the ground. The radiation level rises over the whole region covered by the plume.

Some sources of radiation, like ongoing nuclear reactions, emit radiation at a constant rate. Others, like radioactive isotopes in fallout, have a *half life*. The half life is the amount of time it takes for half of the radioactive material to decay to a stable form. Because of the way radioactive decay works, this time is constant for each radioactive isotope, so the rad level drops by half for each half life increment. The process of decay is gradual — the radiation level doesn’t suddenly drop when the half-life period is up.

Objects exposed to radiation (such as from fallout) do not necessarily become “activated” (*i.e.*, radioactive). That only occurs when the atomic nuclei of a substance exposed to neutron radiation (ionizing radiation composed of neutrons) capture neutrons and transmute to new, radioactive isotopes. For example, hydrogen isn’t radioactive — but if neutron radiation adds two neutrons to it, it becomes the hydrogen isotope tritium, which is radioactive. The more neutrons that are involved, the more likely it is that activation will take place. Thus, the type of substance involved, and the intensity of the radiation the substance is exposed to, are important variables. How long the substance remains radioactive depends on the half life of the isotope it transmuted into — it could be seconds, or it could be thousands of years. For gaming purposes, characters are most likely to be concerned with substances that can remain radioactive for long periods of time, such as metals.

RADIATION SHIELDING

Radiation shielding absorbs high-energy particles. In practice, different materials stop different kinds of radiation better than others, but for the sake of simplicity you can lump them all together as “radiation shielding.” The Radiation Shielding table gives the amount of protection for different materials.

RADIATION SHIELDING

Substance	Radiation Multiplier
Atmosphere	
Standard (per meter)	.75
Thin (per meter)	.9
Trace (per meter)	.98
Dense (per meter)	.9
Brick (per cm)	.75
Lead (per mm)	.8
Radiation Suit	.7
Rock (per cm)	.75
Soil (per cm)	.75
Spacesuit	.9
Steel (per mm)	.9
Vehicle Hull (per point of PD)	.9
Water (per cm)	.9
Wood or Plastic (per cm)	.95

Radiation protection is exponential. Steel plating reduces rad levels by .9 per millimeter, so a layer of steel 5 millimeters thick would reduce it by a factor of (.9 x .9 x .9 x .9 x .9), or about .59 overall.

UNREALISTIC RADIATION

But of course, not all settings treat radiation “realistically.” In many adventure genres, radiation isn’t necessarily the insidious, deadly thing it is in real life. It *can* be, but it can also cause fictional mutations both beneficial and hideous — such as the stereotypical “radiation accidents” that give many superheroes their powers.

CANCER

Exposure to radiation increases a person’s chances of developing cancer. Generally this is beyond the scope of a roleplaying game, since it takes years or decades to develop. (Though a villain might, for example, have an “inflict people with cancer immediately” power based on radiation.) However, GMs interested in greater “realism” might want to rule that exposure to any radiation source inflicts a Major Transform on any character who doesn’t have Life Support (Safe Environment: High Radiation). The Transform accumulates slowly, perhaps only .3-1.0 points per exposure (or some rate based on the total Active Points in the radiation powers the character’s

exposed to, such as .1 point per 10 Active Points)... but eventually enough exposure adds up to the point where the Transform occurs and the character develops cancer. The cancer grows normally from that point; the GM determines what type of cancer the character contracts.

DECONTAMINATION

A character or object who’s been exposed to radiation can undergo *decontamination* to prevent or reduce the effects. Decontaminating surface exposure to radiation is easier than decontaminating internal exposure (from, say, eating irradiated food). Typical procedures involve stripping off irradiated (or possibly irradiated) clothing, a full shower, and then dressing in clean clothes. Characters in some settings might have access to “decontamination foam” or “decon pills” that instantly remove all traces of radiation from them.

In game terms, a character who undergoes formal decontamination procedures within 1 hour of exposure to radiation reduces the damage he suffers (per the Radiation Effects table) by half. If he’s already taken more damage than this, he doesn’t get any CON and/or BODY back, but he takes no further damage. If a character undergoes informal decontamination, he reduces damage by one-quarter (25%).

Traps And Security Devices

The types of traps, alarms, and similar security devices that characters might encounter is nearly limitless. They can range from the deadfalls and poisoned arrow projectors of Fantasy and Pulp adventure, to the motion detectors and closed-circuit TV cameras of the modern day, to Science Fiction sensors of many sorts. Here’s *HERO System* information about a few that you can use as examples for creating others of your own:

DEADFALL

A deadfall is a trap that drops one or more large, heavy objects onto the person triggering it. The typical example is a large block of stone or a tree trunk. If the object hits the victim, he takes a number of dice of Normal Damage equal to the STR needed to lift the object and is crushed beneath the object. (The GM decides how heavy the object is based on its size, composition, and so forth.) He takes the same number of dice of damage every Segment 12 thereafter until he wins free or dies. If the weight hits with a sharp or pointed end, convert the initial damage to the same number of DCs of Killing Damage. In the case of some extremely heavy weights, the GM may have a deadfall do large amounts of NND Killing Damage — blunt or not, a 50-ton boulder should crush just about anyone it falls on.

A deadfall typically has OCV 11. Some deadfalls drop objects so large they cover an entire Area. These attack against DCV 3, and can hit, hurt, and crush multiple persons.

MISSILE PROJECTOR

Trap designers usually install this trap behind a wall or the like, leaving concealed openings through which the arrows (or darts) project. When the victim triggers the trap, the arrows fire at him. Depending on the circumstances they may be ordinary missiles... or they might be coated with poison! Typically the triggering mechanism is a concealed plate or panel in the floor, but it could also be a tripwire, failure to open or pick a lock, or the like. The trap usually has OCV 7.

Missile Projector: RKA 1d6, Area Of Effect (8m Line; +¼), Trigger (see text; +¼) (22 Active Points); IIF Immobile (-1¼), No Range (-½), 1 Recoverable Charge (-1¼). Total cost: 5 points.

MOTION DETECTOR

Motion detectors use ultrasonic sound (or sometimes microwaves or other forms of energy) to detect whether anything is moving in their field of “vision” (which extends for about 50 feet [about 16m] in front of them). When someone moves into the protected area, he disturbs the “field,” and the device registers this and activates an alarm. They’re best used in high-security areas with hard surfaces where no movement is expected (*i.e.*, where guards don’t patrol, there are no pets or cuckoo clocks, and so on). Rooms with soft or absorbent surfaces (such as thick carpet or heavy drapes) absorb more sound, so ultrasonic motion detectors don’t work well in them (reduce the device’s PER Roll by -2 or more).

Some poor-quality motion detectors won’t register objects moving slowly. In game terms, this usually means moving at no greater speed than 2m per Turn. This requires a Stealth roll (in addition, the GM may require characters to make EGO Rolls to force themselves to move that slowly). If the character succeeds with his Stealth roll exactly, the sensor suffers a -1 penalty to its PER Roll; each point by which the Stealth roll is made beyond that increases the penalty by another -1. Better models can’t be fooled by slow movement, and will even detect the presence of immobile objects that aren’t normally in the area it covers.

Motion Detector: Detect Moving Persons/Objects 15- (Radio Group) (11 Active Points); OIF Immobile (-1½), Limited Range (16m; -¼). Total cost: 4 points.

RETINA SCANNER

This biometric device is as much a lock as it is a true security device — it’s just that the “key” is one or more persons’ retinas, rather than a physical object, electronic code, or the like. The user places his eye to the device’s scanner, which harmlessly scans the retina. If the retina matches one in its database of authorized users, the device opens the door.

Retina Scanner: Detect Authorized Retina 14- (Radio Group) (8 Active Points); OIF Immobile (-1½), No Range (-½). Total cost: 3 points.

Vehicle Impact

When a vehicle runs into a character, determine the damage as you would for a Move By (for sideswipes and glancing impacts) or a Move Through (for full collisions). The vehicle’s STR depends on its base STR plus Size only (do not include any extra STR bought for it).

Example: A typical automobile (25 STR — base of 10, plus 15 for Size) is traveling at 40m per Phase when its driver suddenly performs a Move Through on a nearby building. Assuming it hits, the vehicle does $((25/5) + (40/6)) = 11d6$ damage.

The vehicle and all passengers in it take one-third (for Move Bys) or half (for Move Throughs) of the damage done. The damage done to passengers is halved if they have seatbelts, airbags, or similar restraint systems.

Damage from vehicle impacts is Normal Damage unless the vehicle has sharp edges, a spike on the front, or some other feature that would convert it to an equivalent number of DCs of Killing Damage.

6



Everything Else

Here are some guidelines for substances and phenomena not covered above.

DURATION

First, the GM needs to decide whether the substance or phenomenon would cause its damage instantly and then stop, or would keep working over time (*i.e.*, every Segment). If the attack is immediate, the GM need only determine how much and what type of damage it does. If it keeps working, the GM must figure out not only its damage, but how much of the damage applies per Segment. Furthermore, he should know how many Segments it does damage for and how to make it stop working (in other words, how the affected character can neutralize it).

TYPES OF DAMAGE

You can define most phenomena as doing one (or more) of three types of damage: STUN Only; Normal; and Killing. Additionally, the GM can apply Advantages such as NND (either regular NND, or NND Does BODY) and Armor Piercing if necessary to represent the phenomena or substance correctly in game terms. The Types Of Damage Table provides some examples.

AMOUNT OF DAMAGE

For ease of analysis, define the potential strength of the damaging substance or phenomenon into one of four classes: Weak; Strong; Powerful; and Very Powerful. (Of course, these terms are from the point of view of a normal person; PCs in some campaigns may be able to shrug off damage that would kill a normal person instantly.)

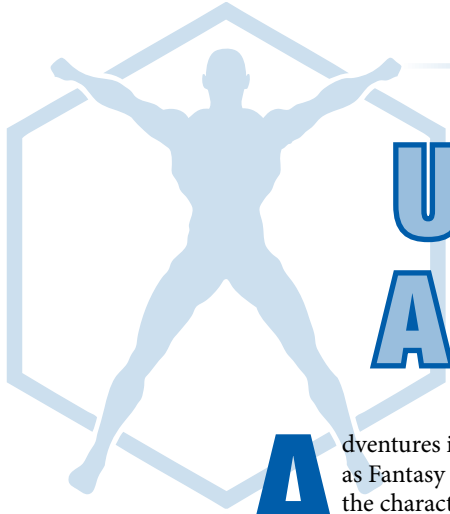
TYPE OF DAMAGE TABLE

Type Of Damage	Example
STUN Only	Small shocks
STUN Only AP	Hits to pressure points
STUN Only NND	Nonlethal gasses
Normal	Damage spread over an area
Normal AP	Damage concentrated at a point
Normal NND (does BODY)	Corrosive substances; some lethal gasses
Killing	Sharp objects
Killing AP	Extremely sharp or hypervelocity objects
Killing NND (does BODY)	Intense radiation, poisons, some lethal gasses

LETHALITY TABLE

Lethality Level	STUN Damage	Normal Damage	Killing Damage
Weak	1-4d6	1-3d6	1 pip-½d6
Strong	5-10d6	4-7d6	1d6-1½d6
Powerful	11-16d6	8-12d6	2-3d6
Very Powerful	17d6+	13d6+	3d6+

Note: If the damage is NND or AP, reduce the lethality by one step up the chart; thus, a Strong Normal NND attack would have 1-3d6 in it, not 4-7d6.



UNDERWATER ADVENTURING

Adventures in some campaigns — such as Fantasy or superhero games where the characters visit underwater civilizations like Atlantis — involve underwater action. Here are rules for underwater activity in the *HERO System*.

THE UNDERWATER ENVIRONMENT

The underwater environment is very different than the surface environment in ways both obvious and subtle. Characters may find that the biggest danger they face on some underwater missions is not the enemies they fight, but the very water around them.

LIGHT

Sunlight only penetrates the ocean to certain depths. The deepest parts of the ocean are as black as a starless night, with the only light coming from the bioluminescence of creatures adapted to the environment. Additionally, the murkiness of the water inhibits sight. See *Perception And Communication*, below, for rules about making PER Rolls underwater.

PRESSURE

The mass of all the water above a swimmer exerts a crushing pressure. This alone can kill characters even if they can breathe normally underwater.

Earth's average atmospheric pressure at sea level (one atmosphere, or approximately 1000 millibars) is the default for game purposes. At 1 atmosphere or below, a character's normal PD is enough to resist the effects of pressure.

Heavier pressure, such as from diving deep into the sea, can cause injury and death. As of 2004, the free-diving record for humans is to 214 meters, where the pressure is about 21 atmospheres — but without special protection, they can only remain at such pressures for short periods.

CALCULATING PRESSURE

As a guideline, on Earth, 10 meters of depth in the ocean equals 1 atmosphere, and every +10 meters (or fraction thereof) thereafter equals +1 atmosphere. Thus, a character swimming 43 meters below the surface experiences 5 atmospheres of pressure.

For game purposes, 10 atmospheres of pressure is the most an unprotected humans can withstand for extended periods without suffering any negative effects. For each +1 atmosphere (or fraction thereof) thereafter, a character suffers 1d6 Normal Damage, NND Does BODY, per Turn (the damage accrues on Segment 1). For example, at 15.5 atmospheres, a character suffers 6d6 damage per Turn. The defense to the damage is Life Support (Safe Environment: High Pressure).

In games emphasizing greater “realism,” Safe Environment (High Pressure) only constitutes a total defense to pressure damage up to 30 atmospheres. Above that, Safe Environment (High Pressure) alone is not enough. At that point, for each +1 atmosphere (or fraction thereof) above 30, a person suffers the damage indicated above (beginning at 1d6, not 21d6) unless he has the proper defense: Safe Environment (High Pressure) *and* a minimum of 1 Resistant PD for every 3 atmospheres of pressure. (Normally the defense to an NND shouldn't vary this way, but in this case it's a realistic and valid way to represent the increasing effects of pressure.) This defense can come from armor, personal force fields, or any other source. Thus, at 31 atmospheres, a character with Safe Environment (High Pressure) and 10 rPD is fine; at 32 atmospheres, he starts taking damage, because his rPD is no longer enough to protect him.

THE BENDS

Even when the pressure isn't high enough to cause harm, being in a high-pressure environment has other dangers. Nitrogen and other gases dissolve in the bloodstream under pressure. The affliction known as *the bends* (or, more formally, decompression sickness) occurs when divers try to ascend from underwater depths too rapidly — when the pressure is reduced quickly, the dissolved gases form bubbles and expand, which can cause debilitating pain and tissue damage. (For a graphic demonstration of this, shake up a bottle of carbonated soda and open the top — then imagine that happening in human blood veins.)

The effects of the bends are highly variable. Some deep-sea divers have survived dozens of dives with no permanent effects, but others died or were left paralyzed. The only way to avoid the bends is to depressurize slowly, either by gradually

ascending through the water or spending time in an artificial pressure-control chamber. Divers descending this far require specialized equipment (including using alternative gas mixes in their breathing apparatus, since highly-pressurized nitrogen is also a powerful narcotic) and at least ten hours of pressure stabilization.

In game terms, for any decrease in pressure of greater than 1 atmosphere per minute, a character must make a CON Roll, with a penalty of -1 for each additional atmosphere of pressure. If he succeeds, he doesn't suffer from the bends. If he fails, he suffers RKA 1d6 NND Does BODY damage (the defense is Life Support [Safe Environment: High Pressure]). If he fails the roll badly (by 4 or more), the GM might want to increase the damage to 2d6 (or perhaps by +1 point per point the character missed the roll by). He suffers an additional 1 BODY damage per hour until decompressed or returned to the higher pressure.

At the GM's discretion, a character suffering from the bends (*i.e.*, who fail the roll and are subjected to the NND Killing Damage) is physically incapacitated. To take any physical action, he must make an EGO Roll at -4 to withstand the pain (the *Resistance* Talent adds to this roll). If he fails, he cannot take the action. Each additional action requires a similar roll. At the same time, they will suffer a loss of 1 BODY per Hour until decompressed or returned to the higher pressure.

NITROGEN NARCOSIS

Sometimes called “rapture of the deep,” *nitrogen narcosis* occurs when a diver breathes compressed air at depths greater than 30m (100 feet). The nitrogen in the compressed air can have an adverse effect. For every Turn spent below 30m, a character breathing compressed air must make a CON Roll. If the roll succeeds, he experiences no ill effects. But if he fails the roll, he starts acting as if he were drunk and suffers the effects of intoxication as described on 6E2 47. In most cases he cannot exercise good judgment (at best, he has to succeed with an EGO Roll to do the “sensible” or “right” thing) — instead, he behaves in a wildly erratic manner, possibly becoming reckless or silly. For example, he might become overconfident in battle, or simply wander away from the fighting.

To “cure” the effects of nitrogen narcosis, a character must go to (or be taken to) a lesser depth. Once the hero reaches a depth of 30m or less and takes a Post-Segment 12 Recovery (he lacks the judgment to take a Recovery voluntarily), the effects of nitrogen narcosis disappear.

The bends only presents a problem for divers who use regular compressed air. Special alternate gas mixes are available that eliminate the problem entirely. On the other hand, divers who use pure oxygen in their SCUBA gear suffer similar effects to nitrogen narcosis regardless of depth. Furthermore, breathing more than 1.6 atmospheres of pure oxygen affects the central nervous system.

This causes the character to suffer convulsions... which means that if someone's not there to put his regulator back in his mouth, he'll drown before he can recover.

Handling nitrogen narcosis in the game is difficult — it's not just an excuse to act silly, it's something to be roleplayed properly — so some GMs may prefer not to use these rules at all if they don't think it's appropriate for their players. One quick and easy way to handle it for some characters is to exaggerate their Psychological Complications (and any other Complications that represent a character's mental state, such as some Enrages and Rivalries). This might not work well for Psychological Complications like *Code Versus Killing* or *Vengeful*, but can be a lot of roleplaying fun when a character has a phobia, is in love with another PC, or the like.

TEMPERATURE

Water conducts heat away from the body much more efficiently than air, so divers find themselves feeling the effects of cold underwater more rapidly. Deep oceanic waters can be very cold (Temperature Level -1 or -2, typically) and quickly sap the strength and energy of anyone unused to them. Characters without Life Support (Safe Environment: Intense Cold), whether innate or provided by equipment, lose REC and Long-Term END pursuant to the Temperature Level rules (see 6E2 145, but ignore any losses for being in Temperature Level 1). Special insulated diving suits exist that can counteract the cold (add +1 Temperature Level for a 3mm insulated suit, +2 Levels for a 6mm insulated suit, and +3 Levels for a drysuit).

BREATHING

The main consideration most characters have when they contemplate an underwater adventure is how they'll breathe underwater. Some characters may be able to breathe underwater on their own, but others have to rely on outside resources.

First and foremost, characters can use SCUBA gear or other underwater breathing equipment (see *Divers And Diving*, below). In a “realistic” game, the amount of oxygen they can carry in a single tank severely hampers their ability to use this method for long adventures. But in more fantastical settings, such as Superhero worlds or Science Fiction campaigns, it's possible to have SCUBA-like gear that allows for an unlimited amount of breathing time... but of course, using gear, no matter how sophisticated, leaves characters vulnerable to losing that gear, having it break or malfunction, and so forth. In fantastical campaigns characters may be able to use magic to breathe underwater.

Characters who find themselves unable to breathe underwater begin to drown (see 6E2 130).

PERCEPTION AND COMMUNICATION

Characters may have difficulty perceiving while underwater, or communicating with each other.

SIGHT

Water blocks out sunlight. For photosynthesis purposes, sunlight reaches to as much as 77-92 meters (250-300 feet), but it starts to lose reds and yellows at about 9 meters (30 feet). At 18 meters (60 feet) and below, all the light is blue-green. Below the photosynthesis level, all living beings are animals or organisms that subsist on something other than sunlight. Besides the loss of light, the other factor affecting visibility underwater is murkiness — materials in the water (particulate matter, small organisms, algae, and the like).

In game terms, the GM should require characters involved in an underwater adventure to make PER Rolls when they change targets or need to notice events at a distance. The accompanying table provides a basic modifier based on depth (and thus on darkness), with an additional modifier for murkiness.

INFRARED & ULTRAVIOLET PERCEPTION; NIGHTVISION

Heat dissipates quickly in water, so Infrared Perception (usually bought as a form of Sight) is limited. Characters using Infrared Perception suffer an additional -2 per range doubling for using it at a distance (this is cumulative with standard Range Modifiers).

Nightvision and Ultraviolet Perception work normally underwater, though Ultraviolet Perception becomes useless below the point where sunlight can penetrate.

UNDERWATER VISIBILITY

Depth	Sight PER Roll Modifier
1-8m	-0
9-16m	-1
17-32m	-2
33-64m	-3
65m or deeper	-4
Conditions	Additional Sight PER Roll Modifier
Very murky (muddy river or lake)	-3
Murky (quarry lake, heavy particulates)	-2
Average (typical ocean)	-1
Clear (clear ocean)	-0
Very clear (some Carribean waters)	-0

Characters with Nightvision suffer no penalty due to depth, but do suffer murkiness penalties.

The Range Modifier for PER Rolls underwater increase to -3 per range doubling instead of the ordinary -2.

HEARING

Sound travels more easily underwater, but frequency dropouts (and surface characters' unfamiliarity with how water affects sound) can make understanding speech, pinpointing the origin/direction of a sound, and the like more difficult. All Hearing PER Rolls are at -3; this increases to -4 if what the character wants to do is locate the origin or source of a sound, but improves to +1 if all the character needs to do is hear a sound (rather than identify or locate it). Additionally, the GM may require characters to make unmodified Hearing PER Rolls to understand speech in languages not designed for underwater use, even though normally characters don't make Hearing PER Rolls just to talk.

If a character fails a Hearing PER Roll underwater, it doesn't necessarily mean he didn't hear the sound (particularly if it's speech). Instead, it may mean that he heard it, but can't understand or identify it at all.

SONAR

Underwater Hearing PER Roll rules do not apply to sonar. It works better underwater; not only does it not suffer the standard penalties, it actually gets a +2 PER Roll bonus. However, sonar used underwater cannot perceive objects above the surface of the water — the surface bounces the sonar signal back to the character, effectively "blinding" him as to all things beyond it. And don't forget that sonar isn't foolproof — for example, thermal layers in the water can create PER Roll penalties, and sonar may read a group of small objects that are close together (such as a school of fish) as one big object.

RADIO

Water tends to obstruct radio signals. All Radio Perception and Radio Perception/Transmission both suffer a -5 penalty to PER Rolls. HRRP, which covers more bands, suffers only a -3 penalty. Radar does not work at all underwater.

SMELL/TASTE

Characters who can breathe underwater can make PER Rolls for Smell/Taste without penalty; those who can't are limited to smelling or tasting whatever's in the air they're breathing. In either case, shifting water currents make Tracking by scent quite difficult. Unless the water's still, Tracking Smell/Taste PER Rolls are made at a -2 penalty.

COMMUNICATION

Closely related to perceiving things is the ability to communicate with other people. Being underwater often makes communication difficult. In addition to the perception problems described above, characters may have trouble speaking because they've got SCUBA mouthpieces in their mouths (though special full-face masks with built-in radios that allow communication are available), have trouble seeing hand signals or gestures because of silt or murk, and have difficulty sending and receiving radio signals (see above).



The GM should keep the environment in mind and require characters to make PER Rolls or INT Rolls to understand one another, if appropriate.

MOVING UNDERWATER

In the water, Swimming becomes the default form of movement in place of Running. Thus, for most characters, that means they won't be able to move more than 4m per Phase (8m Noncombat). Characters who've bought the *Usable [As Second Mode Of Movement]* Advantage for Running, Flight, or the like so they can use that Movement Power as if it were Swimming (see 6E1 158y) can use that power underwater without restriction.

RUNNING

Characters can only have Running 2m underwater (4m Noncombat, 1m Half Move). This assumes they're on the ocean floor or some other surface they can actually run on; if they're in mid-water, they can't run at all. Even then, the surface may be so slippery that the GM requires a character to make DEX Rolls or Breakfall rolls every Phase to keep his feet.

At the GM's option, characters with significantly more than the standard Running 12m (such as some speedsters) can Run underwater at one-sixth their normal Combat Movement rate.

LEAPING

Characters can only Leap underwater if they have a solid surface to push off of (such as bedrock on the ocean floor, the side of a submarine, the top of an Atlantean building, or the like).

A character's Leaping speed is halved while he's underwater. The GM may wish to reduce this even further if he has poor footing, if the shape of his body would increase drag through the water, or the like.

For long leaps, due to the problems of perceiving underwater (see *Perception And Communication*, above), characters may have a much harder time perceiving their target point.

FLIGHT

Unless Flight is bought *Usable As Swimming* (a.k.a. Usable Underwater), it doesn't work at full effect underwater — it depends on the power's special effects. At best, Flight works at half speed in the water; this would apply to graviton manipulation, telekinetic levitation, and other forms of Flight that don't involve any physical motion or effort on the character's part. For Flight involving wings or the like, the GM may restrict a character to one-quarter speed. Flight based on projecting flame or energy behind the character for a "rocket effect" probably won't work at all. The final decision is up to the GM. The Gliding form of Flight doesn't work at all underwater.

SWINGING

Swinging usually doesn't work at all underwater unless it's bought Usable As Swimming. However, the GM might allow a character to Swing 2m in appropriate circumstances, and characters still may be able to use their swing-lines to pull themselves up the side of underwater buildings or cliffs, across underwater chasms, and so on.

TELEPORTATION

Teleportation with the *Must Pass Through Intervening Space* Limitation suffers the same restrictions as Running when used underwater. Other forms of Teleportation typically work at full effect underwater, but characters and GMs must keep two things in mind. First, due to the problems of perceiving underwater (see *Perception And Communication*, above), characters may have a much harder time perceiving the target Area.

Second, and more importantly, Teleporting into an area filled with water constitutes "Teleporting into a solid object," requiring the character to roll on the Teleportation Damage Table as described on 6E2 162y. This may effectively make Teleportation useless underwater for many characters. (If the GM finds this too restrictive, he can either consider Teleporting into water to be the same as Teleporting into air, or only invoke the Teleporting into solid objects rules occasionally [say, on an 11- roll each time the character Teleports].)

TUNNELING

Characters cannot Tunnel through the water. However, they can Tunnel normally through the ocean floor, the walls of an Atlantean building, or similar underwater structures/objects.

Divers And Diving

Characters without Life Support powers or some other way to breathe underwater must rely on SCUBA gear. The current depth record for divers using SCUBA gear and exotic gas mixtures is about 318m (over 1,000 feet). However, anything deeper than 40m (130 feet) is "technical" diving (as opposed to recreational diving), and typically requires greater experience and skill, and/or better equipment.

DIVING GEAR

SCUBA Equipment: Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing) (10 Active Points); OAF (-1), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (oxygen tanks, Easy to obtain; 1 Hour; -0). Total cost: 5 points.

Swimfins: Swimming +4m (2 Active Points); OAF (-1). Total cost: 1 point.

Underwater Scooter: Swimming 20m (10 Active Points); OAF (-1), Does Not Add To Base Swimming 4m (-0), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (battery, Easy to obtain; 1 Hour; -0). Total cost: 5 points.

GAME ELEMENTS

Some elements of the *HERO System* work differently, or don't work at all, underwater.

Skills

Unless noted otherwise below, characters can use Skills normally underwater. As always, the GM may impose modifiers to reflect existing circumstances.

Characters born and bred in underwater environments (such as Atlanteans, or the fish-men of the planet Aquaeon VII) are assumed to have learned "underwater" versions of their Skills, and to use equipment appropriate for the underwater environment. If they try to use their Skills or equipment in the air, they may experience difficulties of their own.

EQUIPMENT-ORIENTED SKILLS

Skills that require equipment, or usually involve equipment, may not work well underwater if the equipment isn't adapted for underwater use. For example, lockpicks work just as well underwater as on the surface, but the makeup and prostheses used with Disguise melt away or fall off when the character submerges himself in water. Characters may have to obtain appropriate underwater equipment to use certain Skills (like Disguise) underwater. Conversely, water-dwelling characters may need "surface versions" of their typical underwater gear if they venture onto land.

INTERACTION SKILLS

If characters cannot easily communicate underwater (see *Perception And Communication*, above), they may find it harder to use Interaction Skills. The GM should impose penalties of -2 to -5, as appropriate.

PERCEPTION SKILLS

Many Skills require the character to perceive something (e.g., Lipreading), or require the "target" of the Skill to be able to perceive the character (e.g., Acting, Disguise, or Mimicry). If appropriate, the GM may impose the standard underwater PER Roll penalties (see *Perception And Communication*, above) to such rolls.

ACROBATICS

Characters generally can't use Acrobatics underwater; the water impedes their motion too much. At the GM's option, a character can succeed with an Acrobatics maneuver if he makes his roll at -5. The GM may choose not to apply this penalty if the character has either (a) the *Aquatic Movement* form of Environmental Movement (see below), or (b) has bought his Running with the *Usable As Swimming* Advantage.

Characters who are native-born underwater dwellers can perform Acrobatics underwater — *Aquabatics*, if you will — without penalty, as if they were in air. However, if they try to use their Acrobatics in air, they suffer the same penalties

a surface-dweller does underwater, unless they buy the *Surface Movement* form of Environmental Movement (see below) or some other ability to negate this problem.

BREAKFALL

Breakfall is *easier* to use underwater, because water slows down movement. Characters can use the Skill normally and usually receive a +2 bonus to rolls.

On the other hand, water-dwelling characters have trouble using Breakfall in the air because they're not used to the way they move in a non-liquid environment. They suffer a -2 penalty to all Breakfall rolls unless they buy the *Surface Movement* form of Environmental Movement (see below) or some other ability to negate this problem.

CRIMINOLOGY, FORENSIC MEDICINE

Water quickly washes away or alters trace evidence of a crime. Therefore these Skills may often prove useless... or at the very least, suffer -3 or greater penalties.

DEMOLITIONS

If an explosive requires fire or heat to ignite/detonate, it won't work underwater unless the character has some way to generate fire there. Water may also prevent electrically-detonated explosives from working.

FAST DRAW

It's tough to move really fast underwater. This Skill suffers a -2 penalty.

MIMICRY

Mimicry depends on the ability to communicate and to perceive, both of which are difficult underwater. At a minimum, Mimicry rolls suffer the standard Hearing PER Roll penalty described above under *Perception And Communication*. However, if a character succeeds with his Mimicry roll, he may be able to take advantage of the fact that surface-dwellers can't always hear clearly and aren't aware of exactly how things should sound in the water. If appropriate, the GM may impose an additional penalty on the target's Hearing PER Roll to determine that the mimicked sound is false.

TRACKING

Characters cannot use Tracking to follow someone who's swimming through the water. Tracking only works underwater if the character can follow footprints or other marks on the ocean floor, Atlantean flagstones, or the like. Even then, the motion of the water may quickly obliterate or alter tracks; the GM can impose a -1 to -3 penalty, as appropriate.

VENTRILLOQUISM

Because sound travels through water more easily than it does through air, characters find this Skill easier to use. The distance penalty for Ventriloquism underwater is only -1 per 6m (instead of the usual -1 per 2m).

Talents

Characters who spend a lot of time underwater often buy the Aquatic Movement form of the *Environmental Movement* Talent to eliminate the combat penalties associated with being underwater (see *Underwater Combat*, below). Native water-dwellers have Aquatic Movement as part of their Racial Templates or as an Everyman ability.

Aquatic Movement doesn't allow surface-dwelling characters to move at greater speed underwater — they're still limited to Running 2m, as described above. However, it does eliminate the penalties for using some Skills, as described above.

Water-dwelling characters sometimes suffer penalties if they try to use some Skills in the air, since they're not used to that environment. If they want to act on the surface without those Skill penalties, they can buy a different form of Environmental Movement: *Surface Movement*. It costs 4 Character Points, and does for undersea dwellers part of what Aquatic Movement does for landfolk — eliminates Skill Roll penalties associated with being out of the water.

Powers By Special Effect

Characters with powers based on certain special effects may, at the GM's option, find that their powers work differently underwater. Here are some recommended changes for certain categories of powers.

Many of the special effects described below become more or less effective in water. This is normally expressed as a percentage (such as "Pulson powers only have 50% effect underwater"). For ease of play, just add or subtract the appropriate number of dice, points of defense, or the like — don't bother recalculating Active/Real Points or anything like that.

If a power becomes more effective underwater, or gains an Advantage it wouldn't ordinarily have, this does not increase the END cost the character pays to use the power. He pays the standard END cost for it; the extra effect or Advantage is "free."

ACID

Most manifestations of acid-based powers are liquid in form and dissipate easily in water. Indeed, many acid attacks are neutralized entirely by contact with water, or may even have a single reaction immediately upon contact. This might be a dangerous surprise to the user, if the effect goes off directly in front of him, or involves acid on his skin!

As a general rule, it's easiest for the GM to assume that water neutralizes and dissipates dangerous acids. When characters use acid attacks underwater, reduce the attacks to half effect. Similarly, acid-based defenses usually provide only half as much protection as normal. See 6E2 147 for more information about acid generally.

AIR AND WIND

Depending on the exact special effect of an air or wind power, it may be completely useless underwater. Air or wind powers that involve manipulating existing air have little or nothing to work with, and so usually have no effect at all. Air or wind powers that involve creating air lose most of their effectiveness because they create bubbles that harmlessly dissipate and float to the surface — at most, such powers have half effect.

A hero who can control masses of air may be able to bring a large “bubble” of it underwater with him, allowing him to breathe (at least for a short time) and providing a potential area of safety from water-dwellers.

DENSITY ALTERATION

Characters whose powers have the special effect of making the character lighter or less dense may find that this affects their bouyancy underwater (though this won't be a problem if they become Desolidified, since then the water just passes right through them). The GM should assign a STR rating and speed (in meters per Segment) to the water currents in the character's location. Every Phase, the lighter than normal character has to win a STR Roll Versus STR Roll Contest to remain in place — if he fails, he gets swept in the direction of the current for the current's

meters of “movement” every Segment until he gets another Phase and can try to win another STR Roll Contest. (Of course, the GM can use this same method for characters of normal mass, if the current's strong enough!)

ELECTRICITY

Pure water makes a fine insulator — but characters aren't likely to encounter pure water outside of a laboratory setting. Impure water, such as lake or river water, is an excellent *conductor* of electricity, and salt water's even better. This has several effects in game terms.

First, electrical attacks become more powerful. In fresh water, they're 25% more effective; in salt water, they're 30% more effective.

Second, Ranged electrical attacks (such as Blasts or RKAs defined as a “lightning bolt”), or any other attack which involves channeling or projecting electricity through the water (as opposed to just touching a target with it) acts as if it had the *Area Of Effect (Line)* Advantage. Alternately, it may act as if it has the *Area Of Effect (Explosion)* Advantage; this is most appropriate for attacks that propel something (like a speargun) through the water which then emits electricity when it approaches or contacts the target.

Third, electrical defenses become more powerful, just like attacks: +25% better in fresh water; +30% in salt water. At the GM's option, a defense that surrounds a character with an electric field, like an electricity-based Resistant Protection that Costs Endurance, also becomes a Damage Shield (typically doing RKA 1d6 damage) when used underwater.

Fourth, characters using electricity powers without sufficient insulation (or Personal Immunity) may risk taking damage from their own attacks. At the GM's option, every Phase a character uses an electricity power, the GM rolls 3d6. If he rolls 11-, the character experiences no problems. If he rolls 12 or above, the character gets shocked by his own power — take 25% of the Active Points in the most expensive power and use it to “buy” an RKA, then apply the RKA's damage to the character with no defense (except defenses bought to apply only against electricity). If the character uses more than one electricity power in a Phase, reduce the roll by 1 for every additional power after the first.

FIRE AND HEAT

If a character's fire powers require oxygen for combustion (as almost all fire powers do), they cannot function underwater. Fire with other special effects — such as mystic flames, or some chemical fires — work normally.

Even if fire powers don't work as intended, a manifestation of intense heat may convert the water in an area to steam. This might inflict burns before the steam dissipates into bubbles and rises to the surface.

Smoke-based powers usually work normally underwater.



HYPERSENSES

See *Perception And Communication*, above, for rules about perceiving underwater. Characters with hypersenses may have a slightly easier time than most characters, but the water plays hob with their senses, too.

ICE AND COLD

Ice and cold powers can have some unusual effects underwater.

First, remember that ice, even large masses of it, is buoyant — in other words, it floats. When characters create ice for an attack (such as many types of Ice Blast or Ice Darts), a defense (such as an Ice Wall, or Ice Armor), or as a form of movement (like Ice Slides), the following rules apply:

- the Range Modifier for Ranged attacks is *doubled*, to represent the fact that the ice starts to bob and rise in the water as soon as it's created
- static structures or objects made of ice, such as Ice Walls, rise to the surface at the rate of 6m per Segment beginning in the Segment after they're created unless they're anchored to something solid (such as the ocean floor or an undersea cliffside)
- a character who protects himself with Ice Armor (i.e., a "suit" of ice that protects him from attacks) will rise just like a static structure unless he has Density Increase or some other way to weigh himself down; the same applies to persons trapped in "block of ice" Entangles or the like
- characters using Ice Slides (a form of Running) are limited to only 25% of their normal meters of movement, since the slides start to rise and break up as soon as they're created, forcing the character to devote time and effort to keeping them solid enough for him to move on

Characters whose powers involve creating intense cold may find that activating such powers underwater causes the water to freeze around them. At the GM's option, every Phase a character uses an ice/cold power underwater, the GM rolls 3d6. If he rolls 11-, the character experiences no problems. If he rolls 12 or above, the character traps himself in an ice Entangle — take 25% of the Active Points in the most expensive power and use it to "buy" an Entangle, then apply the Entangle to the character. If the character uses more than one ice/cold power in a Phase, reduce the roll by 1 for every additional power after the first.

But all is not gloom and doom for ice-based characters. At the GM's option, the vast amounts of water available for them to freeze underwater may increase the effects of their powers. An attack that involves creating ice often gains 1-2 additional Damage Classes — and perhaps more, depending on the nature of the attack (for example, a block of ice used to Entangle or ram someone gets much bigger and heavier than normal, and so

might gain +3-4 DCs). An ice-based defense may gain +1-2 points of defense. An ice/cold-based Change Environment effect is often 25-50% larger than normal. As always, the GM should determine the exact effects based on the circumstances, common sense, dramatic sense, and game balance.

LIGHT

Water diffuses visible light, so it weakens most powers with a Light special effect. Light-based attacks, including laser beams and many Sight Group Flashes, automatically have the *Reduced By Range* Limitation when used underwater. If the power already has that Limitation, double the number of DCs subtracted at each Range increment. If the water's particularly murky or cloudy, the GM might want to increase the DCs subtracted per Range increment by 1.

Light-based defense powers, such as a Resistant Protection "force field," usually lose 25% of their effectiveness. The GM should make a final determination based on the nature of the power.

Powers involving non-visible light — ultraviolet and infrared — work differently. Ultraviolet light powers aren't affected by being underwater at all; they work just as well in the water as in the air. Infrared light attacks have a maximum range of 4m, but can't affect targets beyond that at all; infrared light defenses lose 50% of their effectiveness.

At depths below 77-92 meters (250-300 feet), there's usually insufficient light for powers that require ambient light to work, such as any power with Limitations like *Does Not Work In Darkness* or *Only Works In Sunlight*. See *Perception And Communication*, above, for more information.

MENTAL AND PSIONIC

Mental and psionic powers work normally underwater, but characters may have difficulty establishing Line Of Sight to the target. See *Perception And Communication*, above, for rules about perceiving underwater.

SONIC

Since sound travels more easily through water (about 4.5 times faster, in fact), Sonic powers become more effective beneath the waves.

Sonic non-Ranged attacks typically gain as much as 25% additional power. Sonic Ranged attacks usually automatically gain the Advantage *Area Of Effect (Cone)* (the attack retains its normal Range). If the character doesn't want that effect (i.e., he wants to attack more precisely, so he hits only one target), he may make a *Power Skill Roll* at +2, or if the GM prefers an INT Roll, to control his power and keep it from "spreading." Alternately or in addition, the GM might increase the Damage Classes of a Sonic Ranged attack by as much as 25%.

Sonic defense powers become 20% more effective. Other Sonic powers may gain as much as 10-20% effectiveness, at the GM's option.

TECHNOLOGY, GADGETS, AND DEVICES

Many technological devices aren't intended to work underwater. Unless noted otherwise, assume that any electronic or similar technological device does not work underwater. If the device provides Life Support (Expanded Breathing or Self-Contained Breathing), then it and any other devices that are part of it are considered "watertight" and thus able to function normally underwater. At the GM's option, a character can declare that his devices are watertight. The GM may want to charge 1 or more Character Points per device for this (as part of the device's Active Point cost) to keep characters from gratuitously making all their gear watertight.

Devices are subject to the crushing pressure of the depths (6E2 158) just like characters. Even if a device is waterproof, taking it too far down may damage or destroy it unless the character buys Life Support (Safe Environment: High Pressure) for it. Foci that provide that type of Life Support automatically have it themselves; at the GM's option, so do Inaccessible Foci carried by a character who has Safe Environment: High Pressure himself.

AQUADYNAMIC DEVICES

Large devices that aren't specifically designed to be aquadynamic (*i.e.*, to move through the water as easily as possible) may interfere with a character's ability to swim. Examples include many suits of powered armor, the enormous weapons wielded by some gigantic characters, blaster cannons, many shields, and any Focus with the *Bulky* Limitation. The GM should multiply the device's weight for the purposes of determining Encumbrance's effect on movement to represent the "drag" it creates. If the device provides the character with STR, the GM may not want to count that STR for purposes of determining whether the character's Encumbered (and if so, how badly).

A device is automatically considered "aquadynamic" if it provides the character with any meters of Swimming. At the GM's option, a character can declare that his devices are aquadynamic. The GM may want to charge 1 or more Character Points per device for this (as part of the device's Active Point cost) to keep characters from gratuitously making all their gear aquadynamic.

WATER

At the very worst, Water powers have their normal effect when used underwater. At the GM's option, using Water powers underwater might make them more powerful — as much as 25% more effective. The GM may prefer to express this by adding an Advantage, such as *Area Of Effect (1m Radius)*, *Double Knockback*, or *No Range Modifier* instead of just adding Damage Classes. Increasing the effectiveness of Water powers is particularly appropriate for powers that draw on ambient water, as opposed to ones where the character somehow generates the water himself.

WEATHER

There's no weather to speak of underwater, so characters with weather manipulation abilities may not always have much effect beneath the surface — there's no way to generate a breeze or raise a fog. (In some cases, the character may still be able to affect the weather above the body of water he's in.) However, at the GM's option, there may be ways for a character to use a reasonable "substitute" ability. Instead of creating a fog to interfere with his enemies' vision, maybe he generates a field of bubbles or stirs up water currents.

Weather powers that have additional special effects — such as wind or lightning — follow the rules for those types of abilities, as described above.

Powers By Category And Type

Regardless of special effect, some powers work differently underwater than in the air.

CONSTANT POWERS

Don't forget that characters ordinarily have to maintain Line Of Sight to a Constant Power to keep it in effect. The underwater environment may make this difficult. If appropriate, the GM might require a character to make a PER Roll to determine if he can maintain LOS.

PERCEPTION POWERS

Some Powers require that a character be able to perceive the target before he can affect him. Given that being underwater often interferes with perception (see *Perception And Communication*, above), the GM may want to require characters to succeed with a PER Roll with a Targeting Sense to use such powers. Making this roll takes no time.

CHANGE ENVIRONMENT

Due to the breadth and flexibility of Change Environment, it can suffer many different effects from being underwater — it all depends on what the CE is built to do, and its special effects. The GM should adjust how the power manifests to let the character make reasonable use of it whenever possible. For example, creating an intense magnetic field might work with no problem, increasing the temperature might take time (but decreasing it take less time than normal, or work over a greater area), and instead of creating an area of mist and smoke the character might create turbulence. On the other hand, some effects (such as altering the weather or creating wind currents) might not work at all.

CLINGING

Some special effects of Clinging (such as cling-grip devices) tend to require dry and/or smooth surfaces — neither of which are common underwater — to function properly. If appropriate, the GM can reduce the STR of the Clinging, or forbid its use altogether.

INVISIBILITY

Invisibility to the Sight Group is much less effective underwater — the character is a human-shaped “hole” in the water that others can see. In game terms, Invisible to the Sight Group always has the Limitation *Bright Fringe* underwater if it doesn't have that Limitation already. Invisibility to other Sense Groups works normally, unless the GM rules otherwise.

MIND CONTROL

Unless the Mind Control has the *Telepathic Advantage*, communicating orders underwater may be difficult. See *Perception And Communication*, above, for more information.

Power Advantages

Most Advantages work normally underwater, but a few special cases exist.

NEW ADVANTAGE: POWER WORKS NORMALLY UNDERWATER (+¼)

In campaigns that involve frequent underwater adventuring, the GM might want to consider using this new Advantage. When a power has *Works Normally Underwater*, it works underwater just as well as it would if used in the air — it doesn't suffer any reduction in effect, automatically-imposed Limitations, or the like based upon either its special effect and/or the Power(s) and Power Modifier(s) used to create it. If the power functions better underwater, the character can choose to use the better effect... but if so, he must also accept any problems that the power normally suffers underwater.

Works Normally Underwater is most appropriate for Sensory Powers and the like, so that characters can freely communicate and perceive underwater. It's also appropriate for some Movement Powers. It's less appropriate for Attack and Defense Powers, but the GM may still wish to allow it. However, as with any other element of the *HERO System*, special effects are key: if a character can't provide a reasonable explanation for *why* his power works normally underwater, he shouldn't be allowed to buy the Advantage.

AREA OF EFFECT

Actual physical explosions — grenades, bombs, sticks of dynamite, and so on — tend to be more effective underwater. For every 20 Active Points' worth of effect, add +1 DC to an explosion defined as an ordinary Area Of Effect; for explosions defined using the *Explosion* form of the Advantage, increase the drop-off rate by 2m for every 20 Active Points.

INVISIBLE POWER EFFECTS

Invisible Power Effects may be less effective — even useless — underwater when bought for Attack Powers to affect the Sight Group. Things that leave no visible trace in air still create turbulence or other effects in water. At worst, Invisible to Sight Group becomes useless; at best, the GM allows onlookers a Sight PER Roll to see the power. The GM determines how effective IPE is for other types of powers.

Power Limitations

Most Limitations work normally underwater, but a few special cases exist.

FOCUS

See *Technology, Gadgets, And Devices* above for general rules about using Foci underwater. In a game that stresses “realism,” the GM may want to allow few devices to function properly beneath the surface; in a more “four-color” game, just about any super-device may work underwater.

GESTURES, INCANTATIONS, AND RESTRAINABLE

Water — particularly turbulent water — may interfere with a character's ability to make the proper Gestures or use a Restrainable ability. If appropriate, the GM may require the character to succeed with a STR Roll or DEX Roll each Phase to use the power.

Similarly, speaking Incantations may prove difficult or impossible (especially if a character's got a SCUBA mouthpiece in his mouth!). The GM may require a successful INT Roll to allow a character not born to the underwater environment to speak properly.

RANGE BASED ON STRENGTH

See *Thrown And Propelled Attacks*, below, for information on how being underwater affects throwing things.

UNDERWATER FIGHTING

Some aspects of combat work differently when the fight takes place underwater.

BASIC UNDERWATER COMBAT RULES

Characters who fight underwater suffer from certain penalties unless they have the Talent *Environmental Movement: Aquatic Movement*:

- the character is at -2 DCV
- the character suffers a -2 DC penalty on all attacks. If the rules earlier in this section state a different rule for reducing or increasing the damage for a particular type of attack, that specific rule overrides this general rule.

At the GM's option, a character who has an appropriate Skill, like PS: Diver, can reduce these penalties to -1 each for a Phase if he succeeds with a roll (this takes no time). If a character has TF: SCUBA, he can ignore these penalties altogether for one Phase if he makes a DEX Roll.

UNDERWATER OCV WITH RANGED ATTACKS

Characters normally suffer no OCV penalty just for being underwater. However, it's often difficult to perceive for long distances underwater, as discussed under *Perception And Communication*, above. In appropriate circumstances, the GM may require a character to succeed with a PER Roll to perceive the target he wants to attack (this takes no time). If the roll fails, the character suffers the standard non-perception penalty (see 6E2 27). Alternately, the GM may simply impose a -1 OCV penalty per point by which the character missed his PER Roll.

KNOCKBACK

All Knockback Rolls made against targets who are underwater receive a +1d6 modifier to reflect the greater resistance of water.

THROWN AND PROPELLED ATTACKS

Many attacks involve throwing something, whether it's a weaponmaster throwing a boomerang, a martial artist flipping a foe to the ground, or a super-strong character throwing another character. Unfortunately, thrown attacks have very little effect underwater due to water resistance. All attacks involving throwing something (whether it's a weapon, a rock, the target of the attack, or what have you) automatically suffer from the *Reduced By Range* Limitation at double normal effect.

Furthermore, throwing works properly only when the character has a solid, stable surface to brace against, such as the ocean floor or an underwater rock outcropping. If a character doesn't have something to "brace" against this way, then divide the distance of the throw between the character and whatever he throws — the thrown object/person goes half the distance forward, the character gets propelled half the distance backward.

Attacks propelled by some force other than a character's STR — such as an arrow shot from a bow, a spear fired from a speargun, or a bullet fired from a gun — fare a little better. They also automatically have the *Reduced By Range* Limitation, but only at regular effect. Nor is a solid, stable surface required to use them (though if a weapon has a particularly strong "recoil," the GM might rule that it spins the character around, requiring him to spend a Half Phase to right himself).

The standard rules about the aerodynamicity (or aquadynamicity, in this case) and balance of a thrown attack (6E2 82) apply to underwater thrown attacks; the GM may increase the penalty for particularly non-aquadynamic objects. These penalties also apply to propelled objects, though most such objects are both balanced and aquadynamic.

COMBAT MANEUVERS

In general, Combat and Martial Maneuvers work the same underwater as they do in the air, unless noted otherwise below. The GM may restrict maneuvers characters can use due to water resistance (*i.e.*, the fact that characters can't move as quickly as normal), lack of a stable surface to stand on in mid-water, and other factors. For example, kicks are often harder to perform, or impossible to use.

DIVE FOR COVER

Due to the difficulty of moving quickly through the water, the DEX Roll penalty for Diving For Cover is doubled, to -1 per 1m moved.

GRAB

Grab itself works normally, as do the Squeeze and Slam that can follow it, but the Throw that can follow it doesn't (see above).

MULTIPLE ATTACK

Due to water resistance and slowed movement underwater, a Multiple Attack using HTH Combat attacks may not be possible, particularly against multiple targets. If the GM allows it, he may want to increase the OCV penalty to -3 per attack after the first.

SHOVE

Shove works poorly underwater. Halve the distance a character can Shove a target.

THROWS; TRIP

Throws that have the special effect of tripping the target (including the *Trip* Combat Maneuver), dashing him to the ground, or the like (which is to say, most Martial Maneuvers with the *Throw* element) do only half damage. Throw maneuvers which knock the target down through impact or brute force do their full regular damage (though the GM may subtract a DC or two if he thinks that would be appropriate). If a character wants to Throw his target for distance, the rules for Thrown attacks underwater apply (see above).

WEAPONS

Many weapons work poorly (or not at all) underwater.

MELEE WEAPONS

Moving most slashing, chopping, and smashing weapons (such as axes, maces, swords, flails, picks, and clubs) through the water is difficult — water resistance slows the attack down. In game terms:

- Small weapons like knives, daggers, and hatchets work normally, without an OCV penalty
- Other Short weapons used to slash, chop, smash, or the like suffer a -1 OCV penalty
- Medium-length weapons used to slash, chop, smash, or the like suffer a -2 OCV penalty
- Long-length weapons used to slash, chop, smash, or the like suffer a -3 OCV penalty
- Extra Long-length weapons used to slash, chop, smash, or the like suffer a -4 OCV penalty

The GM may increase or decrease any OCV penalty to better reflect the shape or nature of a particular weapon. He may also add a Damage Class penalty equal to the OCV penalty to reflect the reduction in force.

Thrusting and stabbing weapons — spears, tridents, and the like — suffer no OCV penalty at all. The GM may also eliminate the penalty for a slashing weapon if a character uses it to thrust (as he could with some swords).

THROWN AND PROPELLED WEAPONS

See above for rules about throwing and propelling objects underwater.

Weapons made of wood, leather, and/or strings — such as most bows and crossbows — do not work for very long underwater, since they warp and stretch. For game purposes, assume 30 minutes of immersion renders such weapons useless (probably permanently). Bows and like weapons made from magical or high-tech materials may resist the effects of water longer, or all the time.

FIREARMS

For game purposes, assume that firearms will not work underwater, unless they use gyrojet ammunition or are specifically designed for underwater use (like the H&K P-11 pistol). Some firearms, particularly older types, won't even fire if they get wet. Just making a gun Watertight won't necessarily allow it to fire underwater, but does let a character carry it underwater without damaging it or rendering it incapable of firing when taken out of the water.





BREAKING THINGS

Many fights inevitably involve property damage. What would a barroom brawl be without smashed chairs? The following section describes how to determine when things are broken.

ATTACKING AND DAMAGING OBJECTS

How easy it is to hit an object depends on its size. A human-sized inanimate object typically has a DCV of 3. If the object is larger or smaller than that, you apply the Target Size modifiers (6E2 51) to the attacker's OCV, thus effectively "changing" the object's DCV.

Each object has a PD and ED value and a BODY total. An object's PD and ED are Resistant unless noted otherwise in the table. When a character makes an attack against an object, subtract its appropriate defense value from the BODY done. If the remainder is 0 or less, the object suffers no damage; subtract any amount left from the BODY total. Only the BODY done matters in breaking an object — objects don't have STUN, so attackers can ignore it.

Example: *Chiron tries to cut through a wall with an axe. He chops into a 5 PD, 6 BODY wall, and rolls 10 BODY of damage. The GM subtracts the wall's PD 5 from the 10 BODY, yielding 5 BODY. The wall takes 5 BODY. Since the wall has a total of 6 BODY, it's damaged but still standing — another good blow will cut through it easily.*

The BODY of an object has depends on its size, shape, weight, and durability (or lack thereof). For example, a machine with a heavy steel casing and fragile inner mechanisms would have a high PD, a slightly lower ED, and few BODY. A long, narrow object may have less BODY than one that's more compact, since it's easier to cut through it along one dimension.

The BODY and defense of an object can change depending on the level of technology. Generally, the higher the technology, the more BODY and defense an object has. This shows that more materials are available — high-tech worlds avoid fragile materials for the practicality of sturdier ones — and that the methods for making things have improved.

The Object Table covers some common items which characters may try to break. This list just suggests PD, ED, and BODY for these items;

the GM should change them to fit a particular adventure. In the case of devices, the listed BODY refers to the amount of damage necessary to break the device; to destroy it fully takes twice as much damage (see *Broken Machinery*, below). The same type of object may have different defense and BODY from one example to another. For example, Altarian spacesuits might be sturdier than Denebian ones, so they have +1 PD, +1 ED, and +2 BODY.

See below regarding the use of objects as impromptu weapons.



TOOLKITING: MAKING OBJECTS MORE FRAGILE

The PD, ED, and BODY listed for objects in the Objects Table represent a "baseline" suitable for most campaigns. However, in some campaigns the GM may want to consider altering that baseline to suit the genre or the campaign play style. For example, in a Champions campaign featuring high-powered superheroes, you want characters to be able to smash objects with ease, go flying through walls when they take Knockback, tear cars apart with their bare hands, and punch through tanks. To better simulate that, the GM could reduce the PD, ED, and BODY of most objects by half for these purposes (but keep the standard Characteristics if a character wants to use an object as a weapon).

Besides simply reducing objects' Characteristics, some other ways to make it easier for characters to break objects include:

- assume that characters' attacks against objects are automatically Armor Piercing or Penetrating
- allow a character to automatically do maximum damage to an object if he takes a Full Phase to make the attack
- assume that doing a single point of BODY damage to an object after it applies its defenses is enough to destroy it
- double or triple any BODY damage done to an object after it applies its defenses

OBJECT TABLE

Material or Object	PD	ED	BODY	Material or Object	PD	ED	BODY
Doors				Trees			
Airlock door	8	12	7	Small tree (less than 2m)	4	3	5
City gates, small	5	8	10	Medium tree (less than 10m)	5	4	8
City gates, large/heavy	8	8	20+	Large tree (11m or more)	5	4	11
Interior wood door	2	2	3	Vehicles			
Interior spaceship door	6	6	4	Armored car	8	8	18
Exterior wood door	4	4	3	Automobile	3	3	15
Metal fire door	5	5	5	Bicycle	3	3	2
Safe door	10	15	9	Cart, small	3	3	8
Large vault door	16	24	9	Cart, large	4	4	12
Furniture				Chariot	4	4	8
Chamber pot	2	2	2	Helicopter	3	3	14
Computer, personal	2	2	2	Hovercraft	5	5	14
Furniture, light wood	3	2	3	Jetpack	4	4	4
Furniture, heavy wood	4	3	5	Motorcycle	3	3	11
Furniture, plastic	2	2	3	Plane, Light	3	3	13
Furniture, steel-reinforced	5	4	5	Plane, Twin engine	3	3	15
Glass	(1)	(1)	1	Plane, Multi-engine	3	3	19
Glass, reinforced	(2)	(2)	1	Railroad car	6	6	15
Hearth/fireplace	5	10	10	Spaceship, small	10	10	10
Lamp post (breakaway)	5	7	3	Spaceship, medium	10	10	20-40
Lantern	1-2	4	2	Spaceship, large	15	15	30-80
Mantel	3	2	3	Submarine	10	10	20
Locks				Tank (front armor)	20	20	
House door lock	3	3	2	Tank (side, top, rear, bottom)	16	16	19
Magnetic lock	5	5	3	Truck or bus	4	4	17
Padlock	4	4	3	Wagon, covered	3	2	12
Machinery				Walls			
Light machinery	5	4	4	Armored wall	13	18	7
Medium machinery	7	6	6	Brick wall	5	10	3
Heavy machinery	9	8	8	Concrete wall	6	10	5
Spacesuit	2	2	3	Home inside wall	3	3	3
Outdoor Items, Miscellaneous				Home outside wall	4	6	3
Awning	3	1	1	Reinforced concrete wall	8	10	5
Boulder (single)	5	10	13	Spaceship interior wall	8	8	6
Bridge, small (1.6 ktons)	9	9	21	Wooden wall	4	3	3
Bridge, large (100 ktons)	9	9	27	Weapons			
Bushes	2	(1)	2	Heavy weapon	6	6	8-9
Cobblestone, single	4	6	4	Pistol	4	4	3-4
Dirt (per cubic meter)	0	4	10	Rifle	4	4	5-7
Flagpole (breakaway)	4	4	2	Sword	4	4	4-6
I Beam (per 2m length)	9	9	8	Very large heavy weapon	6	6	12
Manhole cover	9	9	5	Miscellaneous			
Railroad tracks	4	4	5	Barrel	3	2	6
Roadway (.5m thick)	5	8	11	Control console (per cubic meter)	4	x	4
Stone (per cubic meter)	5	10	19	Drum, 55-gallon, steel	4	6	6
Telephone pole	5	5	5	Wooden crate (1m square)	4	3	7

Defense in (parentheses) is Normal Defense (*i.e.*, it doesn't apply against Killing Damage).



OBJECT BODY TABLE

Mass	Example	Living or		
		Vehicle	Unliving	Complex
200g		1	0	0
400g		2	0	0
800g	(grenade)	3	0	0
1.6kg		4	1	0
3.2kg		5	2	0
6.4kg	(assault rifle)	6	3	1
12.5kg		7	4	2
25kg	(TV Set)	8	5	3
50kg		9	6	4
100kg	(man)	10	7	5
200kg	(piano)	11	8	6
400kg	(chariot)	12	9	7
800kg	(sportscar)	13	10	8
1.6t	(small car)	14	11	9
3.2t	(garbage truck)	15	12	10
6.4t	(small jet)	16	13	11
12.5t	(subway car)	17	14	12
25t	(frigate)	18	15	13
50t	(tank)	19	16	14
100t	(space shuttle)	20	17	15
200t	(Statue Of Liberty)	21	18	16
400t	(trawler)	22	19	17
800t	(drilling rig)	23	20	18
1.6kt	(small bridge)	24	21	19
3.2kt	(loaded freighter)	25	22	20
6.4kt	(unloaded destroyer)	26	23	21
12.5kt	(temple)	27	24	22
25kt	(large bridge)	28	25	23
50kt	(medium cruise ship)	29	26	24
100kt	(aircraft carrier)	30	27	25

g = gram kg = kilogram
 t = ton (1000 kg) kt = kiloton (1000 t or 1,000,000 kg)

WALL BODY

Material	Thickness (millimeters)									
	4	8	16	32	64	125	250	500	1m	2m
Wood	—	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Stone	—	—	—	1	3	5	7	9	11	13
Metal	1	3	5	7	9	11	13	15	17	19
Plastic	1	3	4	6	7	9	10	12	13	15

MATERIALS DEFENSE TABLE

Substance	PD	ED
Wood		
Thin board	2	1
Plywood	3	2
Heavy wood	4	3
Very heavy wood	5	4
Metal		
Sheet metal	4	6
Chain or heavy tube	5	8
Heavy bar	6	9
Plate	7	10
Casting	8	12
Hardened casting	9	14
Light armor	10	15
Medium armor	13	20
Vault doors	16	24
Heavy armor	19	28
Stone		
Brick	5	10
Concrete	6	10
Reinforced brick	7	10
Reinforced concrete	8	10
Plastic		
Light plastic	1	1
Plastic castings	2	2
Light fiberglass	4	4
Heavy fiberglass	6	6
Armored plastics	8	8

DEVICE MALFUNCTION TABLE

Damage	Chance to Work Properly
Less than ¼ BODY damage	14-
¼ to ½ BODY damage	11-
Greater than ½ BODY damage	8-



DETERMINING THE BODY AND DEFENSE OF AN OBJECT

If an object isn't listed on the Object Table, use the ones that are listed as guidelines for how much PD, ED, and BODY it should have. Alternatively, the GM can determine the PD, ED, and BODY by using the Object BODY Table and Materials Defense Table.

On the Object BODY Table, an object's BODY depends on its total mass. Typically each doubling of mass is +1 BODY, though the GM may wish to increase the BODY of enormous objects like asteroids and planets. The GM may also want to increase an object's BODY based on its size or the materials it is made of.

On the Materials Defense Table, the PD and ED of an object depends primarily on the material it's made from. Since an object is no stronger than its weakest major part, generally you should use the PD and ED of the material an object's weakest major part is made from when determining an object's overall defenses.

When determining the PD, ED, and BODY of an object, the GM should first look at the object's function. If the function comes from several different parts of the object, then figure out each part separately.

Example: *Storvak hits a large automated drill press with an Area Of Effect attack. The attack does 6 BODY to each portion of the machine. The computer control is a 50 kg complex machine in a cast plastic casing. It would have PD 2, ED2, and 4 BODY. The attack destroys the machine beyond any possibility of repair. The drill press is a 200 kg simple machine — the weakest part is sheet metal. It has PD 4, ED 6, BODY 8. It takes 2 BODY and is only partially damaged.*

Broken Machinery

An object that takes more damage than it has BODY is broken. However, partially damaged devices might malfunction even before they're completely disabled. The GM should decide whether a damage device still works, or roll on the accompanying optional table.

Wall BODY

Of course, with walls and similar structures, a character may not need to destroy an object completely — he might just want to blow a hole through it. In this case, use the wall's thickness, according to the following table. A character who exceeds the wall's BODY has created a human-sized hole in it. The size of the hole doubles for every +1 BODY inflicted over the wall's base BODY.

Objects As Weapons

Places where characters get into fights often feature all sorts of objects — furniture, lampposts, rocks, tools, bric-a-brac, and countless other things. Sometimes characters want to use these

objects as weapons, either as HTH “clubs” or as part of a *Throw Combat Maneuver*.

Depending on the type of object a character wants to use as a weapon, the GM may require him to Grab it first. For example, a Grab is definitely required to use another character as a weapon (see 6E2 124). On the other hand, the GM should assume that a simple, nonresisting object can be picked up and used as a weapon as part of a single Attack Action. Generally speaking, as long as an object is non-resisting and in no way difficult to grasp or lift, a character shouldn't have to use a Grab to pick it up if he can lift it with his Casual STR.

IMPROVISED WEAPON DAMAGE

Depending on the type of object used, an improvised weapon may enhance a character's ability to do damage, or it may simply allow him to hit a target without having to touch that target with his bare hands.

Add the object's PD + BODY, then compare that number to the character's dice of damage from STR. (Just use regular STR; don't include HA damage, the effect of Pushing, or the like.) If the character's STR dice exceed the PD + BODY, then the most damage he can do with it is a number of dice equal to the PD + BODY — the object's too fragile for his STR, so he can't do extra damage with it, and may not even get the full effect of his STR. (On the other hand, he doesn't have to touch the target, which may be advantageous.)

If the object's PD + BODY exceeds the character's dice of damage from STR, it's sturdy enough that it may help the character do more damage. For each full 2 points by which the object's PD + BODY exceeds the character's STR dice, the object adds +1d6 of damage, but it cannot more than double the number of dice the character gets from STR. (This situation is an exception to the Adding Damage rules, which don't apply here; in this case the STR is the “base damage” and the object adds to it, the object's not a “weapon” to which STR adds damage.)

Example: *Grond is immensely strong (STR 90), but he's fighting Dwarfstar, who's incredibly tough and difficult to hurt. Grond decides he needs to hit the little guy even harder than usual. So he picks up a bus. A bus has PD 4, BODY 17. That adds up to 21, and Grond normally has 18d6 from STR. So the bus gives him $((21-18)/2 = 1.5) + 1d6$ of damage, for a total of 19d6.*

The Shadow Avenger, a gun-toting mystery man with STR 12, has run out of bullets during a fight against some mobsters. Fortunately, there's a crowbar nearby. The crowbar has PD 5, BODY 3, which adds up to 8. The Shadow Avenger only does 2d6 damage with STR, so the crowbar can add $((8-2)/2 = 3) + 3d6$ damage. However, since it can't more than double the Shadow Avenger's STR dice, he does 4d6 damage when hitting the mobsters with it.

Improvised weapon damage is usually Normal Damage. However, if the object used is particularly sharp, jagged, or the like, the GM might convert the damage done with it to the equivalent DCs of Killing Damage.

Improvised weapons typically can only increase a character's Normal Damage in HTH Combat when used with a *Strike* Combat Maneuver. If used with some other Maneuver, they just let the character hit the target without having to touch it (unless the GM or some other rule says otherwise). However, that may still be beneficial for the character; for example, a *Move By* performed with a weapon causes the weapon, not the attacker, to take damage from the Maneuver (see 6E2 70).

DAMAGING THE IMPROVISED WEAPON

Since improvised weapons aren't designed to be used as weapons, they don't always stand up to the rigors of combat well. When a character does damage with one, the improvised weapon also takes the damage. (That's why strong characters like to pick up Enemy A and use him to hit Enemy B — both enemies take the damage!) It's not uncommon for a single attack with an improvised weapon to shatter the weapon, making it useless for further attacks. The GM decides the extent to which an impromptu weapon is damaged through use. It should depend on how much like a "normal" weapon the object is (a log used as a club wouldn't suffer much damage, but hitting someone over the head with an antique vase almost certainly shatters the vase).

IMPROVISED WEAPON MODIFIERS

Several factors affect how easy it is to use an object as an improvised weapon.

WEIGHT

The heavier an object, the more difficult it often is to use as an improvised weapon — though of course what's "heavy" to one character may be trivially easy for another to lift.

If a character can lift an object with his Casual STR, he can use it as an improvised weapon easily;

he suffers no OCV penalty. For every 10 STR (or fraction thereof) beyond his Casual STR that he needs to lift the object, he suffers a -1 OCV penalty. If he has to Push his STR to lift the object, the GM may increase the penalty. If a character cannot lift an object at all, he cannot use it as an improvised weapon.

BALANCE

Unlike weapons built as weapons, objects used as improvised weapons are rarely properly shaped and balanced for ease of use in HTH Combat. To put it another way, some of them have awkward shapes and/or weight distributions that makes it harder to use them as weapons. A "Balanced" object may impose an OCV penalty of -0 to -2; a Poorly Balanced one of -2 to -3; and an Unbalanced one -4 OCV or higher.

The GM decides how balanced an object is, taking all relevant factors into account. For example, an object that's unbalanced for a human-sized character may be balanced (or at least less unbalanced) for a larger character.

If a character wants to use an object as an improvised thrown weapon, consult the rules on 6E2 82 to determine how its balance and aerodynamic properties affect his OCV.

SIZE/SHAPE

The GM also needs to consider the size and shape of an improvised weapon. Most objects used as improvised weapons are human-sized or smaller, so their size doesn't have any significant effect on combat, but large objects are a different matter. In some campaigns, characters have enough STR to wield logs, cars, asteroids, and other large objects as weapons. The GM has two options for handling this situation.

First, he can treat a large object as an "Area Of Effect" attack that covers an area equal to the size and shape of the object. Thus, a supervillain who uses a car as a club would cover a 4m x 2m area (the size of a standard car) when he tries to smash the heroes with it. To take a more complicated example, consider a giant using a log as a "club" by swinging it from side to side. That would cover an area defined by the length of the log and the arc through which he swings it. Using an improvised weapon as an "Area Of Effect" allows the character to make his attack against DCV 3 as usual. However, unlike normal Area Of Effect attacks, targets often can Dodge this sort of attack. For example, a knight could simply duck under (or jump over) the log as the giant swings it; the heroes could step out of the way of the car (or acrobatically dive through the open windows) as the supervillain brings it crashing down. Of course, targets can also Dive For Cover if they prefer.

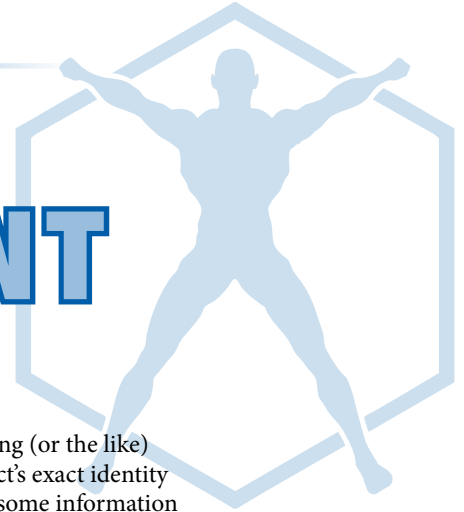
Second, the GM can determine the OCV bonus for targeting the object used as an improvised weapon (see *Target Size*, 6E2 51) and apply that bonus to the attacker's OCV when he attacks with the object. Thus, using a human as a club would provide no OCV bonus, but using a log that's four times human size would add +4 to the attacker's OCV.

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IMPROVISED WEAPON TABLE

Weight	OCV Modifier
Can be lifted with Casual STR	-0
1-10 STR beyond Casual STR needed to lift object	-1
11-20 STR beyond Casual STR needed to lift object	-2
21-30 STR beyond Casual STR needed to lift object	-3
...and so on	
Balance	OCV Modifier
Balanced (a log, a telephone pole, most rocks)	-0 to -2
Poorly Balanced (a tree, a car)	-2 to -3
Unbalanced (a piece of rubble, a character)	-4 or worse
Size/Shape	OCV Modifier
Treat object as "Area Of Effect"	Attack versus DCV 3, but often can be Dodged
Treat object as OCV bonus	Use object's Target Size penalty as OCV bonus

CONCEALMENT



There are many things a character might want to conceal — weapons, equipment, papers, microfilm, and so on. A character uses the *Concealment* Skill to hide objects in a room or on his person. The *Concealment* Skill is used versus the searcher's *Concealment* roll (or *PER* Roll) in a Skill Versus Skill Contest.

Each object or weapon has a Perception Modifier (“*PER* Mod”) that provides a rough indication of its size and shape. Likewise, clothing and other items (such as briefcases) have a *PER* Mod rating as a hiding place, indicating how easy it is to conceal something beneath or inside it. If the object's *PER* Mod is less than or equal to the *PER* Mod rating of the hiding place, it's hidden from view and can only be found with a search (see below) and successful *Concealment* Versus *Concealment* (or *PER* Roll) Contest. If the object's *PER* Mod is larger than the *PER* Mod rating of the hiding place, then it might be spotted.

If the object is hidden, a viewer may still notice that something's hidden if he looks hard. If a character specifically asks the GM about the possibility of hidden objects — for example, “Is he carrying something under his jacket?” — he may make a *Concealment* or *PER* Roll to check. He suffers a -1 penalty to his *Concealment* or *PER* Roll for each +1 *PER* Mod the object is smaller than its hiding place.

Example: “*Bull*” Robinson carries an *AMT Backup* (*PER* Mod +1) under his surf jacket (*PER* Mod 2). The gun won't be noticed by casual observers; anyone specifically looking for it will take a -1 on his *Concealment* or *PER* Roll to find it.

If the object's *PER* Mod exceeds the *PER* Mod rating of the hiding place, anyone can notice the object — it causes an unsightly bulge, or the like. Anyone the character deals with notices the bulge with a successful *Concealment* or *PER* Roll.

Example: *Bull* later decides to carry a *Llama Super Comanche .44 magnum revolver* (*PER* Mod +3) under his jacket. Because the gun is bigger than the jacket's *PER* Mod rating, casual observers can notice it. People are starting to talk about *Bull*.

Concealment or *PER* Rolls tell a character someone's carrying a hidden object, but not what

the object is. As long as clothing (or the like) still covers an object, the object's exact identity remains unknown. However, some information about the object may be available. If an observer notices a bulge under the character's left armpit, it's probably a gun... but the observer won't know what type of gun it is until it comes out into view.

Some objects are so large a character can't hide them in a given area. If a hiding place's *PER* Mod is 2 or more points smaller than the object's *PER* Mod, the object isn't considered hidden. Don't even try hiding a +7 *PER* Mod machine gun under your hat.

The *Concealment* Table lists the most common concealment spots for objects and weapons. The *PER* Mods of various items are listed in the *Concealed Objects* Table. If an item is not listed, use the listed objects as guidelines to determine an appropriate *PER* Mod.

Anything less than *PER* Mod +0 may be hidden on a character's person with *Concealment*. Such objects can't be found visually, but only with a *Strip Search* and a *Concealment* Versus *Concealment* Contest. Such items are considered so small they can fit behind belt buckles, in shoe heels, inside specially created pockets, or even within the character's body itself (such as in the mouth).

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SEARCHING A PERSON

Whenever a character gets captured, his captors will probably search him. There are three kinds of searches: a Fast Patdown; a Thorough Patdown; and a Strip Search. All three work on the basic Concealment Versus Concealment (or PER Roll) system.

A *Fast Patdown* only takes one Phase and will find most large items hidden on a character's torso. The searcher rolls his Concealment or PER Roll, using the PER Mod of any object the character is carrying on his torso as a bonus. The searcher finds each item if he makes his Concealment or PER Roll for each one. The chance is pretty good for him to find a gun, but there's still a small chance to miss one.

A *Thorough Patdown* takes a full Turn and will find most large items hidden anywhere on a character's body. The searcher still must make his Concealment or PER Roll (with an extra time bonus), but he can now find objects hidden anywhere on a character.

A *Strip Search* is exactly what it sounds like. It takes at least one minute, and often five or ten minutes or more. The searcher removes all of the subject's clothing and searches it, sometimes even systematically destroying each item of clothing to make sure everything hidden in it is found. Anything not hidden with the Concealment Skill will automatically be found; anything hidden with Concealment will be found if the searcher wins a Skill Versus Skill Contest. After searching the clothing, the searcher turns his attention to the subject and searches him thoroughly, right down to his body cavities; hiding anything is almost impossible. In general, performing a Strip Search grants +5 (or more) to the searcher's Concealment roll — and, of course, taking extra time to search gives the searcher further bonuses.

CONCEALMENT TABLE

Location/Item	PER Mod
Armor	1
Boots	1
Briefcase, backpack	4
Camera case	2
Cloak	5
Coat (heavy, long jacket)	4
Handbag, large	3
Handbag, small	1
Hat	1
Jacket, men's suit	2
Jacket, windbreaker	3
Overcoat (trenchcoat)	5
Saddlebags	3
Shirt, blouse, tunic, tabard	1
Skirt, dress, or robes	1

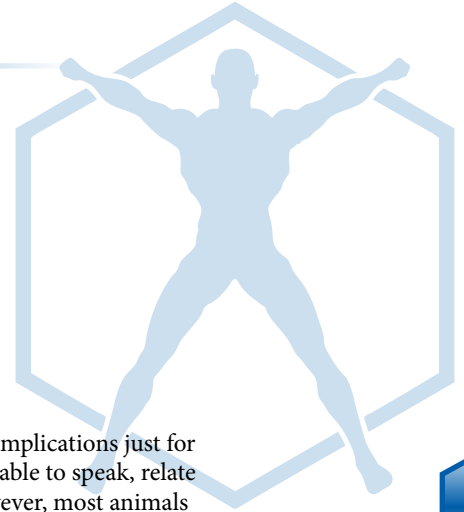
The PER Mod rating of the jackets and coats given in the Concealment Table represents them buttoned up. If a jacket is left unbuttoned, the PER Mod rating of its hiding spaces increases by 1. But when a character moves while wearing an unbuttoned jacket, there's a chance of 1 on 1d6 (1 or 2 if he's running) for the jacket to open and reveal any objects hidden under it.

If a character has clothing specifically tailored for one piece of equipment or weapon, the PER Mod rating goes up by 1. A suit jacket specifically designed to hold a Colt Anaconda (PER Mod +3) would have a PER Mod rating of 3 and just barely hide the gun.

CONCEALED OBJECTS TABLE

Item	PER Mod
Assault rifle	+5 to +7
Bag/purse of coins	+1 to +3
Binoculars	+2 to +3
Book, notebook, papers	+1 to +3
Bow, long	+4 to +7
Bow, short	+3 to +5
Cash, roll of	+1
Coin	+0
Crossbow	+4 to +7
Film, roll of	+0
Gemstone	+0
Grenade	+1
Knife	+1
Knife (small), shuriken	+0
Laptop computer	+3
Pistol	+2 to +3
Rifle, shotgun	+4 to +7
Ring	+0
Staff	+4 to +7
Submachine gun	+3 to +5
Sword, broad/bastard	+4 to +6
Sword, short	+2 to +3
Wand	+2

ANIMALS



In the *HERO System*, you create animals from the same base as human characters. Thus, they have the same Base Values in their Characteristics, a free Running 12m, and so forth. Animals are often bought with Powers to simulate their defenses, attacks, and Senses; these Powers are almost always intrinsic to the animal (no Foci). Many animal attacks are bought with the Power Limitation *Reduced Penetration*.

Animals do not receive Complications just for being animals — for being unable to speak, relate to humans, and so forth. However, most animals receive a Complication for having no manipulatory limbs — they cannot use tools, dial a telephone, and the like. This is a Frequent, Greatly Impairing Physical Complication (20 points). Here are some example animals the GM can use in his campaign.

AMERICAN BLACK BEAR

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
23	STR	13	14-	Lift 600 kg; 4½d6 HTH damage [2]
15	DEX	10	12-	
18	CON	8	13-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll 11-
5	EGO	-5	10-	
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
5	OCV	10		
5	DCV	10		
2	OMCV	-3		
2	DMCV	-3		
3	SPD	10		Phases: 4, 8, 12
8	PD	6		Total: 8 PD (2 rPD)
6	ED	4		Total: 6 ED (2 rED)
8	REC	4		
35	END	3		
12	BODY	2		
34	STUN	7		Total Characteristics Cost: 82

Movement: Running: 12m
Leaping: 2m

Cost	Powers	END
15	Bite: HKA 1d6 (2d6 with STR)	1
16	Claws: HKA 1d6+1 (2½d6 with STR) Reduced Penetration (-¼)	2
4	Growl: +10 PRE Only For Fear-Based Presence Attacks (-1), Incantations (must growl or roar; -¼)	0
2	Tough Skin/Fat: Resistant (+½) for 2 PD/2 ED	0
1	Burst Of Speed: Running +6m (18m total) Increased Endurance Cost (x8 END; -3½)	8
-1	Poor Leaper: Leaping -2m (2m total)	
4	Bear's Nose: +2 PER with Smell/Taste Group	0

Talents

3 Lightsleep

Skills

8 +1 HTH

3 Climbing 12-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 55

Total Cost: 137

175 Matching Complications (50)

20	Physical Complication: Animal Intelligence (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
	Physical Complication: Hibernates In Winter (Infrequently, Fully Impairing)
	Physical Complication: Human Size
15	Physical Complication: Poor Eyesight, suffers -2 to all Sight PER Rolls (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
	Physical Complication: Poor Hearing, suffers -2 to all Hearing PER Rolls (Frequently, Slightly Impairing)
20	Physical Complication: Very Limited Manipulation (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)

Total Complications Points: 50

Experience Points: 0

LION

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
23	STR	13	14-	Lift 600 kg; 4½d6 HTH damage [2]
18	DEX	16	13-	
20	CON	10	13-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll 11-
5	EGO	-5	10-	
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
6	OCV	15		
6	DCV	15		
2	OMCV	-3		
2	DMCV	-3		
4	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
10	PD	8		Total: 10 PD (1 rPD)
5	ED	3		Total: 5 ED (1 rED)
10	REC	6		
40	END	4		
14	BODY	4		
36	STUN	8		Total Characteristics Cost: 111

Movement: Running: 14m
Leaping: 8m

Cost Powers

		END
25	Bite: HKA 1½d6 (3d6 with STR)	2
16	Claws: HKA 1d6+1 (2½d6 with STR) Reduced Penetration (-¼)	2
4	Roar: +10 PRE Only For Fear-Based Presence Attacks (-1), Incantations (must roar; -¼)	0

1	Tough Skin: Resistant (+½) for 1 PD/1 ED	0
2	Swift Runner: Running +2m (14m total)	1
4	Strong Leaper: Leaping +4m (8m forward, 4m upward)	1
9	Cat's Senses: +3 PER with all Sense Groups	0
5	Cat's Eyes: Nightvision	0
5	Cat's Nose: Tracking with Normal Smell	0

Skills

24	+3 HTH
3	Climbing 13-
5	Stealth 14-
1	Camouflage Coloration: +1 to Stealth; Only In Home Environment (-1)
3	Tactics 11-
3	Teamwork 13-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 110

Total Cost: 221

175 Matching Complications (50)

20	Physical Complication: Animal Intelligence (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
	Physical Complication: Human Size
15	Physical Complication: Very Limited Manipulation (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)

Total Complications Points: 35

Experience Points: 61

HORSE (LIGHT WARHORSE)

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
25	STR	15	14-	Lift 800 kg; 5d6 HTH damage [2]
18	DEX	16	13-	
20	CON	10	13-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll 11-
5	EGO	-5	10-	
16	PRE	6	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
4	OCV	5		
4	DCV	5		
2	OMCV	-3		
2	DMCV	-3		
3	SPD	10		Phases: 4, 8, 12
7	PD	5		Total: 7 PD (1 rPD)
4	ED	2		Total: 4 ED (1 rED)
8	REC	4		
40	END	4		
16	BODY	6		
30	STUN	5		Total Characteristics Cost: 80

Movement: Running: 24m
Leaping: 10m

Cost Powers

		END
5	Bite: HKA 1 point (½d6 with STR)	1
12	Kick/Rear: HA +3d6 Hand-To-Hand Attack (-¼)	1
1	Tough Skin: Resistant (+½) for 1 PD/1 ED	0

1	Combat-Acclimated: +3 PRE Only To Protect Against Presence Attacks (-1)	0
6	Heavy: Knockback Resistance -6m	0
12	Horse's Legs: Running +12m (24m total)	1
3	Horse's Legs: Leaping +6m (10m forward, 5m upward)	1
6	Sharp-Eared And Keen-Nosed: +2 PER with all Sense Groups but Sight Group	0

Skills

3	+1 with Bite, Kick/Rear
2	PS: Attack 11-
2	PS: Stop Attacking 11-
1	Riding 13-; Complementary To Rider's Skill Only (-1)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 54

Total Cost: 134

175 Matching Complications (50)

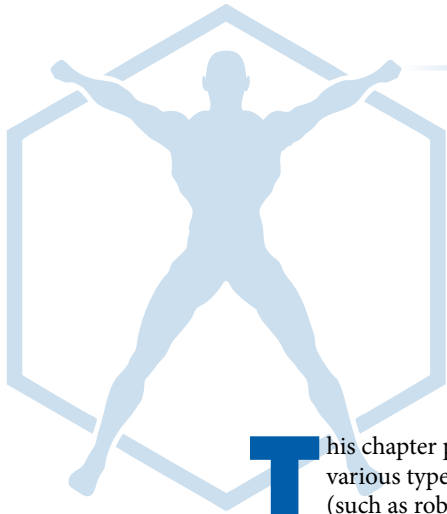
20	Physical Complication: Animal Intelligence (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
	Physical Complication: Large (4m; +2 OCV to hit horse, +2 to PER Rolls to perceive) (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
15	Physical Complication: Very Limited Manipulation (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
20	Psychological Complication: Domesticated (Very Common, Strong)

Total Complications Points: 50

Experience Points: 0



CHAPTER SEVEN
EQUIPMENT



EQUIPMENT

This chapter provides rules for constructing various types of equipment — automatons (such as robots), computers, vehicles, bases, and weapons — in the *HERO System*. It also includes lists of different types of weapons and vehicles. Characters who need a fancy broadsword or a cool car can find it here — and if they can't find what they're looking for, they can build their own.

BUILDING AND BUYING EQUIPMENT

Characters build equipment with Character Points, using the rules for each particular type of equipment as described below. Most equipment is built with Powers, though Skills are often bought for some types of equipment.

In Heroic campaigns, characters typically don't have to pay Character Points for their equipment. Instead, they pay money. However, they have to pay Character Points for the appropriate Skills to

use their equipment, such as Transport Familiarity and Weapon Familiarity. They may also buy abilities specifically for use with “free” equipment (such as a naked Autofire (3 shots; +¼) Advantage that can be applied to any non-Autofire firearm, or HKA +1d6 that can be applied to any sword).

Superheroic characters not only build equipment with Character Points, they must pay Character Points for it as well. A character (in any type of campaign) never has to buy a Skill to use weapons or equipment he bought with Character Points, unless some Limitation requires him to. However, this does not extend to other equipment of that same type. For example, if a character pays Character Points for a motorcycle, he doesn't gain TF: Two-Wheeled Motorized Ground Vehicles for free — he just has the ability to drive that one motorcycle.

In some cases the GM will let Superheroic characters have everyday, mundane equipment, like a flashlight, for free. However, this “free” equipment is much more likely to be damaged, stolen, or lost than gear the character pays for. See 6E1 32 for more information.

The minimum cost of any piece of equipment is 1 Character Point, as with anything in the *HERO System*.

THE EFFECT OF FREE EQUIPMENT

As the GM considers whether characters in his campaign have to pay Character Points for equipment, he should keep in mind that free gear can affect the balance between characters. For example, consider a Fantasy Hero campaign. Characters who rely primarily on weapons and armor, such as warriors and rogues, get all that gear without having to spend Character Points on it. This frees up their points to be spent on Skills and other abilities to make them highly effective with that equipment.

On the other hand, wizards and other spellcasters typically have to devote most of their Character Points to buying spells and related Skills. That leaves relatively few Character Points for anything else — and often the spells are no more effective as attacks than the longbows, greatswords, and poisons other characters get for free.

7



This doesn't necessarily make free equipment a bad thing. It just means the GM needs to be aware of the implications of free equipment and plan his campaign accordingly. For example, in the Fantasy Hero campaign described above, the GM has several options, such as:

- Increase the power of attack spells (without increasing their cost to the character) so that a character who pays Character Points for a “weapon” does more damage than one who gets his weapon for free.
- Design the spells in the magic system so that spellcasters aren't “competing” with weapon-using characters (i.e., trying to do the same types and amounts of damage), but have different tactical options. Spells based on Drain, Mental Blast, RKA AVAD Does BODY, and other Powers that aren't used to build weapons give the character who's spending Character Points on his attacks a chance to be combat-effective in his own way.
- Make magic more effective than mundane weapons in some situations or some ways. For example, maybe armor only provides half of its PD/ED as a defense against spells, and mundane objects like walls and doors only get half their defenses when hit with a spell.
- Design the magic system so spellcasters get their “equipment” (their spells) for free (or close to it) also. For example, instead of paying the Real Cost for each spell, perhaps the character buys a “Spell Familiarity” Skill that lets him use a spell (or class of spells), or only pays the Real Cost divided by 5 (as if the spell were a flexible Multipower slot, even though it's not actually in a Multipower).

THE 5-POINT DOUBLING RULE

At the GM's option, characters in any type of campaign may double the number of a particular piece of equipment, weapon, or object they have for +5 points. Thus, if a sword costs 20 Character Points, for 25 points the character could have two such swords. This is a quick and easy way to simulate characters who carry lots of “back-up” weapons or who want to own a fleet of vehicles. If the equipment is unusual (such as an Unbreakable Focus, an enchanted item, or the like), the character should get the GM's permission to buy it using this rule.

The 5-point doubling purchase is a separate cost, not a part of the equipment being purchased. Therefore it doesn't affect the purchased equipment's Active Points or the like. If a character applies the 5-point doubling rule to a gadget built with Limitations, those Limitations don't apply to the +5 points — the +5 points aren't subject to Power Modifiers. The +5 points also cannot be put in Power Frameworks.

If a character wants to buy multiple items of equipment that cost less than 5 points, he can buy the items individually or using the 5-point rule, whichever is cheaper. For example, if a Vehicle only costs 1 point, a character could buy 8 of them for 1 point apiece. Even then, though, the character may reach a point where the 5-point method is cheaper. For example, if he buys two 4-point gadgets, it's cheaper to buy them individually; if he wants eight such gadgets, the 5-point method is cheaper.

Items of equipment bought with the 5-point doubling rule are considered “separate” from the original item. They're distinct from each other, each with its own identity and uses even if they're defined identically in *HERO System* rules terms. Thus, a character could use two of them for Two-Weapon Fighting, a Multiple Attack, or the like. In the interest of game balance, common sense, or dramatic sense, the GM may forbid any uses of double-bought equipment that he deems inappropriate.

If a character uses the 5-point doubling rule to buy multiple weapons or gadgets, each of them has to be identical. However, if he uses this rule (or a corresponding rule) to buy extra Computers, Followers, Vehicles, or Bases, the various items can differ — they just all have to be built on that same point total or less. For example, a character could buy four 200-point Vehicles, defining them as a car, a motorcycle, a boat, and a mini-copter.

A character cannot use the 5-point doubling rule to buy a “duplicate” of a single slot in a Power Framework. However, if an entire Power Framework is defined as a single gadget (such as a laser pistol with various settings, each a Multipower slot), then he could use the 5-point doubling rule to buy more of that gadget.

Characters may not apply the 5-point doubling rule to innate powers or abilities.





AUTOMATONS

AUTOMATONS IN COMBAT

Automatons are affected by damage just like normal characters — their PD and ED are Normal (not Resistant), they take STUN damage, and so forth. However, because they have no free will, Automatons are completely unaffected by all Mental Powers or mentally targeted attacks (those requiring an MCV Attack Roll, though the GM may exclude some

powers that get an MCV Attack Roll though the *Alternate Combat Value Advantage*).

However, some Automatons purchase special Automaton Powers (see text) or take Complications which affect how they take damage.

Similarly, Automatons attack and do damage in the usual fashion. Unless bought with natural attacks (such as claws), they must learn the Skills to use weapons, and obtain weapons to attack with.

Automatons are “individuals” who, although active, aren’t alive in the traditional sense. Robots, zombies, golems, skeletons, mechanical constructs, and the like are all Automatons. An Automaton is more like a device than a free-willed person.

Automatons, in their various forms, are popular in adventure literature, especially as servants for master villains — they never ask questions, don’t require food, never lose morale, and rarely form unions. Characters usually buy Automatons as Followers, or obtain them via the *Power Summon*.

DESIGNING AUTOMATONS

To create an Automaton, design a character normally. Thus the Automaton starts with a 10 STR, 2 SPD, 12m Running, standard human Senses, and so on. The designer purchases increased Characteristics, Skills, and Powers, as appropriate. However, there are a few changes or considerations to keep in mind.

First, since an Automaton isn’t really a sentient, living being, it automatically has a 0 EGO, 0 OMCV, and 0 DMCV, and is immune to all Mental Powers. An Automaton cannot make EGO Rolls and doesn’t have the ability to make its own decisions.

Second, Automatons often sell back their END to 0, and then buy all their Powers down to 0 END (or power them with an Endurance Reserve).

Third, although Automatons have Presence, and can make crude Presence Attacks (usually involving fear or intimidation), they are immune to all Presence Attacks.

Fourth, instead of having its own INT, an Automaton may sell its INT back to 0 and install a Computer brain (possibly defined as some magical instructions, in a Fantasy campaign). The Computer gives the Automaton orders, and the Computer’s INT makes PER Rolls for the Automaton. For rules on designing and buying Computers, see *Computers*, below.

Fifth, an Automaton has no Everyman Skills or free languages — it must buy all of these things with Character Points.

Many Powers, particularly Life Support, are appropriate for Automatons (few Automatons need to eat, sleep, or breathe). In fact, there’s an entire category of Powers, *Automaton Powers*, that are intended primarily (if not exclusively) for Automatons (see 6E1 145 for more information).

Automatons may also buy Skills and Talents (for example, a robot might have Absolute Time Sense to simulate an internal chronometer). Automatons generally should not buy Perks.

USING AN AUTOMATON

Because an Automaton has no free will, it can only follow commands. An Automaton can have a number of simple commands, or programs, equal to its INT (or the INT of its Computer brain, if it has one). An Automaton’s commands can include statements like “Shoot anyone who comes through this door and isn’t wearing a badge” or “Drive this car to headquarters.”

Unlike a Computer, when an Automaton encounters an obstacle to carrying out one of its commands, it may not make an INT Roll to solve the problem or avoid the obstacle. Typically an Automaton just keeps trying to do whatever it was ordered to do, and if the course of action isn’t obvious it either stops functioning or does the most dramatically useful thing (which usually isn’t to the creator’s benefit). Ordinarily the commands given to an Automaton should be so simple that these sorts of dilemmas don’t arise. But ultimately it’s up to the GM to decide how an Automaton reacts in these circumstances.

An Automaton must know the appropriate Skill to execute a command. If commanded to fire a pistol, it must have WF: Handguns or suffer the standard nonproficiency penalty. If commanded to drive a car, it must have TF and City Knowledge (unless someone can give it orders/directions). Remember, Automatons have no Everyman Skills.

Usually an Automaton follows the last order it received. If an Automaton hasn’t received an order, it stands lifeless, gathering dust. The way an Automaton receives commands is defined when it is created. This can be as simple as giving a verbal command or as complex as downloading a computer program.

Example: *The Zombie is an Automaton created by the Evil High Priest. It has INT 5, so it can have five simple commands at any one time. The EHP has also created the Zombie so it can accept voice commands, but only if those commands are in the EHP’s voice, and only when preceded by the phrase “Your dark lord commands...” If someone were to discover the key phrase, and properly mimic the EHP’s voice, he could also command the Zombie.*

COMPUTERS



In modern-day and futuristic campaign settings, computers are often very common. Useful for reference, entertainment, analysis, and a thousand other tasks, they can be slow and stubborn or fast and user-friendly. Extremely advanced computers can even possess their own intelligence.

In the *HERO System*, characters can use Computers for a variety of purposes. Besides acting as a source of information, they can control weaponry, vehicles, and bases. With the AI rules, they can also be used to create intelligent devices, magic items, and the like.

Computers are normally bought as part of a Base or Vehicle or as a type of Follower.

Constructing A Computer

Characters design Computers just like normal characters, but they only have seven Characteristics: INT; DEX; OCV; DCV; OMCV; DMCV; SPD; and, if they're Artificial Intelligence ("AI") devices, EGO. The starting values for these Characteristics for a Computer are the same as for a human character, and if appropriate may be sold back (down to a minimum of 1).

Computers are subject to certain restrictions. They have no movement ability. They cannot, by themselves, "perceive" — unlike Automaton, they don't come with the basic suite of Senses for free. They have to be hooked into sensory systems (like the security cameras at a base, or the sensors on a starship) to give them the ability to perceive, or the builder has to buy the Computer specific Senses (see 6E1 209 for costs). If bought with the ability to perceive, a Computer can make PER Rolls based on its INT, and can recall things it has perceived with an INT Roll.

Almost all Computers have Eidetic Memory to reflect their ability to store information indefinitely. Computers without Eidetic Memory are either extremely limited (e.g., a personal data storage device, which only has to "remember" things like addresses, phone numbers, and someone's schedule), or prone to memory loss for some reason. Eidetic Memory thus defined doesn't allow a Computer to record anything it perceives, as if it were a camera or tape recorder. (To have that ability, the Computer has to buy Eidetic Memory a second time.)

Computers cannot buy Skill Enhancers, such as Scholar and Traveler.

Programs for a Computer cost 1 Character Point each.

Normal Computers

Normal Computers do not think for themselves. They have Skills, programs, and seven Characteristics (see above). They cannot have Complications. All they can do is execute a program, such as "Fly from planet A to planet B," "Test all weapon systems," or "Incarcerate any intruders."

Once a Computer starts a program, it continues doing the same thing until it reaches a logical conclusion (such as arriving at its destination) or someone stops the program. Normal Computers have no common sense, instincts, or self-will: they follow their program regardless of the consequences. For example, once instructed to "Attack," a normal Computer continues to attack until the target is destroyed (or something else stops it, like lack of ammunition), even if doing so results in the destruction of the Computer itself.

However, this lack of self-will doesn't necessarily make normal Computers stupid; they may have very sophisticated programs. The general sophistication of a Computer's program depends on the Computer's INT: whenever a Computer encounters a problem in achieving its goal, it must make an INT Roll, with modifiers as determined by the GM. If the INT Roll succeeds, the Computer comes up with an appropriate response or clever action. If the INT Roll fails, the Computer reacts in a very simple way.

Example: *A Computer autopilot on a spaceship is fighting an enemy ship that suddenly turns invisible. The Computer makes an INT Roll. If it succeeds, it realizes the enemy is using an invisibility screen and hunts for it with all available detectors. If it fails, it may conclude that the enemy has been destroyed, stop fighting, and turn off all its ship's force-field. A badly failed roll may even result in the Computer randomly selecting another nearby ship to attack.*

Computers may run several programs simultaneously. A character with the *Computer Programming* Skill can modify, erase, or replace programs, though this usually takes at least a few hours.

As an optional rule, the GM can limit the number of programs a Computer can run at once to INT/5. This encourages characters to build high-INT computers.

PROGRAMS AND SKILLS

Programs are not the same as Skills. Computers with Skills but no programs are powerful but not “user friendly.” Only characters who succeed with Computer Programming rolls can use them. However, it’s easy to use Computers with both Skills and programs — they can often be used by anyone, and may even respond to voice commands (this requires buying one or more Languages for the Computer).

For example, a Computer chauffeur with Transport Familiarity and no program can drive a limousine, but requires constant supervision by a computer programmer. Anyone can use a more “friendly” Computer with both a Transport Familiarity and the program “Drive from A to B”; it doesn’t require supervision (the program can handle that).

If a Computer and a character have the same Skill, the computer’s Skill can act as a Complementary Skill. Most programs require one or more Skills to be useful. The accompanying table has a list of example programs and required Skills; players and GMs can make up more programs as needed.

All programs cost 1 Character Point.

COMPUTER CHARACTERISTICS TABLE

Characteristic	Starting Value	Cost
INT	10	1
EGO	10 (AIs only)	1
DEX	10	2
OCV	3	5
DCV	3	5
OMCV	3	3
DMCV	3	3
SPD	2	10

Normal Computers have:	AIs have:
1) Characteristics: DEX, INT, OCV, DCV, OMCV, DMCV, SPD	1) Characteristics: DEX, INT, EGO, OCV, DCV, OMCV, DMCV, SPD
2) Skills	2) Skills
3) No Psychological Complications	3) Psychological Complications
4) Programs (1 point each)	4) Programs (1 point each)
5) No self will	5) Self will: can initiate own actions with EGO Roll.

Since they have no self-will, normal Computers cannot be reasoned with. They only accept commands to switch from one program to another or to change the operation of the current program. The only Mental Powers that work against them are those which affect the Machine class of minds (see 6E1 149; substitute INT for EGO), but even they may not always work well (the GM can impose negative modifiers to any rolls.)

Artificial Intelligence Computers

Artificially intelligent Computers (AIs) can think; they may have instincts, a personality, and even Psychological Complications. AIs have the same Characteristics as normal Computers, plus one: EGO. The base EGO for an AI is 10. AIs can be affected by Mental Powers that affect the Machine class of minds, and sometimes by Mental Powers affecting Human minds as well (depending on just how advanced they are). AIs have programs just like normal Computers, but they may also initiate their own actions if they make a successful EGO Roll.

For example, an AI with the Psychological Complication *Self-Preservation Instinct* may decide to run away from combat even if ordered to fight. Attempts to persuade a stubborn AI make great roleplaying, and may be decided by a Skill Versus Skill Contest, with the AI pitting its EGO Roll against a character’s Persuasion or Computer Programming.

Operating A Computer

A Computer has an OCV and DCV. Computers get Phases according to their SPD and DEX just like characters. If a Computer runs more than one program at once, such as Pilot Ship and Attack And Destroy Target, each program may act on each of the computer’s Phases. A computer can fire any weapons which it’s hooked up to.

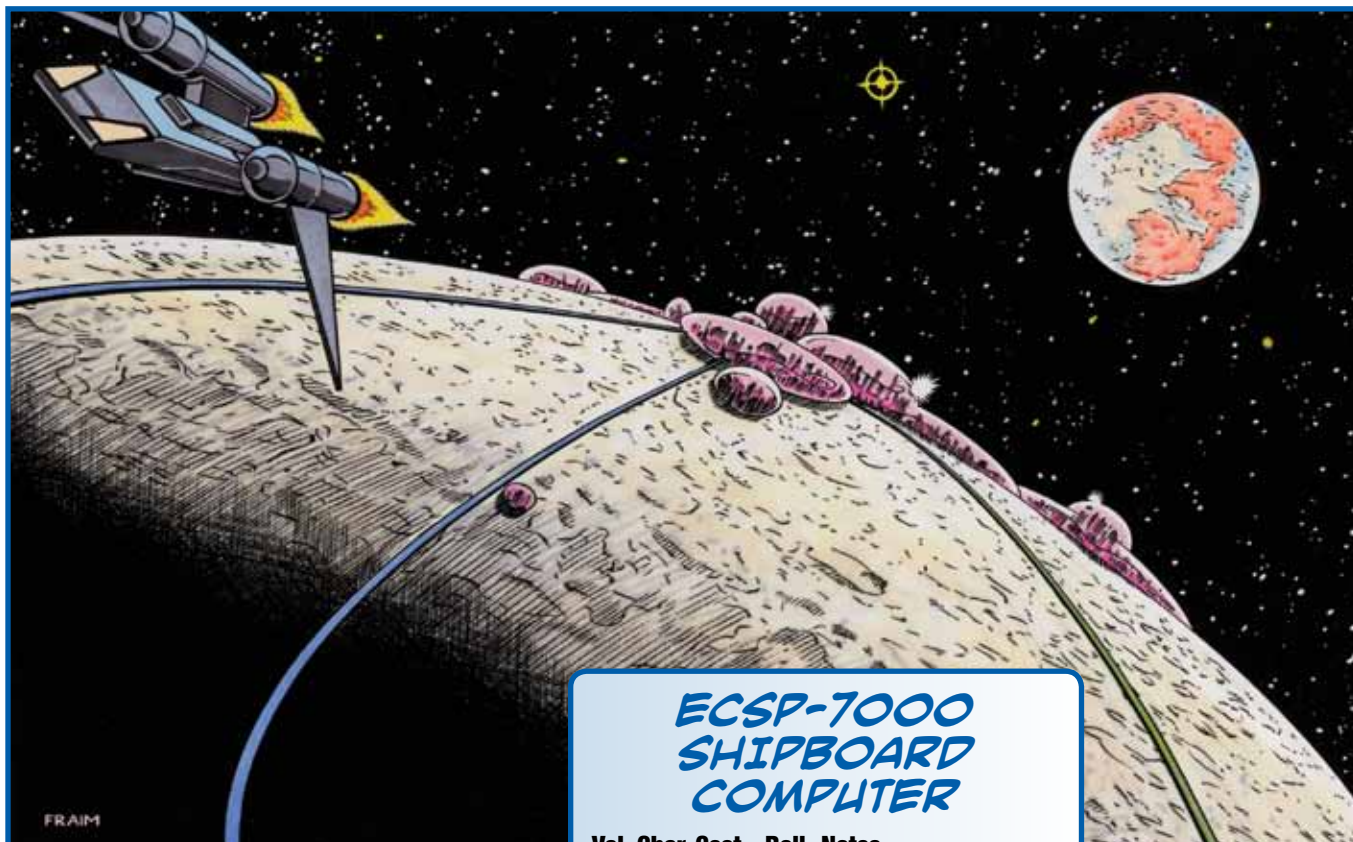
EXAMPLE PROGRAMS

Program	Required Skill(s)
Attack and Destroy Target	Weapon Familiarity
Diagnose Ship Malfunction	Mechanics, Electronics
Diagnose a Character's Disease	Paramedic; SS: Medicine
Drive from Location A to Location B	Transport Familiarity, Combat Driving, AKs
Search Nearby Space for other Spaceships (alerts crew if one is found)	Systems Operation
Search Reference Material for Information on a Topic	Knowledge Skills
Show Entertainment	Knowledge Skills

COMMON AI PSYCHOLOGICAL COMPLICATIONS

- Self-Preservation Instinct (Common, Strong):** 15 points
- Code Against Killing Humans (Very Common, Strong):** 20 points
- Considers Mission Goals More Important Than The Crew's Lives (Common, Total):** 20 points
- Secret Programmed Goals The Crew Doesn't Know About (Uncommon, Total):** 15 points
- Must Obey Orders From Humans (Common, Total):** 20 points





ECSP-7000 SHIPBOARD COMPUTER

Example Computer

This is a bare minimum, normal starship Computer — the ECSP-7000. The ECSP-7000 can drive a starship on routine flights, as long as no emergencies arise. Its SPD of 1 may seem too slow for safe piloting, but it maintains a Held Action for emergencies. If some emergency arises, the ECSP-7000 tries to continue towards its destination with the best plan its 11- INT Roll can devise.

Since the ECSP-7000 can only run two program at a time, it turns off all entertainment when landing, checking its position, and making course corrections. The 8- entertainment programs represent a dreary, small selection of movies, music, and games (it has only an 8- chance of having any particular item).

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll: 11-
10	DEX	0	11-	
3	OCV	0		
3	DCV	0		
3	OMCV	0		
3	DMCV	0		
1	SPD	-10		Phases: 7

Cost Skill

Basic Abilities

3	Clock: Absolute Time Sense
5	Memory: Eidetic Memory
3	Math Processor: Lightning Calculator
3	Scanner: Speed Reading

Autopilot Skills

3	Combat Piloting 11-
2	KS: Flight Protocols 11-
1	Voice Command Recognition: Language: PanGalactic Tradespeak
2	Navigation (Space) 11-
4	Systems Operation 11-

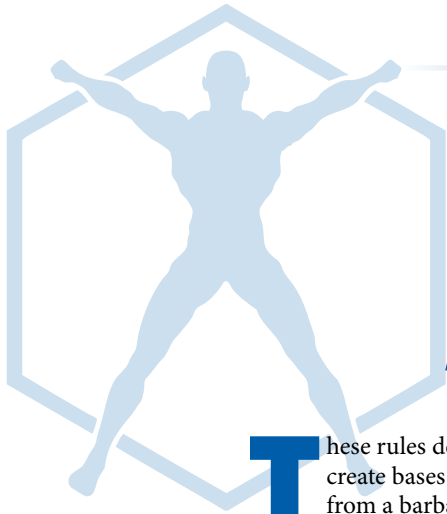
Entertainment Skills

1	Popular Movies 8-
1	Popular Music 8-
1	Video Games 8-

Programs

1	Drive Ship from A to B (A and B must be on the Navigation Maps)
1	Show Entertainment

Total Cost: 19 points



VEHICLES AND BASES

These rules describe how characters can create bases and vehicles. Vehicles range from a barbarian warrior's chariot, to the souped-up coupes and sportscars driven by pulp heroes and Dark Champions spies, to the faster-than-light spaceship of an intergalactic smuggler. Similarly, Bases can range from a medieval castle, to the sprawling underground headquarters of a supervillain, to Space Station Gamma-9. Regardless of their origin or technological level, all Bases and Vehicles use the same rules.

Buying a Base or Vehicle is like buying any other type of equipment. In Heroic campaigns, characters must pay money. In this case, the GM usually designs the Vehicle or Base, and he also sets the price. Players can design their own Vehicles or Bases, but only with the GM's permission.

Characters in Superheroic campaigns pay for bases and Vehicles with Character Points. These points can come from one individual or several. Typically, Vehicles and Bases cost 1 Character Point per 5 points in the vehicle or Base; see *Vehicles And Bases*, 6E1 107. As with anything else in the *HERO System*, the minimum cost of a Vehicle or Base is 1 Character Point.

VEHICLE CHARACTERISTICS

Vehicles have nine Characteristics. Like the Characteristics for characters, Vehicle Characteristics reflect the attributes and abilities of the Vehicle. Vehicles also have one or more types of movement.

SIZE

Vehicles have a default starting size just like characters, but their longest dimension is length (horizontal), rather than height (vertical). The default vehicle size is 2m long and 1m wide. You can increase vehicle Size with the Vehicle Size Table. Each increment of Size on the table costs 5 Character Points.

Example: *Telarchus would like to build a Vehicle the size of a chariot. To increase its Size by 2 increments costs 10 points. The Vehicle now has a STR of 20, weighs 400 kg, and has 12 BODY.*

As a Vehicle's Size increases, so do its BODY and STR. This means the Vehicle's harder to disable and can carry more weight. Also, since passengers take up space, a larger Vehicle can carry more passengers than a smaller one.

On the other hand, the larger a Vehicle is, the easier it is to hit in combat. The "OCV+" listed on the Vehicle Size Table is a bonus for attackers to hit the Vehicle (it's derived from the Target Size rules; 6E2 51). It's not a bonus to the Vehicle's own OCV.

The dimensions presented in the Vehicle Size Table are not absolute; you can alter them somewhat as long as the total volume remains the same. The interior size of a Vehicle equals half the external size; with a minimum of one cubic meter. A normal passenger typically takes up 1 cubic meter of space, although it's possible to squeeze many more characters in.

STRENGTH (STR)

This is the lifting STR of the vehicle, indicating how much the vehicle can carry (in addition to its own mass). The base STR for a vehicle is 10; this increases automatically as the vehicle's Size increases. Vehicles can also buy STR separately, to reflect an especially powerful, but small, vehicle.

VEHICLE CHARACTERISTICS

Characteristic	Starting Value	Cost
Size	2m x 1m x 1m or less	See Size Table For Vehicles
STR	10	1
DEX	10	2
OCV	3	5
DCV	3	5
SPD	2	10
PD	2	See text
ED	2	See text
BODY	10	1
Movement	12m Ground Movement (24m Noncombat)	See Vehicle Movement Table

STR bought independently costs 1 Character Point per point of STR.

Vehicle STR can lift exactly as much as character STR. Encumbrance rules apply and may slow down heavily-loaded vehicles.

A Vehicle's innate STR based on its Size, and additional STR bought as a Characteristic, automatically costs no END. Any additional STR bought as a Power must be bought to 0 END or draw on a source of END such as an Endurance Reserve.

DEXTERITY (DEX)

This represents the intrinsic handling and maneuverability of a Vehicle. Thus, a fighter plane has a higher DEX than a bulldozer. A Vehicle begins with DEX 10; each +1 DEX cost 2 Character Points.

BODY

BODY indicates the structural integrity of the Vehicle — how much damage it can take before it falls apart. The base BODY for a Vehicle is 10; this increases automatically as the vehicle's Size increases. A Vehicle can also buy BODY independently; in this case it costs 1 Character Point per +1 BODY.

PHYSICAL DEFENSE, ENERGY DEFENSE

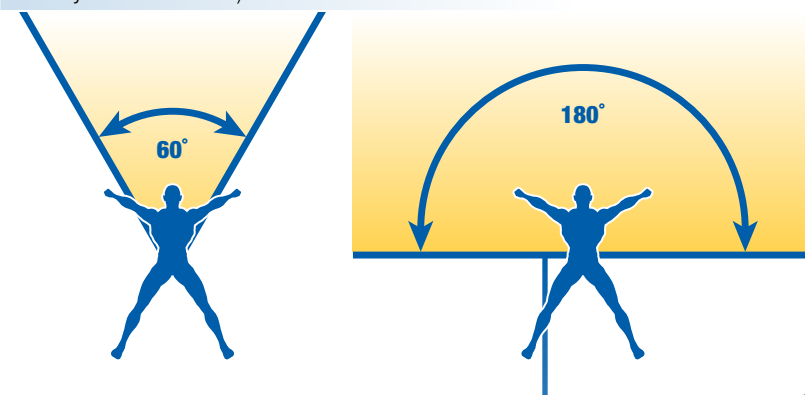
The PD and ED of Vehicles are Resistant. A Vehicle begins with 2 points of defense of each type. Every +2 points of defense costs 3 Character Points. For example, for 3 Character Points a Vehicle could have +2 PD, +2 ED, or +1 PD/+1 ED.

A Vehicle's PD and ED normally protects all parts of it, but characters can buy PD or ED that only protects the Vehicle from attacks from a certain direction. The Limitation, which is applied only to the PD or ED in the limited area, depends on the size of the area protected (see the Limited Defense Table).

Example: *Renegade builds an armored van. Overall, it has PD 6, ED 6, but Renegade wants some extra PD on the front of the vehicle to protect him against collisions. He buys +4 PD (6 Active Points), Limited Coverage (60 Degrees [front of vehicle only]; -1) (total cost: 3 points).*

LIMITED DEFENSE TABLE

Coverage Protects	Limitation
60 Degrees	-1
180 Degrees	-½
Only on the same horizontal Level	-¼
Coverage doesn't protect passengers (like a motorcycle or skateboard)	-½



VEHICLE SIZE TABLE

Cost	Size	Length	Width	Height	Volume	Mass	OCV+	STR	KB	BODY	Example
0	0	2m	1m	1m	2m ³	100 kg	+0	10	0	10	Bicycle
5	1	2.5m	1.25m	1.25m	4m ³	200 kg	+0	15	-1	11	Motorcycle
10	2	3.2m	1.6m	1.6m	8m ³	400 kg	+1	20	-2	12	Chariot
15	3	4m	2m	2m	16m ³	800 kg	+2	25	-3	13	Sportscar, stagecoach
20	4	5m	2.5m	2.5m	32m ³	1.6 ton	+2	30	-4	14	Four-door automobile
25	5	6.4m	3.2m	3.2m	64m ³	3.2 ton	+3	35	-5	15	Limousine, IFV
30	6	8m	4m	4m	125m ³	6.4 ton	+4	40	-6	16	Tank
35	7	10m	5m	5m	250m ³	12.5 ton	+4	45	-7	17	School bus
40	8	12.5m	6.4m	6.4m	500m ³	25 ton	+5	50	-8	18	Attack helicopter, Lear jet
45	9	16m	8m	8m	1000m ³	50 ton	+6	55	-9	19	Locomotive, jet fighter
50	10	20m	10m	10m	2000m ³	100 ton	+6	60	-10	20	Large cargo plane
55	11	25m	12.5m	12.5m	4000m ³	200 ton	+7	65	-11	21	ICBM
60	12	32m	16m	16m	8000m ³	400 ton	+8	70	-12	22	Trawler, trireme
65	13	40m	20m	20m	16000m ³	800 ton	+8	75	-13	23	Cutter, longship
70	14	50m	25m	25m	32000m ³	1.6 kton	+9	80	-14	24	Freighter
75	15	64m	32m	32m	64000m ³	3.2 kton	+10	85	-15	25	Jetliner (e.g., Boeing 747)

Size 0: includes all Vehicles of 2 x 1 x 1 meters size or less.

OCV+: This is the OCV bonus attackers have to hit the Vehicle (see *Target Size*, 6E2 51). Vehicles do not receive an OCV bonus for Size.



VEHICLE AND BASE DEFENSE

For the sake of simplicity, the PD, ED, and BODY of a Base or Vehicle apply throughout — every wall within the structure has the same PD, ED, and BODY, and so forth — unless some walls have more BODY or PD/ED with the *Limited Coverage* or *Partial Coverage* Limitations. In the interest of “realism” and common sense, a character can voluntarily declare that different parts of his Base or Vehicle have lower PD, ED, or BODY than what he’s paid for overall. (Alternately, the GM may require this.)

OFFENSIVE COMBAT VALUE (OCV), DEFENSIVE COMBAT VALUE (DCV)

All Vehicles start with OCV 3, DCV 3, and can buy more of either for 5 Character Points per point. However, in combat a Vehicle’s CV derives from its own CV or the CV of its driver, whichever is lower. For more information, see *Vehicle Combat*, below.

Vehicles rarely buy extra DCV, and many sell back some of what they start with. A Vehicle’s Size provides an OCV bonus to hit it (see above), making it difficult for most Vehicles to avoid attacks.

SPEED (SPD)

Vehicles have a SPD, just like characters. A Vehicle begins with SPD 2; each +1 SPD cost 10 Character Points.

A Vehicle’s SPD controls how often it moves (not how fast) and how often the driver can adjust the Vehicle’s direction. Responsive Vehicles, like sportscars, have a higher SPD than Vehicles such as dump trucks or station wagons. It’s possible for a Vehicle to have a SPD higher than its driver’s SPD; in this case the Vehicle is “too responsive,” so the driver can’t use it to its fullest potential. For more information, see *Vehicle Combat*, below.

MOVEMENT

This is the Vehicle’s actual movement capability. All vehicles begin with Ground Movement 12m (Running), Swimming 4m, and a x2 Noncombat Movement multiplier with both modes of movement. Vehicles that lack either or both of those types of movement (such as boats, which have no Ground Movement) can sell back their Ground Movement and/or Swimming. Vehicles can buy additional movement at the prices listed in the Vehicle Movement Table.

All Vehicle movement has a x2 Noncombat Movement multiplier for free — in other words, a Vehicle can travel twice as fast if it travels at Noncombat velocities. You can double a Vehicle’s Noncombat Movement for +5 Character Points. Vehicles do not have to pay END for their movement.

Example: *Defender builds a gyrocopter. He buys Flight 20m for 20 points. He then spends +10 points for an additional x4 Noncombat Movement multiple. The final Noncombat Movement multiple is x8, so the gyrocopter can fly 160m per Phase when flying at Noncombat velocities.*

You can also build Vehicles with special modes of movement like Extra-Dimensional

Movement and FTL Travel, and movement-related Powers such as Clinging. Buy these Powers for vehicles just like you would for characters.

All Vehicles, even those using Ground Movement, have a Turn Mode when turning, just like characters with Flight in personal combat. See 6E2 28 for more information about Turn Modes.

MOVEMENT LIMITATIONS

To reflect how certain types of Vehicles work, their movement can be bought with Limitations.

LIMITED MANEUVERABILITY

Some Vehicles are so unwieldy that, regardless of their Turn Mode, they cannot turn around in a Phase. Vehicles with this $-\frac{1}{4}$ Limitation can only make a maximum of two equally spaced turns (instead of the 3 or more usually needed to turn around) over the course of a Phase while moving at Combat Movement speeds. When moving at Noncombat Movement speeds, a Vehicle with this Limitation can only make one turn over the course of the Phase.

STALL VELOCITY

Stall Velocity means a flying Vehicle has to maintain a certain airspeed or risk stalling. Ordinarily, Vehicles with Flight have no stall velocity, so their flight is effectively momentumless — they can hover in place, fly straight upward, and so forth. However, if you buy a Vehicle’s Flight with this Limitation, the Vehicle may “stall” if it doesn’t fly quickly enough to exceed its stall velocity. (Of course, any flying Vehicle can safely slow down to land.)

If the Stall Velocity is half the Vehicle’s maximum combat velocity, this is a $-\frac{1}{4}$ Limitation. If the Stall velocity equals the Vehicle’s combat velocity, Stall Velocity is a $-\frac{1}{2}$ Limitation (such a Vehicle could only stay airborne by making Full Moves every Phase or moving at Noncombat Movement velocities).

A stalled Vehicle is at $\frac{1}{2}$ DCV and begins to fall normally. A skilled pilot (one with the Skill *Combat Piloting*) can attempt to pull out of a stall by succeeding with a Combat Piloting roll.

VEHICLE MOVEMENT TABLE

Movement Mode	Cost per 1m	Base
Ground Movement	1 point	12m
Flight	1 point	0m
Swimming	$\frac{1}{2}$ point	4m
Leaping	$\frac{1}{2}$ point	0m
Swinging	$\frac{1}{2}$ point	0m
Teleportation*	1 point	0m
Tunneling†	Special	0m
Extra-Dimensional Movement	N/A — 20 points	
FTL Travel	N/A — 10 points	
Clinging	N/A — 10 points	

*: A Teleporting Vehicle can automatically Teleport itself, and all of the weight it can carry inside itself based on its STR, without paying for any *Increased Mass* Adders. Any *Increased Mass* it does buy starts by doubling the amount it can lift with its STR.

†: A Tunneling Vehicle pays 3 Character Points to Tunnel 1m through 1 PD materials, +1 Character Point for each +1m of velocity, +2 Character Points for each +1 PD Vehicle can Tunnel through.

BASE CHARACTERISTICS

The rules for constructing Bases are similar to those for building Vehicles, with one important difference: Bases don't move. Thus, they do not have SPD, DEX, OCV, or DCV; Bases are defined by only 4 Characteristics. (However, for purposes of determining the END usage of Constant Powers and the like, assume that all Bases have SPD 3.)

BODY

BODY indicates the structural integrity of the Base's walls (interior and exterior) and roof. Because a Base's BODY spreads out over a large area, a Base's walls start with only 2 BODY, and their Size doesn't affect this. Each +1 BODY costs 1 Character Point; this BODY applies to the entire Base.

PHYSICAL DEFENSE, ENERGY DEFENSE

The PD and ED of Bases are Resistant. A Base begins with 2 points of defense of each type. Every +2 points of defense costs 3 Character Points. For example, for 3 Character Points a Base could have +2 PD, +2 ED, or +1 PD/+1 ED.

When a Base is attacked, the attack hits either the walls, ceiling, or floor. Damage to the Base is determined using the *Breaking Things* rules (see 6E1 170). It's also possible to target particular pieces of equipment (see below).

PARTIAL COVERAGE

A character can build parts of a Base (or, in special cases, a Vehicle) with more armor or BODY than the rest of the Base. Because this PD, ED, or BODY doesn't protect the entire Base, the cost of the extra PD, ED, or BODY may take the *Partial Coverage* Limitation.

To derive the value for Partial Coverage, determine the overall size of the Base and the size of the heavily protected section. For each increment of Size reduction (each step upwards on the Base Size Table), the PD/ED for the smaller section receives a -¼ Limitation (maximum of -2).

Example: *Defender constructs a Base 50 x 25 x 25 meters large. The Base, a normal building, has PD 2, ED 2, BODY 2 walls, but it has a super-secure vault which is only 8 x 4 x 4 meters large. Because this is 8 increments up the table, the defenses for that area receives a -2 Limitation.*

SIZE

The minimum Size for a Base is 125 cubic meters (8 x 4 x 4 meters). You can increase a Base's Size with the Base Size Table. Each increment of Size on the table costs 2 Character Points.



BASE CHARACTERISTICS

Characteristic	Starting Value	Cost
Size	8 x 4 x 4m	See Base Size Table
PD	2	See text
ED	2	See text
BODY	2	1

BASE SIZE TABLE

Cost	Size	Length	Width	Height	Volume	OCV+
0	0	8m	4m	4m	125m ³	+4
2	1	10m	6m	6m	360m ³	+4
4	2	12.5m	6.4m	6.4m	500m ³	+5
6	3	16m	8m	8m	1000m ³	+6
8	4	20m	10m	10m	2000m ³	+6
10	5	25m	12.5m	12.5m	4000m ³	+7
12	6	32m	16m	16m	8000m ³	+8
14	7	40m	20m	20m	16000m ³	+8
16	8	50m	25m	25m	32000m ³	+9
18	9	64m	32m	32m	64000m ³	+10
20	10	80m	40m	40m	125000m ³	+10
22	11	100m	50m	50m	250000m ³	+11
24	12	125m	64m	64m	500000m ³	+12
26	13	160m	80m	80m	1mil m ³	+12
28	14	200m	100m	100m	2mil m ³	+13
30	15	250m	125m	125m	4mil m ³	+14
32	16	320m	160m	160m	8mil m ³	+14
34	17	400m	200m	200m	16mil m ³	+15
36	18	500m	250m	250m	32mil m ³	+16

OCV+: This is the OCV bonus attackers have to hit the Base (see *Target Size*, 6E2 51). Bases do not have OCV.



OTHER BASE ATTRIBUTES

In addition to Size and Characteristics, Bases have certain other attributes.

LOCATION

The location of a Base may affect its price. This reflects the availability of land, transporting building materials, ease of maintenance, and so forth. The standard Base is located in or near a city or equivalent population center. If the character distributes the area of his Base among two or more locations (see below), determine the location cost from the most expensive of the locations (unless the GM rules otherwise).

City: The Base is located in a major city in the campaign setting (usually the city where the campaign takes place), and is easily accessible to PCs, their enemies, the authorities, ordinary people, and the like.

Suburb: The Base is close to the city, but not actually within the city limits. It may take some time for characters to get from the Base to events happening in the city, and vice-versa.

Distant: The Base is far away from the city. Such isolation makes the Base very private and secure from unexpected visitors. However, characters cannot reach the city quickly unless they have a very fast transportation system.

Floating in Water: The Base is on a ship or raft. This usually makes it easier to reach the water, but also makes the Base susceptible to waves, hurricanes, sea monsters, and the like.

Deep Wilderness: The Base is located in deep wilderness, like the Arctic, the Amazon jungle, a mountaintop in the Himalayas, a remote island, or someplace similar. It enjoys great solitude, but the night life is very dull. The Base may need Life Support to protect the residents from harsh local conditions.

Airborne: The Base is suspended above the ground by some device (but it's still immobile; if you want a mobile flying "Base," design a large Vehicle instead).

Underwater: The Base is located underwater. This protects it from most waves and winds, but has problems of its own in the form of high pressure, underwater flora and fauna, Atlantean marauders, and the like.

Underground: Just what it sounds like. Really secure, but essentially a hole in the ground.

Space: A great view, very stable weather, room to grow — but getting anywhere requires spaceships, teleportation machines, or extremely tough residents.

Another Dimension: For the ultimate in far-out accommodations. This Base is located in another dimension; characters using it need dimensional travel technology or powers to move between the campaign's home dimension and the Base.

FLOOR PLANS

The designer determines the internal arrangement of a Base. He should make sure the Base has all the facilities required (such as bathrooms).

A character can may distribute the volume of his Base vertically as well as horizontally. Many Bases have several floors, especially in skyscrapers. He could even decide that some of the volume is in a different location. For example, a character wants to have a stable which contains most of his horses and chariots far from his castle. He could create a Size 12 Base (8,000 cubic meters), set aside 2,000 cubic meters for the stable, and use the remaining 6,000 for the castle. If a character "splits" his Base this way, he can also split the Base's grounds (see below); the split need not be proportional.

In short: a character buys the overall space his Base has, and then can arrange that space as he sees fit (and the GM allows). For example, to have a five-story Base, with each four meter tall story having a 100 x 100 meter floorplan, the character should buy two million cubic meters worth of Size (Size 14, costing 28 points).

GROUND

A Base's Size represents a building or similar installation. In addition, a Base can have grounds or a yard equal to the size of the Base itself. You can double the area of the grounds for +1 Character Point; this has no effect on the Size of the Base itself. Of course, a Base can't have unlimited tracts of land, especially in an urban setting; the GM is the final arbiter as to whether the grounds surrounding a Base would "fit."

The grounds have neither walls nor rooms. At the builder's options, the grounds can be surrounded by 2 BODY, 2 PD, 2 ED fence (you can increase this BODY and defense like the BODY and defense of the rest of the Base).

PERCEIVABILITY

Normally a Base is relatively easy to find and recognize. Anyone can find the Base with a little research; anyone looking at the Base instantly knows what it is.

However, a Base can be both hard to find and hard to recognize if its builder so desires. To make a Base hard to locate, the builder should purchase the *Concealment* Skill for the Base. This gives the Base a 9- roll for 3 Character Points (Bases get no bonus for INT); you can improve the roll normally. Whenever someone tries to locate the Base, roll the Base's Concealment versus the searcher's skill (Computer Programming, Concealment, PER Roll, and so forth) in a Skill Versus Skill Contest. If the searcher wins, he finds the Base; otherwise it remains hidden.

You can also disguise a Base's function so that it doesn't necessarily appear to be a Base. To do this, purchase the *Disguise* Skill for the Base. This costs 3 Character Points for a 9- roll; you can improve the roll normally. Whenever someone tries to determine the function of the Base, roll his Disguise or PER Roll against the Base's Disguise in a Skill Versus Skill Contest. If the viewer wins,

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BASE LOCATION TABLE

Location	Cost
City	0
Suburb	5
Distant	10
Modifiers	
Floating in water	+5
Deep Wilderness	+5
Airborne	+10
Underwater	+15
Underground	+20
In Space	+25
Another Dimension	+30

he knows that the Base is, in fact, a Base; otherwise, the building's function remains hidden. Of course, a curious individual can always go to the Base and ask what its function is.

Example: *Defender wants to make his Base hard to find and recognize. To make it hard to locate, he buys Concealment on a 16-; this costs 3 + 14 = 17 points. He then buys Disguise on a 15-; this costs 3 + 12 = 15 points. The Base is now extremely hard to locate and recognize.*

OUTFITTING A BASE OR VEHICLE

After determining the Size of your Base or Vehicle, you can outfit it. Buying resources and equipment costs Character Points, and these points count toward the overall cost of the Base or Vehicle.

Any Base or Vehicle equipment must be self-powered; that is, it must normally cost no END, be bought to 0 END, use Charges, or have an Endurance Reserve. It's possible to have a single large Endurance Reserve for an entire Base or Vehicle; this would simulate the power plant or batteries possessed by many Bases and Vehicles.

GENERAL ABILITIES

A Base or Vehicle can have a Power or Talent that affects all of it. (Generally, Bases and Vehicles shouldn't be allowed to buy Perks, though the GM can permit this if appropriate.) For these all-inclusive abilities, the builder should simply buy the Power with appropriate Advantages and Limitations. Since the Base or Vehicle is considered a single "character," you don't have to buy a Power that affects all of it (typically a Defense Power or Life Support) with the *Area Of Effect* Advantage, nor must you buy such Powers as *Usable On Others* (inhabitants and passengers can use them automatically).

Life Support is one of the Powers most frequently bought for a Base or Vehicle. It often takes the $-\frac{1}{2}$ Limitation *Costs Endurance*, meaning it must be turned on and has to be hooked up to an Endurance Reserve (or some other power source).

You may also purchase special defenses such as Hardened defenses for a Vehicle or Base. A Base or Vehicle could even have Desolidification or Invisibility, although these should only be bought in special cases. Of course, the GM has final say as to what can and cannot go into a Base or Vehicle; not all Powers will be appropriate (for example, buying Mental Defense for a Vehicle or Base would require a good justification).

COMPUTERS

You can install a computer in a Base or Vehicle. Determine the Computer's cost separately using the standard rules (see 6E1 102), then add it to the cost of the Base or Vehicle after you calculate that cost.

Example: *Defender buys a 100-point Computer for his Base (costing $100/5 = 20$ points). When he finishes building his Base, he'll add this 20 points onto the Base's final cost.*

PERSONNEL

A Base or Vehicle can have personnel associated with its operation — workers, guards, chauffeurs, pets, even robots. Build personnel with the Follower rules. As with Computers, calculate the cost of the Followers separately and then add it to the cost of the Base or Vehicle after you calculate that cost.

Example: *Defender has spent 120 points on his Base so far, and would now like to buy some guards for it. He buys 64 agents built on 100 Character Points (costing $100/5 = 20$ points, $x64 = 30$ points; total 50 points). When Defender finishes calculating the cost of his Base, he'll add 50 points to it.*

VEHICLES

Bases sometimes have their own Vehicles. In this case, calculate the cost of the Vehicle(s) and then add it to the cost of the Base after you calculate that cost.

LABS AND SKILLS

A Vehicle or Base can have laboratories. Labs help characters do research and improve certain Skills, provide a way to analyze data about mysterious events, and so forth. Don't let the term "lab" confuse you; they're not restricted to the hard sciences. A Base could have a "lab" stocked with Disguise equipment, gymnasium equipment for practicing Acrobatics, or lockpicking tools and practice locks.

To build a lab, simply buy the appropriate Skill — this indicates what the lab is designed for. This Skill can be a Familiarity for poor labs, or a normal Skill for better ones. When a character uses the lab, its roll acts as a Complementary Skill Roll to his own roll. Because labs don't have any Characteristics, the Base roll for a lab Skill is always 9-. Of course, the lab only helps the character with his Skill; if he doesn't have the Skill in the first place the lab does him no good. (Most people couldn't make heads or tails out of the equipment in Einstein's laboratory, for example.) All labs require a minimum of two cubic meters of space; many need much more than that.

Example: Because he's the one who has to design the Base, Defender decides he's going to build himself an electronics lab. The cost for an electronics lab is 3 Character Points; this gives a lab with an Electronics roll of 9-. Defender buys +8 with the skill; this costs 16 points (total of 19 points). The lab now has a 17- Electronics Roll that serves as a Complementary Skill to anyone doing Electronics research there.

Computers and AIs may also be given control over the laboratories, though of course the Computer or AI must have the requisite Skill to use it. The Computer needs either Extra Limbs, a robot, or a person in the lab to help it use the facility.

CELLS

You can build cells in Bases or Vehicles to hold enemies or villains. You build them with extra PD/ED using the *Partial Coverage* Limitation described above. You may also apply unusual defenses or Advantages to the walls to hold unusual prisoners — Cannot Be Escaped With Teleportation to stop characters with Teleportation, Mental Defense to keep mentalists from using their powers effectively, Affects Desolidified to keep Desolidified characters from simply walking out, or Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing) so that it's airtight (meaning characters with Shrinking can't escape through the cracks). All of these Powers and Advantages can also take the *Partial Coverage* Limitation to reflect the size of the cell(s).

POWER

Bases can hook up to the normal power grid for no point cost; this provides enough power to run all normal lighting, ventilation, and laboratory needs. If the Base is outside normal power sources (like on the Moon), it has internal generators for these purposes. However, if the Base has to power weapons or other equipment built with Powers, it needs an Endurance Reserve.

SENSORS

You can buy external sensors for a Base as Clairsentience with the appropriate Enhanced Senses. Of course, if no one monitors the sensors, they won't help much (although a Computer or AI can serve as an effective monitor). External Sensors are usually bought with Limitations (such as a Required Roll) to reflect imperfect coverage; the GM may require this.

Buy internal sensors the same way, but they can take the *Partial Coverage* Limitation, if not all of the Base is under surveillance.

Sensors can function as security systems, and may be disabled with a successful Security Systems roll.

TRAINING FACILITIES

Many Bases have training facilities where characters can practice Skills and other abilities. These range from a combat practice ground and jousting field at a castle, to the "danger room" of a superhero team's secret headquarters, to the hologymnasium on a space station.

Training facilities may offer some or all of the following benefits:

1. They allow characters to buy off Vulnerabilities and Susceptibilities, and possibly other Complications as well. A character can expose himself to the attacks and substances he takes (extra) damage from and build up tolerance and resistance. Of course, buying off a Complication requires the expenditure of Experience Points and the GM's permission.

Similarly, a character could train to overcome (*i.e.*, buy off) Limitations on his Powers. For example, a character whose RKA *Only Works Against Metal* (-1) could work at expanding his range of effect. He might go from only affecting metals, to affecting any inorganic substance (-½) to any nonliving substance (-¼), to anything or anyone.

2. Learning new Skills and abilities. A character can use training facilities to learn things from his comrades or on his own. For example, if one of the characters knows WF: Staff, he can use the Training Facility to teach another character how to use that weapon.

Practicing in a Training Facility is a particularly good justification for buying Combat Skill Levels (representing intense practice with a particular attack or group of attacks) or the *Teamwork* Skill (representing a group of characters working together to hone their battlefield tactics and ability to Coordinate). The GM might even allow a character to buy extra defenses or CSLs to represent training in resisting or counteracting particular types of attacks.

3. Learning about other characters' abilities, strengths, and weaknesses. By observing other characters as they train, a character may learn valuable information about them. What he learns, and how he learns it, depends upon his ability to perceive things, the situation, how well the other character hides things, and the GM's discretion.

4. Learning about different environments. By experiencing other environments — such as zero gravity, vacuum, underwater, high altitude, extreme heat, extreme cold, different atmospheres, or different gravities — a character can learn how to overcome the problems they pose. This is a good justification for buying the *Environmental Movement* Talent.

EQUIPMENT

Bases and Vehicles can also have equipment, ranging from weaponry, to luxury items, to communication devices.

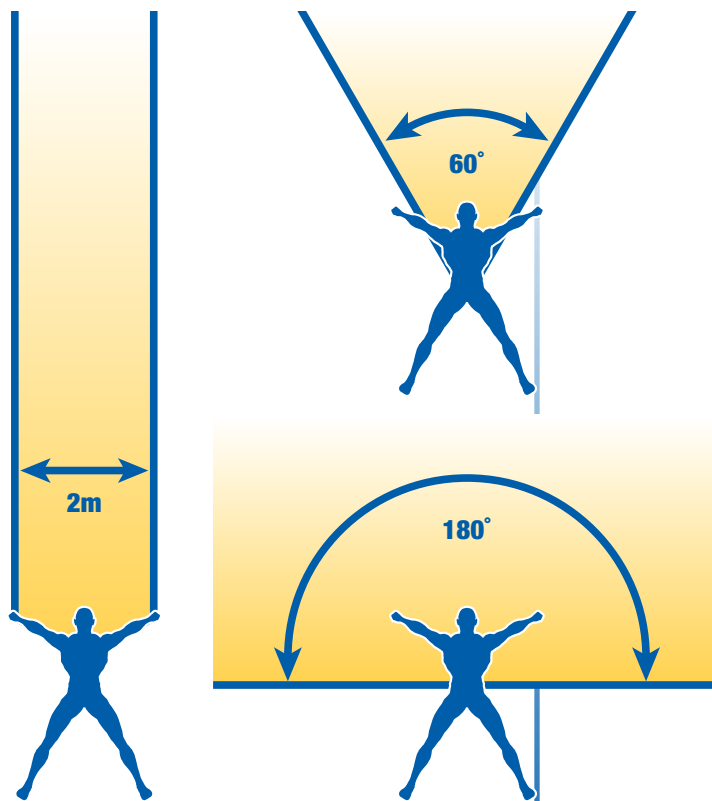
Equipment is usually bought with a *Focus* Limitation unless it's intrinsically a part of the Base or Vehicle. All Vehicle equipment receives an extra -½ Limitation in addition to the normal value of the *Focus* Limitation — it's a Bulky, but mobile, *Focus*. However, don't halve a Vehicle's DCV for carrying it; that effect only applies if a character detaches the item from the Vehicle and carries it himself. All Base equipment receives an extra -1 Limitation in addition to the normal value of the *Focus* Limitation (*i.e.*, it's an Immobile *Focus*).

Characters can apply the 5-point doubling rule (6E1 181) to Base and Vehicle equipment.

Example: *Defender wants to install some defensive weaponry in his Base. He buys a Blast 10d6 with the Limitations Obvious Accessible Focus (including an extra -1 for being an Immobile Focus) and 16 Charges. The cost for one blaster is 50 / (1+1+1+0) = 17 points. He decides to buy 16 of the blasters; this costs an additional +20 points. The total cost for 16 blasters is 17+20 = 37 points.*

Sometimes a character can destroy a Vehicle's or Base's equipment without destroying the Vehicle itself or the Base's walls. Accessible Foci are outside the PD/ED of the Vehicle or Base; they get the normal defense for a *Focus* (see 6E1 376). Inaccessible Foci, on the other hand, get both their own defenses and the defenses of the Vehicle or Base. Obvious Foci are recognizable for what they are and the function they perform. Inobvious Foci are hidden or resemble ordinary parts of the Vehicle or Base.

Some Vehicle and Base equipment is intended for the use of the occupants, not the Vehicle or Base itself. For example, a space station or starship might have a Teleportation Platform so people can easily enter and exit it. Obviously this device doesn't allow the Base or Vehicle itself to Teleport — it's for the use of people. Similarly, the occupants of a Vehicle or Base may be able to use its sensors, weapons, and other equipment instead or, in addition to, the Vehicle or Base itself being able to do so.



LIMITED ARC OF FIRE

You can buy Vehicle weaponry (and sometimes Base weaponry as well) with a special Limitation: *Limited Arc Of Fire*. A weapon with a Limited Arc Of Fire cannot fire in all directions; instead, it can only cover certain areas. The value of the Limitation depends on the size of the arc and whether the weapon can only fire on targets on the same horizontal level as itself.

LIMITED ARC OF FIRE

Arc Of Fire	Bonus
2m wide line	-¾
60 degrees	-½
180 degrees	-¼
Additionally	
Only on same horizontal level	-¼



VEHICLE AND BASE COMPLICATIONS

A Vehicle or Base can have Complications, just like a character. Complications serve to give the Base or Vehicle flavor, but don't usually reduce the Vehicle's or Base's cost to the character (see 6E1 107). The GM should carefully examine the Complications to make sure they fit into the campaign; some Complications may be Mystery Complications (6E1 417), thus allowing the GM to make sure they fit the campaign. The GM can also set a maximum number of Complications for the Base or Vehicle.

Dependent NPC: The Base or Vehicle has an individual who's almost always in or near it. A DNPC is different from personnel because the builder of the Base or Vehicle feels a special need to protect the DNPC from harm. The DNPC will often be especially defenseless or close to the builder.

Example: *Defender has an out-of-work brother who's staying at Champions HQ because he doesn't have anywhere else to live. He keeps himself busy by fixing things up around the Base. He's a Very Frequent DNPC.*

Distinctive Features: A Base or Vehicle that's particularly distinctive can have Distinctive Features.

Example: *The Star Galleons of the Varanyi Empire are constructed to inspire fear in opponents. They have Distinctive Features (Unconcealable) and cause an extreme reaction, worth 25 points. Onlookers are always able to recognize a Star Galleon, and associate it with death and destruction — they usually shoot on sight.*

Hunted (Watched): Many Bases or Vehicles are Watched by some organization or group. This can even be part of a deal that enables the characters to build the Base or Vehicle in the first place (“We’ll let you build your headquarters, but we’ll be keeping an eye on you”). The Character Point value for having someone Watch the Base or Vehicle is covered in the Hunted rules (6E1 423).

If the group Watching is the government (as is often the case), then there will probably be other repercussions. The Government will often want information about anyone who uses the Base or Vehicle. Of course, the Government also insists on detailed reports of all group activities, especially detailed descriptions of all enemies encountered. Any unusual magic or technology “found” by the group must be turned over to the Government for examination by “top men in the field.”

“Who?”

“Top men. Top men. Don’t worry, it’s all being taken care of.”

Social Complication: Publicly Known: Just like a character with a Social Complication: Public Identity, a Base or Vehicle can be Publicly Known. This means everyone knows its (current) location, who owns it, its prominent features, what can be found inside, and so forth.

Unluck: The Vehicle or Base itself is a nexus for unfortunate events. Equipment malfunctions, windows break, the computer starts printing out poetry, the AI gets hooked on video games, escalators suddenly reverse directions, the Base weapons fire by accident, and so forth. Unluck can be even worse if the Base or Vehicle is in a hostile environment: the hull could be punctured by a meteor which flew out of clear space, the airlock door falls off, and so on.

Vulnerability: The Vehicle or Base is particularly Vulnerable to certain types of attacks.

VEHICLE COMBAT

The HERO System handles Vehicle movement and combat similarly to character movement and combat. You can have a combat between several characters with Vehicles, or between a mixed group of Vehicles and pedestrians, all without breaking a sweat, using the streamlined Vehicle combat system below. Although not designed to cover every possible contingency in Vehicle combat, these rules enable you to run most Vehicle-oriented combats quickly and easily.

For ease of description, these rules refer to “driving” Vehicles and the Skill *Combat Driving*. Substitute “piloting” (or “flying”) and *Combat Piloting* if appropriate.

Vehicle Movement

Vehicles have a Base movement in meters. This movement is the number of meters the Vehicle can move at Combat Movement velocity in a single Phase. A Vehicle can move more quickly if the driver (or pilot) moves at Noncombat Movement velocity (which of course reduces the Vehicle's OCV to 0 and halves its DCV). A Vehicle's Phases derive from its SPD, just like a character. A Vehicle with a SPD 4 moves on Segments 3, 6, 9, and 12. (For details on Noncombat Movement and acceleration, see 6E2 24-25.)

A Vehicle's effective SPD in combat equals its SPD or the driver's SPD, whichever is lower. If the Vehicle is driven on the Phases for this SPD (or a lower SPD), it has a normal Turn Mode for all of its types of movement. In addition, the Vehicle may receive a DCV bonus if the driver has *Combat Driving* (see below).

If the driver has a higher SPD than the Vehicle, the Vehicle simply isn't responsive enough for him. He has to Hold his Actions so he acts on the Phases in which the Vehicle can act if he wants to maintain full control over the Vehicle. Alternately, he can perform other actions (such as making an

attack) on any Phase which he has but the Vehicle doesn't. (Making attacks is discussed below.)

If the Vehicle has a higher SPD than the driver, the driver has two choices. First, he can, as described above, have the Vehicle only move on his Phases (in essence, he makes the Vehicle Hold its Action until he can control its movement). However, he can, if he wishes, try to drive the Vehicle at its SPD instead of his own, lower, SPD. If the Vehicle moves in a Phase which it has but the driver doesn't, it's considered to be moving at Noncombat Movement velocity (regardless of how many meters of movement it actually uses) and thus to be at 0 OCV, ½ DCV. It cannot accelerate or decelerate; it must continue moving at the velocity it had on its last Phase. It is also harder to turn — it must continue moving in the direction it was moving, since the driver can only adjust the Vehicle's direction or velocity when he has an Action (*i.e.*, on one of his Phases) or if he Aborts one of his Phases to do so. The Vehicle can only attack when its driver has an Action, except for Move Throughs — if it runs into something, it does Move Through damage (see below), regardless of whether its driver had a Phase that Segment.

A Vehicle can never move at a SPD higher than its own (a Vehicle can only be so responsive).

Example: *Fast Eddie (SPD 2) is driving a Corvette (SPD 4). Eddie can drive the Vehicle at SPD 2, thus driving at Combat Movement velocity. Alternatively, he can really open it up and drive the Vehicle at SPD 4. On the Phases which the 'vette has but Eddie doesn't, it's considered to be traveling at Noncombat Movement velocity (regardless of how many meters it moves) and is at 0 OCV, ½ DCV. In addition, Eddie can only adjust the Vehicle's course or velocity in his Phases (Segments 6 and 12), even though the car moves on Segments 3, 6, 9, and 12).*

Hitting A Vehicle

Vehicles have an effective OCV and DCV equal to their OCV/DCV or their driver's OCV/DCV, whichever is lower.

VEHICULAR DCV

Remember that a Vehicle's Size and other modifiers affect how easily others can hit it (by providing a Target Size OCV bonus). Furthermore, Vehicles are normally driven at Noncombat Movement velocity, so in a typical situation a Vehicle's effective DCV is halved. If driven at Combat Movement velocities, a Vehicle has its full effective DCV.

The driver's skill (or lack thereof) may also modify a Vehicle's effective DCV. If the driver doesn't have Combat Driving, the Vehicle is at ½ DCV (regardless of whether it's traveling at

Combat or Noncombat velocity). DCV can only be halved once, so a Vehicle driven at Noncombat velocity by an untrained driver is only at ½ DCV, not ¼ DCV. If the driver has Combat Driving, the Vehicle gets its full effective DCV when moving at Combat Movement velocities.

Optionally, you can also determine a Vehicle's effective DCV from its velocity; see 6E2 24.

Vehicles can "Dodge" in a fashion. If the driver does nothing but drive in a Phase (*i.e.*, doesn't attack and doesn't have to make any Combat Driving rolls to avoid obstacles or to maneuver), he may make a Combat Driving roll and eliminate the Target Size OCV bonus to his his Vehicle.

DAMAGE TO VEHICLES

Vehicles that take damage slowly fall apart. Each time a Vehicle takes BODY from an attack, the GM should roll on the Vehicle Damage Table to determine the effects. When a Vehicle has lost all of its BODY it falls apart, or blows up, at the GM's option.

VEHICLE DAMAGE TABLE

Roll 1d6 Vehicle Loses

1	One 2x Noncombat Movement multiplier
2	10m of Combat Movement
3	Vehicle's largest Power
4	10 STR
5	5 DEX
6	1 SPD

Vehicle And Passenger Attacks

Determine a Vehicle's effective OCV as described above. If the driver has Combat Driving, the Vehicle has its full effective OCV; if he doesn't have Combat Driving, halve the Vehicle's effective OCV.

Use the Vehicle's effective OCV for attacks with weapons built into the Vehicle, and for ramming (Move Through) and sideswipe (Move By) attacks.

If the driver or passengers want to make their own attacks with their own weapons or Powers, they may do so; they act on their own Phases and DEXs. All such attacks suffer an automatic -2 OCV penalty — it's hard to aim straight in a moving Vehicle. The driver suffers an additional -1, since he has to devote some of his attention to controlling the Vehicle. If the driver has made any Combat Driving rolls at more than a -1 modifier that Segment to control or maneuver his Vehicle, all attacks he or his passengers make suffer an additional -1 modifier.

SENTIENT VEHICLES

Of course, some Vehicles don't need a driver — they have their own Computer drivers, autopilot systems, or the like. Some Vehicles may even be alive!

In this case, the Vehicle moves on its own DEX and SPD, and anyone riding in the Vehicle is a passenger and acts on his own DEX and SPD. If a Computer driver has a different DEX and SPD than the Vehicle does, treat the Computer as a driver and use the rules in the main text.



VEHICLE TABLE

Name	Size	OCV+	Mass (KB)	STR	DEF	BODY	DEX	OCV	DCV	SPD	Move	MAX	Cost	Notes
Miscellaneous Cars														
Compact	4x2x2m	+2	800kg (-3)	25	3	13	15	5	5	3	36m x4	532m	77/17	
Midsized	5x2½x2½m	+2	1.6t (-4)	30	3	14	15	5	5	3	50m x4	600m	166/21	
Full-Size	6x3x3m	+2	1.6t (-4)	35	3	16	14	5	5	3	48m x4	576m	108/22	
Limousine	6x3x3m	+3	3.2t (-5)	35	3	15	12	4	4	3	48m x4	576m	93/19	
Pickup Truck	6x3x3m	+3	3.2t (-5)	40	3	18	15	5	5	3	48m x4	576m	123/25	1
Sports Utility Vehicle	5x2½x2½m	+2	1.6t (-4)	35	4	14	14	5	5	3	46m x4	552m	108/22	
Van	6x3x3m	+3	3.2t (-5)	40	3	18	12	4	4	3	46m x4	552m	109/22	
Panel Truck	8x4x4m	+4	6.4t (-6)	45	3	19	10	3	3	3	42m x4	504m	80/16	LM
School Bus	10x5x5m	+4	12.5t (-7)	45	4	17	10	3	3	2	44m x4	352m	72/14	LM
Tractor-Trailer	20x10x10m	+6	100t (-10)	60	4	20	10	3	3	3	42m x4	504m	95/19	LM
Armored Car	8x4x4m	+4	6.4t (-6)	45	8	20	10	3	3	3	40m x4	480m	94/19	LM
Police Car	5x2½x2½m	+2	1.6t (-4)	30	3	14	15	5	5	3	54m x4	648m	127/257	2
Sportscars														
Lamborghini Diablo	4x2x2m	+2	800kg (-3)	25	3	13	23	8	8	4	70m x4	1120m	183/37	3
Lotus Esprit Turbo	4x2x2m	+2	800kg (-3)	25	3	13	21	7	7	4	60m x4	960m	159/32	
Porsche 911	4x2x2m	+2	800kg (-3)	25	3	14	23	8	8	4	62m x4	992m	174/35	
Motorcycles														
Harley-Davidson V-Rod	2.5x1x1m	+0	200kg (-1)	25	4	11	18	6	6	4	48m x4	576m	129/26	4
Kawasaki ZX12R Ninja	2.5x1x1m	+0	200kg (-1)	15	4	11	23	8	8	4	64m x4	1024m	167/33	
Military Land Vehicles														
HMMWV "Humvee"	5x2½x2½m	+2	1.6t (-4)	30	4	17	16	5	5	3	30m x4	360m	94/19	5
M1A1 Abrams MBT	8x4x4m	+4	6.4t (-6)	55	[30/20]	25	10	5	3	3	36m x2	216m	437/87	6
M113A2 APC	5x2½x2½m	+2	1.6t (-4)	35	10	18	14	5	5	3	38m x2	228m	177/35	7
Civilian Air Vehicles														
Bell Jetranger Helicopter	10x5x5m	+4	12.5t (-7)	25	4	17	18	4	4	3	60m x4	720m	108/22	
Boeing 747-400	64x32x32m	+10	3.2kt (-15)	85	5	25	10	3	3	3	22m x16	1056m	124/25	SV 10m
Learjet 31A	12x6x6m	+5	25t (-8)	42	4	18	18	4	4	3	30m x32	2880m	124/25	
Piper PA-28 Cherokee	8x4x4m	+4	6.4t (-6)	22	4	16	16	4	4	3	34m x8	816m	85/17	SV 16m
Military Air Vehicles														
F-15E Eagle	20x10x10m	+6	100t (-10)	50	6	20	23	8	8	5	76m x8	3040m	504/101	8
AH-1W SuperCobra	16x8x8m	+6	50t (-9)	30	10	20	20	7	7	4	58m x4	928m	397/79	9
AH-64 Apache	12x6x6m	+5	25t (-8)	42	12	20	23	8	8	4	50m x4	800m	476/95	10
Boats														
Speedboat, medium	6x3x3m	+3	3.2t (-5)	35	3	15	17	4	4	3	54m x2	324m	75/15	
Yacht, medium	12x6x6m	+5	25t (-8)	50	3	18	10	3	3	2	48m x2	192m	53/11	

KEY

LM: Limited Maneuverability

SV: Stall Velocity

Size: The length and width of the Vehicle. This doesn't include the wings on airplanes, the rotors of helicopters, or the like.

OCV+: The OCV bonus an attacker gets to hit the Vehicle, based on its size.

Mass (KB): The mass of the Vehicle when empty and its Knockback modifier.

STR: The maximum lifting Strength of the Vehicle. Use the rules for Encumbrance to determine if a Vehicle is too overloaded to move at full speed.

DEF: The PD and ED of the Vehicle (they're equal, unless noted otherwise). If the defense is listed as #/#, the first number is the defense from the front, the second number is the defense from the sides, bottom, top, and rear. If the defense is in brackets, it is Hardened.

BODY: The amount of BODY the Vehicle can take before it stops running.

DEX: The maximum effective DEX which can be used when driving the Vehicle.

SPD: The maximum effective SPD which can be used when driving the Vehicle.

MOVE: This is listed as # x#; the first number is the Vehicle's maximum Combat Movement, and the second number is the Vehicle's Noncombat multiple.

MAX: The maximum amount of meters the Vehicle can travel in one full Turn at Noncombat Movement velocities.

Cost: The cost of the Vehicle, expressed as Active Points/ (points divided by 5).

NOTES

1. Pickup Trucks have +3 to counteract offroad driving penalties with Ground Movement.

2. Police Cars include Radio, Emergency Lights and Siren, Public Address System, +1 with Ground Movement, and possibly various police weapons.

3. All the listed sportscars have +3 with Ground Movement (the Porsche only has +2) and Distinctive Features.

4. A Motorcycle's PD/ED are bought with the Limitation *Doesn't Protect Occupant* (-½). All the listed motorcycles have Skill Levels with their Ground Movement (+2 for the Harley, +3 for the Kawasaki) to reflect their excellent handling.

5. The HMMWV (High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle; "Humvee") or "Hummer" is the U.S. Army's modern all-purpose vehicle. Depending on how an individual unit is outfitted, it can function as an ambulance, communications center, cargo transport, and so forth. It can also be equipped to carry weapons such as TOW missile launchers and 7.62mm or .50 caliber machine guns. The listed Humvee has no weapons.

6. The M1A1 Abrams Main Battle Tank has a crew of four. It has Distinctive Features. It is armed and equipped with a main gun (120mm cannon, RKA 8d6, +1 STUN Multiplier, 55 Charges), two 7.62mm machine guns (RKA 2d6+1, Autofire (10), +1 STUN Multiplier; 11,400 Charges), one 12.7mm machine gun (RKA 3d6, Autofire (10), +1 STUN Multiplier; 1,000 Charges), smoke generators, NBC protection, and a nightvision system.

7. The M113A2 APC (Armored Personnel Carrier) has a crew of 2 and can carry up to 11 soldiers. It is amphibious. It has Distinctive Features. The standard model is equipped with a 12.7mm machine gun (RKA 3d6, Autofire (5), +1 STUN Multiplier; 2,000 Charges). It can be reconfigured for many different types of missions and weapons.

8. Military planes have Distinctive Features and two Skill Levels with Flight. Most have common equipment including an ECM system, ejection seat, infrared sensors, life support, 360-Degree Radar with, and HRRP.

Military helicopters have Distinctive Features. If the moving rotors hit something, they will do 2d6 Killing Damage in about an 8-14m radius. Military Helicopters usually have two or more Skill Levels with Flight.

9. The F-15E Eagle jet fighter can fly at about Mach 2.5 (it also has 4m of MegaScaled Flight to represent this). It's armed with a 20mm cannon (RKA 4d6, Autofire (10), +1 STUN Multiplier, 940 Charges), up to 11,000 pounds of ordnance (represented here by 24 one thousand pound bombs [RKA 4d6, Explosion]), eight Sidewinder and Sparrow missiles, and various electronic warfare systems.

10. The AH-1W SuperCobra is equipped with an M197 20mm cannon (RKA 4d6, Autofire (10), +1 STUN Multiplier, 750 Charges) and two AGM-114 anti-tank missiles (RKA 4d6, AP, Explosion). It can carry a variety of other weapons, and also has anti-infrared systems, IR sensors, radar, and HRRP.

11. The AH-64 Apache has four hardpoints. This allows it to carry four pods of four Hellfire missiles, four 19-tube 2.76-inch FFAR rocket launchers, or some combination of the two. It also has a 30mm chain gun (RKA 4½d6, Autofire (10), AP, +1 STUN Multiplier, 1,200 Charges). It also has anti-infrared systems, IR sensors, radar, and HRRP.



WEAPONS AND ARMOR

Characters use weapons for a variety of purposes, such as hurting an opponent or breaking out of a prison cell. Weapons can improve a character's accuracy, his ability to do damage, or both. Armor, of course, helps to keep the character from getting hurt in the first place.

BUYING WEAPONS AND ARMOR

How characters obtain weapons and armor depends on the type of campaign they're in.

SUPERHEROIC CAMPAIGNS

In Superheroic campaigns, weapons and armor are simply special effects for Powers — characters must buy them with Character Points, like any other Power. If a character wants to simulate a specific type of weapon or armor, he should consult the weapons charts in this chapter for the cost and effect of the desired item. Characters who want to create their own weapons can use the rules and guidelines provided in this chapter.

HEROIC CAMPAIGNS

In Heroic campaigns, characters buy normal weapons and armor with money (or, for that matter, find or steal them). This includes all the weapons on the charts in this section, although some weapons may be difficult to locate or available only in certain areas. And of course the GM will limit the list of available weapons based on the type of campaign he runs; a character couldn't find a submachine gun in a Fantasy setting, for example.

Heroic characters who want to build special weapons or armor (for example, a magic sword) must pay Character Points and use the rules and guidelines provided in this chapter.

WEAPONS

The way characters use weapons varies according to the nature of the campaign. Since characters in Heroic campaigns don't pay Character Points for weapons, they must instead know the appropriate Weapon Familiarity or suffer a -3 OCV penalty for nonproficiency.

Since characters in Superheroic campaigns pay Character Points for their weapons, they automatically know how to use them. They don't need WFs — a character never has to have a Skill to use a weapon he's paid Character Points for (unless a Limitation on the weapon requires a Skill).

General Rules For Building Weapons

Most weapons are built as Killing Attacks: HKA for melee weapons; RKA for ranged weapons. A few blunt weapons are built using Hand-To-Hand Attack, but in this case the character wielding them typically can only add STR damage based on the STR Minimum rules (see below). Some thrown weapons are built as HKA with the *Range Based On STR* (+¼) Advantage.

The following rules apply to building both ranged and melee weapons.



STRENGTH MINIMUM

In Heroic campaigns, melee weapons built with HKA and HA have a *Strength Minimum* that defines the minimum STR required to use them properly. STR Min is an optional rule; the GM shouldn't use it if he doesn't want to, or can use it purely as a way of defining weapons in his campaign rather than a Limitation. It shouldn't be used in Superheroic campaigns. The STR Minimum rules apply to both Normal Damage and Killing Damage weapons.

A weapon's STR Minimum isn't the minimum STR required to lift it or wield it — it's the minimum STR needed to wield it *effectively*. A character with 5 STR is fully capable of picking up a broadsword, and can even swing it around in combat if he wants to. But it takes a 12 STR to wield a broadsword effectively — to use it in combat Phase after Phase; to make it go exactly where you want it to go; to control its motion, momentum, and aim with precision. Thus, it has a 12 STR Minimum.

When a character lacks the STR to use a weapon effectively, he suffers a -1 OCV *and* -1 DC penalty for every 5 points (or fraction thereof) his STR is below the STR Minimum. Conversely, a character can add +1 Damage Class to a melee weapon's damage for every 5 full points by which his STR exceeds the STR Minimum. See *Adding Damage*, 6E2 99, for further information, including rules on adding damage to weapons bought with Advantages.

Typically when a character adds damage to a weapon with the STR Minimum rules, he can no more than double the base Damage Classes of the weapon used. However, at the GM's option he can do more damage than that, but the weapon *also* takes the full amount of damage it does to the target (and thus probably breaks).

For some types of weapons, it's not appropriate for a character to add damage from STR, even though he needs a certain level of STR to wield the weapon effectively. In that case, the *STR Minimum* Limitation is worth an additional ½ Limitation value. Characters still suffer OCV and DC penalties if they don't meet the STR Minimum for such a weapon, but can never add DCs no matter how much STR they use.

Characters can also apply STR Minimum to Ranged weapons, such as bows, crossbows, and guns. However, those weapons are built with Blast or RKA, neither of which add damage from STR. Therefore characters can never add damage to these weapons by using extra STR; they can only suffer the OCV and DC penalties for having too little STR. Ranged weapons do not get an additional Limitation for this.

Wielding weapons costs Endurance, but the END cost depends on the STR used, not the Active Points the weapon is built on: 1 END for every 10 STR used (or 5 STR in some Heroic campaigns). Weapons themselves are built with Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½).

Example: *Brak's younger brother Drak the Barbarian has 18 STR. When wielding a dagger (1d6-1, or 2 DCs; STR Min 8), he takes no penalty for using the weapon. In fact, he can add up to 2 DCs to the dagger's damage, raising its DC from 1d6-1 to 1d6+1. Unless the GM permits otherwise, he can't raise the damage any higher (by doing a Haymaker, for example) because he's already at twice the weapon's Damage Classes.*

Later Drak tries to use a huge trollish war axe (STR Min 28). Because his STR is 10 below the STR Minimum, he's at -2 OCV and -2 DCs every time he attacks with the axe.

MODIFIERS TO STR MINIMA

Using Two Hands: If a character uses two hands to wield a weapon that normally only requires one, reduce the weapon's STR Minimum by 3.

Using One Hand: If a character uses a one-and-a-half-handed weapon with one hand, add +2 to the STR Minimum (or, in the case of guns and other weapons for which the STR Minimum doesn't affect damage, impose a -1 OCV penalty for one-handed use). If he uses a two-handed weapon with one hand, add +3 to the STR Minimum (or impose a -2 OCV penalty for guns and the like).

Autofire: Autofire weapons have a +5 STR Minimum unless fired in single-shot mode (or thrown one at a time).

Bipod: A weapon fired from a bipod has a -10 STR Minimum. (A weapon which can only be fired from a weapons mount shouldn't be built with STR Minimum at all.)

Braced: When a character Braces (see 6E2 60) while using a Ranged weapon, subtract 5 from the weapon's STR Min.

CALCULATING STR MINIMA

STR Minimum is a Limitation. The STR required to wield the weapon effectively determines the Limitation's value (see accompanying table).

To determine the proper STR Minimum for a weapon, consider its nature, size, mass, and unwieldiness (if any). A light, slim rapier has a lower STR Minimum than a big, heavy, awkward club. The weapons lists in this chapter provide guidelines for appropriate STR Minima for various types of weapons.

STRENGTH MINIMUM TABLE

STR Min	Limitation
STR Min = 1-3	-0
STR Min = 4-8	-¼
STR Min = 9-13	-½
STR Min = 14-18	-¾
STR Min = 19 or greater	-1
Limitation Modifiers	Modifier
STR Min Cannot Add Damage	½ more Limitation





TOOLKITING: STRENGTH MINIMUM AND WEAPON DESIGN

Strength Minimum is a Limitation because it restricts how much damage a character can add with his STR, and sometimes imposes an OCV penalty to boot. Ordinarily any character with 5 STR or more can add damage to an HKA- or HA-based weapon at the rate of +1 DC per 5 STR used. For example, a STR 15 character using an HKA 1d6 does HKA 2d6 damage when he adds his STR. But if that weapon has STR Minimum 10, he can only add +1 DC, making it an HKA 1d6+1 attack.

The values for STR Minimum are based on the assumption that the average character has around STR 10-13 and the average weapon a STR Minimum of about 10. If that's not the case in your campaign, or you want to emphasize a particular approach to the creation and use of weapons in the *HERO System*, you might prefer to adjust the values accordingly.

As you design weapons for your campaign, keep in mind that there are several possible approaches. The first is a strictly rules-based approach that ignores “realism” and character design in favor of trying to make each weapon balanced and “fair” in rules terms. Taken to an extreme, this approach could even suggest making all weapons in a category (such as all swords or all axes) do the exact same damage, then differentiating them with modifiers and bonuses that are strictly balanced against one another.

The second approach is a “realism”-based method that tries to make weapons work the way they did in the “real world.” The difficulty with this is that even experts don't always know and agree on how weapons were used, or the effects they have. But as long as you're willing to do the research and make your own judgments, you can at least create a consistent list of “realistic” weapons for your own campaign.

The third approach is a more game-oriented perspective. Rather than looking at the “real world” or strictly at the rules, you look at what the PCs (and similar characters) in your campaign can do and design the weapons accordingly to make weapons a balanced tactical choice, but not overwhelmingly effective. Who could use what in the real world is irrelevant; all that matters is what PCs are like in the game and what effect the weapon design rules will have on their performance in combat.

None of these approaches is wrong or bad; it's all a question of what you want to do with your campaign. The weapons lists in this chapter try to strike a reasonable balance and provide a good “baseline” suitable for most campaigns, but as always you should adjust the list to suit your own personal preferences.

REQUIRED HANDS

With melee weapons and some Ranged weapons, you must also consider how many hands a character needs to use them. Most weapons only require one hand. However, some weapons, such as bows, great swords, and rifles, require two hands to use. Consult the Required Hands Table to determine whether a weapon receives a Limitation for the number of hands needed to use it.

The default weapon type, as indicated by the -0 value of the Limitation, is One-Handed: characters can use all weapons with one hand unless the weapon takes one of the other Limitations. If a character wields a one-handed weapon with two hands, reduce the STR Minimum by -3. (This may not be possible with all one-handed weapons; there's only so much room on the haft of a dagger, after all.)

Characters normally use One-And-A-Half-Handed Weapons (“1½H”) with two hands; their listed STR Minima assumes two-handed use. However, if necessary characters can use them one-handed without too much difficulty. If a character uses the weapon with only one hand, increase its STR Minimum by +2 (or impose a -1 OCV penalty for weapons for which the STR Minimum Cannot Add Damage).

Two-Handed Weapons (“2H”) require two hands for best effect; use this Limitation for weapons such as great swords, bows, rifles, and pole arms. In some cases, as with bows and pole arms, it generally isn't possible to use the weapon one-handed at all. However, characters can use some two-handed weapons (such as great swords) with one hand; if so, increase the STR Minimum by +3 (or impose a -2 OCV penalty for rifles and other weapons for which the STR Minimum Cannot Add Damage).

The size or species of the user may affect the number of hands required to use a weapon. For example, a giant can easily wield a human's two-handed sword with one hand, and a race of four-armed aliens might create swords no human could ever hope to use. (See also *Weapons For Small And Large Characters*, below.)

REQUIRED HANDS TABLE

Value	Limitation
-½	Two-Handed Weapon
-¼	One-And-A-Half-Handed Weapon
-0	One-Handed Weapon

REAL WEAPON

Weapons require constant maintenance, or else they lose their effectiveness. Characters must clean and sharpen their swords and knives, lest they become too dull and rusty to cut through anything harder than butter; and they must clean and oil their firearms, lest they jam or fail to work. Similarly, some weapons just can't damage some things (or only damage with difficulty) — for example,

it's not normally possible to hack through a brick wall with a knife.

The Limitation *Real Weapon* (-¼) reflects these sometimes unpleasant realities. Characters must devote time to maintaining weapons with this Limitation, or else begin to suffer penalties to OCV and DCs, and perhaps increased risk of having them break or jam. Real Weapons typically require a Half Phase to draw or prepare for use if they're not already in the character's hand when he wants to use them. Lastly, GMs should limit the nature and type of objects Real Weapons can

damage, if appropriate. For example, it's difficult to hack through a brick wall with a bladed weapon no matter how big and sharp it is. The exact results are up to the GM's fiendish imagination.

Additionally, a Real Weapon can only be enhanced so far. Typically, no matter how a character tries to add damage to it (see 6E2 99), he cannot make the weapon do more damage than double its base Damage Classes. However, at the GM's option a Real Weapon can do more damage than that, but the weapon *also* takes the full amount of damage it does to the target (and thus probably breaks).



TOOLKITTING: WEAPON DAMAGE, GENRE BY GENRE

The listed damage figures for various weapons are a good “baseline” suitable for the vast majority of campaigns. However, in some games the GM may want to change weapon damage based on genre considerations.

In some games, the GM wants “ordinary” weapons to do less damage — or to put it another way, want characters to be more resistant to damage from “ordinary” weapons. (“Ordinary,” that is, in comparison to weapons wielded by PCs and major NPCs, particularly ones they pay Character Points for.) This is particularly common in Superhero games, where it's fun to watch super-tough characters wade through a hail of gunfire without suffering much harm. Some possible ways to achieve this effect include:

- assume all weapons with the *Real Weapon* Limitation only do half damage to PCs and other important characters
- assume all weapons with the *Real Weapon* Limitation automatically have the *Reduced Penetration* Limitation when used against PCs and other important characters
- assume that Killing Damage weapons with the *Real Weapon* Limitation do the equivalent DCs of Normal Damage when used against PCs and other important characters
- assume all PCs have a certain amount of extra Resistant Protection for free that only works against attacks made with weapons that have the *Real Weapon* Limitation
- reduce the listed damage of all weapons by 1 DC or more

On the other hand, in some games the GM wants weapons to be even more lethal. It may be easiest to achieve this result by adopting the Wounding, Impairing, Disabling, and Bleeding rules (see Chapter Four of 6E2). If that doesn't suit you, you can increase the damage of all weapons by +1 DC (or more), give all weapons a +1 Increased STUN Multiplier (or more), or assume that all weapons are by default Penetrating.

Hand-To-Hand Weapons

This section covers knives, clubs, swords, and other weapons a character can use in Hand-To-Hand Combat.

When building HTH weapons in Heroic campaigns, you should normally use the following Power Modifiers: Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (calculate the weapon's END cost from the STR required to wield it); Focus (OAF; -1), STR Minimum, Required Hands, and Real Weapon. Weapons which characters can throw as well as use in HTH Combat take the Advantage *Range Based On STR* (+¼). Superheroic campaigns may or may not use any of these Modifiers (see above).

WEAPON LENGTH

One benefit to using a melee weapon is that it can extend the user's Reach, which can have several benefits in combat. (See 6E1 284 regarding how to buy extra Reach.)

Weapons come in four Length categories:

- *Small* weapons, which don't provide any significant extra Reach; this includes daggers, hatchets, most natural weaponry like claws and fangs, and unarmed attacks
- *Medium* weapons, which extend the user's Reach by +1m. This includes most weapons, such as swords, axes, maces, hammers, picks, and clubs
- *Long* weapons, which extend the user's Reach by +2m. This includes the shorter polearms, spears, and similar hafted weapons.
- *Extra Long* weapons, which extend the user's Reach by +3m or more. This includes the longer polearms, spears, lances, and similar hafted weapons.

The following optional rules apply to weapons of various Lengths. The GM may choose to use some, all, or none of them.

OCV PENALTIES

Wielders of Short weapons are at a disadvantage when fighting opponents with longer weapons. When a character with a Short weapon (including unarmed characters) fights a target with a Medium weapon, he suffers a -1 OCV penalty. When he fights a target with a Long or Extra Long weapon, he's at -2 OCV.

Similarly, when a character with a Medium weapon fights a target with a Long or Extra Long weapon, he suffers a -1 OCV penalty. A character with a Long weapon suffers no OCV penalty against a character with an Extra Long weapon. In any situation, the character with the longer weapon *doesn't* get a bonus to OCV.

Weapon length OCV penalties apply to attempts to Block as well as attacks.

A weapon length OCV penalty only lasts as long as it takes the character with the shorter weapon to hit the target with the longer weapon. Hitting the target means he's gotten "inside" the target's reach — and the situation reverses. The wielder of the longer weapon now suffers an OCV penalty identical to the penalty the character previously had. (For this reason, wielders of long weapons often have a Short or Medium weapon as well.) To get rid of the penalty, he has to back up a length equal to his weapon's Reach bonus (this constitutes a Half Move, of course), or has to hit his foe in spite of the OCV penalty (this means he's thrown his foe back to his preferred fighting range).

When a character has a weapon the same length as his foe's (for example, if both have polearm Long weapons), but decides to make an unarmed attack (for instance, kicking his opponent), he doesn't suffer the OCV penalty — because he has a weapon of length similar to his foe's, he fights at no reach disadvantage even though he's using a Short attack.

An attacker with a Long or Extra Long weapon can attack "over" a friendly character, at an opponent on the other side, at a -2 OCV penalty. This makes massed ranks of spearmen particularly effective in battle.

INITIATIVE PENALTIES

Rather than simulate the effect of weapon Length with an OCV penalty as described above, the GM can use an initiative penalty instead. That way a character with a longer weapon's more likely to get to attack first... until his opponent gets inside his Reach, when the shorter weapon's better for close-quarters combat. To do this, simply change the OCV penalties described above into DEX penalties, only for purposes of attacking first in combat.

SHIELDS AND LONGER WEAPONS

A shield constitutes a Short weapon when used to attack a target (*i.e.*, make a shield-bash attack), and suffers any penalties appropriate for weapon Length. However, the shield doesn't suffer a weapon Length OCV penalty when its bearer tries to Block a Medium, Long, or Extra Long weapon attack. A shield blocks a dagger, a sword, a spear, and a pike with the same OCV.

HIT LOCATIONS

A character with a Short weapon can choose to roll 2d6+1 (High Shot) or 2d6+7 (Low Shot) (depending on whether he strikes high or low) for his Hit Location rolls without taking any OCV penalty for making a Placed Shot.

A character with a Medium, Long, or Extra Long weapon rolls the standard 3d6 for his Hit Location rolls. If he wants to make a High Shot, Low Shot, or the like, he suffers the standard OCV penalty for a Placed Shot.

WEAPON LENGTHS AND ENCLOSED SPACES

Longer weapons aren't as useful when a character's fighting in an enclosed, cramped, or cluttered space. The accompanying table lists a variety of different fighting environments and their effects on different types of weapons. The GM may allow a character to reduce or eliminate the penalties if he succeeds with an Acrobatics roll, and a character with the *CrawlSpace Ace* form of Environmental Movement never suffers them.

WEAPONS IN ENCLOSED SPACES

Environment	Unarmed	Short Weapons	Medium Weapons	Long Weapons	Extra Long Weapons
Extremely Cramped (coffin, latrine)	-2 OCV	-3 OCV	N/P	N/P	N/P
Very Cramped (1m hallway)	-1 OCV	-2 OCV	-3 OCV	N/P	N/P
Cramped (room crowded with furniture or debris, 2m hallway, 1m doorway)	—	—	-1 OCV	-2 OCV	-3 OCV
Partly Cramped (room with 2m ceiling, 3m hallway, 1.1m+ doorway)	—	—	—	-1 OCV	-2 OCV

—: No effect on OCV.

N/P: Use of this weapon is not possible.

WEAPONS FOR SMALL AND LARGE CHARACTERS

In some campaigns, characters come in many different sizes. For example, the characters in a Fantasy campaign might range from sprites and halflings to trolls and giants. Each type of character uses weapons suitable to its size, which may affect the damage a weapon does. The Weapons Tables assume weapons sized for humans and other characters that are standard height (2m) (or close to it, such as dwarves). The accompanying table provides guidelines for varying the base damage and STR Minima for smaller and larger weapons, based on the Size/Weight categories used for the Size Templates in the Appendix to 6E1.

Characters sometimes want to wield weapons that are too large or small for them. Even assuming a character has enough STR to lift the weapon at all, he may be unable to wield it effectively (*i.e.*, do less damage and suffer an OCV penalty) due to its STR Minimum. Find the character's Size/Weight category on the Larger And Smaller Weapons table. A character can wield weapons used by creatures one category smaller or larger than he at no penalty (assuming he has enough STR to meet the STR Minimum). For each step beyond that, he suffers a -1 OCV penalty (this is in addition to any OCV penalty for not meeting the weapon's STR Minimum). For example, a human can wield a Large or Small creature's weapon with no penalty. But he suffers a -1 OCV when using Diminutive or Enormous weapons, a -2 OCV for Tiny or Huge weapons, and so forth. A Huge giant can wield Enormous and Gigantic weapons without any size problems, but would suffer a -3 OCV with a Small creature's weapon.

LARGER AND SMALLER WEAPONS

Size Category	Weapon Damage	Weapon STR Minimum*
Insectile	-6 DC	-30
Minute	-5 DC	-25
Minuscule	-4 DC	-20
Tiny	-3 DC	-15
Diminutive	-2 DC	-10
Small	-1 DC	-5
Human-sized	—	—
Large	+1 DC	+10
Enormous	+2 DC	+20
Huge	+3 DC	+30
Gigantic	+4 DC	+40
Gargantuan	+5 DC	+50
Colossal	+6 DC	+60

*: The minimum STR Minimum for any weapon is 1, regardless of how much you subtract from its base STR Minimum.

Every step below Human-sized reduces a weapon's Length category by one (to a minimum of Short). Thus, a spear that's Long at human dimensions counts as a Short weapon when created for Diminutive and smaller creatures. Similarly, each step above Human-sized tends to add one to the weapon's Length category (to a maximum of Extra Long), though the GM may make exceptions to this if desired.

If appropriate, a GM may let two or more characters wield a weapon too large for either of them to use on his own. To determine the group's effective STR, add their lifting capacities together, then use that total to derive the group's "STR" on the Strength Table. That tells you whether the group can lift the weapon, and how the group's STR compares to the weapon's STR Minimum. All characters wielding the weapon must take their Phases on the same Segments (faster characters have to Hold their Actions if necessary, and may lose some Actions). They must use the same DEX to strike. This DEX determines the group's OCV; the group cannot apply any Combat Skill Levels (unless every member of the group has CSLs with Oversized Weapons, in which case they can apply only as many Levels as the character with the fewest Levels has).



HAND-TO-HAND WEAPONS

Weapon	OCV	Damage	STUNx	STR Min	A/R Cost	Length	Notes
Axes, Hammers, Maces, And Picks							
Axe, Battle	+0	2d6	+0	13	47/16	M	1½H
Axe, Francisca	+0	1½d6	+0	12	46/17	M	Can Be Thrown
Axe, Great	+0	2d6+1	+0	16	54/16	M	2H
Axe, Hand (Hatchet)	+0	1d6	+0	6	26/10	S	Can Be Thrown
Axe, Small	+0	1d6+1	+0	8	32/13	M	
Hammer	+0	1d6	+1	10	28/10	M	
Hammer, Small	+0	1d6-1	+1	8	23/9	M	
Hammer, War	-1	1d6+1	+1	13	37/11	M	1½H
Mace	+0	1d6+1	+0	10	32/12	M	
Mace, Great	+0	2d6	+0	15	47/14	M	2H
Mace, Small	+0	1d6	+0	8	24/10	M	
Maul	+0	1½d6	+1	18	46/13	M	2H
Pick	+0	1d6 AP	+0	11	28/10	M	
Pick, Great	+0	1½d6 AP	+0	14	46/13	M	2H
Pick, Military	+0	1d6+1 AP	+0	13	37/13	M	1½H
Pick, Small	+0	1d6-1 AP	+0	8	23/9	M	
Clubs (Do Not Require Weapon Familiarity)							
Baton/Shillelagh	+0	3d6 N	—	8	24/9	M	
Club	+0	4d6 N	—	10	32/11	M	
Club, Great	+0	6d6 N	—	15	47/14	M	2H
Club, War	+0	5d6 N	—	12	39/12	M	1½H
Stick	+0	2d6 N	—	5	17/6	S	
Swords And Knives							
Dagger/Dirk	+0	1d6-1	+0	6	21/8	S	Can Be Thrown
Knife	+0	½d6	+0	4	17/7	S	Can Be Thrown
Stiletto	+0	½d6 AP	+0	5	20/8	S	Can Be Thrown
Sword, Bastard	+0	1½d6	+0	13	39/13	M	1½H
Sword, Broad/Long	+0	1d6+1	+0	12	32/13	M	
Sword, Great	+1	2d6	+0	17	49/15	M	2H
Sword, Short	+0	1d6	+0	10	24/9	M	
Polearms							
Javelin	+0	1d6+1	+0	8	39/15	L	Can Be Thrown
Pole Arm	-1	2d6	+0	14	49/13	L	2H
Spear, Long	-1	2d6	+0	13	51/15	EL	2H
Spear, Medium	+0	1½d6	+0	12	48/18	L	Can Be Thrown
Spear, Short	+0	1d6+1	+0	10	39/15	L	Can Be Thrown
Unusual Melee Weapons							
Flail	+0	1d6	+0	9	24/9	M	
Flail, Battle	+0	2d6	+0	18	47/14	M	2H
Lance	+0	1½d6	+0	13 †	43/13	EL	Only On Horseback
Quarterstaff	+1	4d6 N	—	10	34/10	M	2H
Whip	+0	½d6	+0	5 †	27/11	Spec	+6m Reach, can Grab
Science Fiction Melee Weapons							
Electric Whip	+0	1d6 E	+0	6 †	34/13	Spec	+6m Reach, can Grab
Energy Saber	+1	1½d6 E	+1	10 †	48/15	M	
Shock Prod	+0	3d6 N E	—	6 †	24/8	M	
Vibro-Blade	+1	1½d6 AP	+0	11	48/18	M	

HAND-TO-HAND WEAPONS KEY

†: STR Minimum Cannot Add Damage

1½H: One-And-A-Half-Handed Weapon

2H: Two-Handed Weapon

AP: Armor Piercing

Can Be Thrown: The weapon has the Range Based On STR (+¼) Advantage.

E: Energy damage

N: Normal Damage (all other weapons do Killing Damage), bought as a Hand-To-Hand Attack (but to which characters add damage only by exceeding the STR Minimum)

Only On Horseback: Characters can only wield this weapon while mounted (a -½ Limitation)

RP: Reduced Penetration (-¼)

All HTH Combat weapons are built as HKAs (or HAs) with the Advantage Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) and the Limitations OAF (-1), Real Weapon (-¼), and Strength Minimum (varies). Many also have the Required Hands Limitation.

OCV: This is applied as a bonus or penalty against all attacks made with the weapon. OCV bonuses are bought as a 2-point Combat Skill Level with the Limitations OAF, Required Hands, and Real Weapon OCV penalties are a minor Side Effect (automatically occurs; -½) for the weapon.

Damage: The amount of damage the weapon does. An “N” indicates Normal Damage; otherwise damage is Killing.

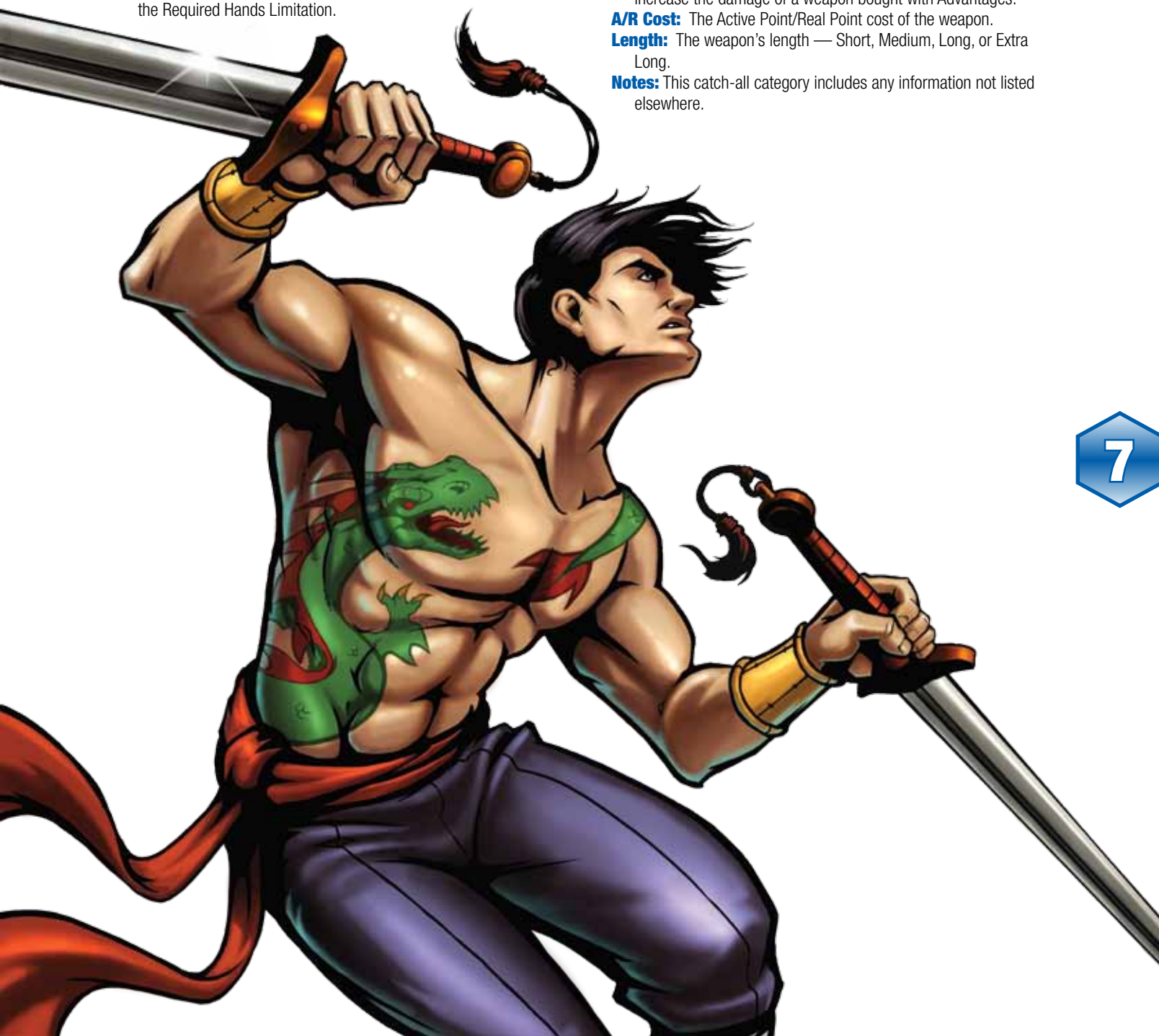
STUNx: This is the STUN Multiplier for Killing Damage weapons (a 0 means “no modification”; use the standard ½d6 STUN Multiplier). Apply the STUNx modifier to the STUN Multiplier roll (or to the STUNx for the Hit Location struck, if the campaign uses Hit Location rules). For example, if a character with a War Flail (STUNx +1) hit an opponent in the Head, the total STUNx would be 6.

STR Min: STR Minimum. See 6E2 199 for rules. Remember to apply the Adding Damage rules on 6E2 99 when using STR to increase the damage of a weapon bought with Advantages.

A/R Cost: The Active Point/Real Point cost of the weapon.

Length: The weapon’s length — Short, Medium, Long, or Extra Long.

Notes: This catch-all category includes any information not listed elsewhere.



Muscle-Powered Ranged Weapons

This section covers bows, crossbows, throwing knives, and other Ranged weapons powered, in some part, by the user's muscles (as opposed to by gunpowder).

In Heroic campaigns, these weapons are built with some or all of the following Limitations:

Focus (OAF; -1), STR Minimum, Required Hands, Real Weapon, and Charges (indicating the number of rounds of ammunition the average user carries). Most also have Beam. Superheroic campaigns may or may not use any of these Modifiers (see above).

MUSCLE-POWERED RANGED WEAPONS TABLE

Weapon	OCV	RMod	Damage	STUNx	STR Min	Shots	A/R Cost	Notes
Arbalest	+0	+2	2d6	+0	16	4 RC	32/7	2H, Conc, ‡2
Bow, Very Light	+0	+0	1d6-1	+0	5	10 RC	15/4	2H, Conc
Bow, Light	+0	+0	1d6	+0	8	10 RC	19/5	2H, Conc
Bow, Medium	+0	+0	1d6+1	+0	9	10 RC	25/6	2H, Conc
Bow, Heavy	+0	+0	1½d6	+0	10	10 RC	31/7	2H, Conc
Crossbow, Light	+0	+1	1d6+1	+0	12	10 RC	26/6	2H, Conc, ‡1
Crossbow, Heavy	+0	+1	1½d6	+0	14	10 RC	32/7	2H, Conc, ‡1
Longbow, Light	+0	+1	1d6+1	+0	10	10 RC	26/7	2H, Conc, no horse
Longbow, Medium	+0	+1	1½d6	+0	12	10 RC	32/8	2H, Conc, no horse
Longbow, Heavy	+0	+1	2d6	+0	15	10 RC	38/9	2H, Conc, no horse
Sling	+0	-1	1d6+1	+1	8	10 RC	30/7	2H, Conc
Staff Sling (Fustibal)	+0	+0	1½d6	+1	10	10 RC	37/9	2H, Conc
Throwing Knife	+0	+0	1d6	+0	7	4 RC	19/6	RBS

MUSCLE-POWERED RANGED WEAPONS KEY

2H: Two-Handed Weapon

Conc: Concentration (½ DCV "throughout" the loading and/or firing process, see text; -½)

No horse: Characters cannot fire this weapon while mounted (a -¼ Limitation)

RBS: Range Based On STR

RC: Recoverable Charge

†: STR Minimum Cannot Add Damage

‡: Extra Time (Full Phase to use; -½)

‡1: Extra Time (1 Phase to reload between shots; -¾)

‡2: Extra Time (2 Phases to reload between shots; -¾)

Ranged weapons are built as RKAs with some or all of the following Limitations: Focus (OAF; -1), STR Minimum, Required Hands, Real Weapon, Beam, and Charges (indicating the number of rounds of ammunition the average user carries).

OCV: This is applied as a bonus or penalty against all attacks made with the weapon; see the Hand-To-Hand Weapons Table for more information.

RMod: This represents a modifier to the weapon's accuracy at Range. Positive values (bought as 1-point Penalty Skill Levels versus the Range Group with the Focus and Required Hands Limitations) help to offset the standard Range Modifier; negative values (a minor Side Effect (automatically occurs; -½)) add to it. RMod can never raise a character's base OCV, it can only negate penalties.

Damage: The amount of damage the weapon does.

STUNx: This is the STUN Multiplier for Killing Damage weapons (a 0 means "no modification"; use the standard ½d6 STUN Multiplier). Apply the STUNx modifier to the STUN Multiplier roll (or to the STUNx for the Hit Location struck, if the campaign uses Hit Location rules). For example, if a character with a Sling (STUNx +1) hit an opponent in the Head, the total STUNx would be 6.

STR Min: STR Minimum. See 6E2 199? for rules; remember that, except for thrown weapons (which are built as HKA with Range Based On STR), Ranged weapons don't get bonus damage or other benefits from exceeding the STR Minimum. The STR Minimum simply indicates the STR needed to effectively use the weapon — to hold, draw, and/or cock it.

Shots: The standard amount of ammunition carried by a user of the weapon. Typically a character can only fire/throw/shoot one round of ammunition in a Phase; thereafter he must reload his weapon (or ready a new one). Reloading/readying may or may not take time.

A/R Cost: The Active Point/Real Point cost of the weapon.

Notes: This catch-all category includes any information not listed elsewhere.

Firearms

More technically known as “non-muscle-powered ranged weapons,” these weapons use gunpowder or other means to fire a projectile or energy beam at the target.

In Heroic campaigns, characters build gunpowder firearms with some or all of the following Limitations: Focus (OAF; -1), STR Minimum (though as Ranged attacks they cannot add damage from exceeding the STR Minimum), Real Weapon, Beam, and Charges (indicating the number of rounds of ammunition in the gun's cylinder, clip, or battery). Rifles and shotguns also have Required Hands. Superheroic campaigns may or may not use any of these Modifiers (see above), and may also add No Knockback.

OPTIONAL FIREARMS MALFUNCTIONS

You can use these optional rules to make gun combat more exciting. It won't come into play very often, but when it does, it has devastating effects. These are the end results of the *Real Weapon* Limitation — the sorts of things that go wrong when characters don't keep their guns in good condition.

There are several ways a firearm can malfunction. The two main types of problems are jamming and misfiring. In addition, weapons with the *Autofire* Advantage are subject to runaway fire. Compare all Attack Rolls made to shoot firearms to the accompanying table. Use the numbers in parentheses if the weapon is dirty, has gone without maintenance, or is otherwise in less than perfect condition.

FIREARMS MALFUNCTIONS TABLE

Attack Roll	Problem
18 (17-18)	Misfire
17 (16)	Jam
16 (15)	Runaway (only for weapons with Autofire)

MISFIRE

Damaged or improperly loaded rounds may fail to fire when the character pulls the trigger. This is very dangerous, since the round is still live. The gun will not fire until someone removes the round from the chamber. A character with Weaponsmith (Firearms) Skill can clear a misfire with a successful Skill Roll as a Half Phase Action. If he fails his Skill Roll, clearing the misfire takes a Full Phase.

A character without Weaponsmith (Firearms) can attempt a DEX Roll to clear the misfire as a Full Phase Action. If he succeeds with the DEX Roll, he clears the misfire. If the roll fails, the round explodes, doing its listed damage to the character's hand (apply the effects of that Hit Location). If the character takes two Full Phases, he can clear the round without making a DEX Roll, and therefore without risking blowing up his hand.

JAMMING

Sometimes a round fails to feed properly into the firing chamber. This causes a jam, and the gun won't fire until someone clears the jam. It takes one full Phase for a character to clear a jam (or half a Phase if the character knows Weaponsmith (Firearms)). Once someone clears the jam, the weapon can fire normally. Revolvers and single-shot bolt action weapons will not jam.

RUNAWAY

Weapons with Autofire can “runaway” when firing more than one bullet. A runaway gun continues to fire even after the firer releases the trigger and expends all its rounds in one Phase. This doesn't affect the character's Attack Roll. After the shooter reloads the gun, it fires normally.

SIGHTS

Certain technological devices allow anyone to shoot more accurately. Special vision devices let a gunman work in very low light or total darkness. The attacker must first be Braced and be sighted in to use most of the sights listed on the accompanying table. Each sight has an OCV modifier and modifier to the Range Modifiers. If a gun has no sights, the character using it receives only the usual bonuses for Bracing (see 6E2 60).

SIGHTS TABLE

Name	OCV	RMod
Iron Sights (normal)	+0	+0
Micrometer Sights	+1	+0
Standard Scope	+1	+1
High-Power Scope	+1	+2
Laser Sight*	+1	+1
Infrared Scope†	—	—
Nightsight Scope‡	—	—

*: Need not Brace to use; only works for shots to 125m; may not be usable against brightly colored backgrounds, through fog, or in other conditions.

†: Provides Infrared Perception (Sight Group)

‡: Provides +3 to Sight Group PER Rolls to counteract darkness modifiers.

FIREARMS TABLE

Weapons	OCV	RMod	Damage	STUNx	Shots	STR Min	A/R Cost	Notes
Revolvers								
.38 Derringer	-2	-2	1d6	+0	2	4	15/3	
.38 S&W Model 10	+0	+0	1d6	+0	6	7	15/4	
.357 M Colt Python	+1	+0	1½d6	+0	6	10	27/8	
.44 M Llama Super Comanche	-1	+0	2d6	+1	6	12	37/9	
.45 Colt Peacemaker	+0	+0	2d6-1	+1	6	10	34/9	
Semi-Automatic Pistols								
.22 LR High Standard Trophy	+1	+1	1d6-1	+0	10	6	15/6	
.30 Luger P-08	+1	+0	1d6+1	+0	32	8	27/10	
.380 A Walther PPK/S	+1	-1	1d6	+0	7	6	17/5	
9mm Browning Hi Power	+0	+0	1d6+1	+0	20	7	25/9	
.44 Automag	+0	+0	2d6	+1	7	14	37/10	
.45 ACP Colt M1911/M1911A1	+1	+0	2d6-1	+1	7	9	36/11	
.50 AE Desert Eagle	+1	+0	2d6+1	+1	9	13	46/14	
Submachine Guns								
9mm Uzi	+1	+0	1d6+1	+0	40	12	42/14	AF5
9mm H&K MP5	+1	+0	1d6+1	+0	30	12	37/13	AF5
.45 ACP Ingram MAC-10	+1	+0	2d6-1	+1	32	12	56/19	AF5
.45 ACP Thompson M-1928	+0	+0	2d6-1	+1	50	14	61/19	AF5
Rifles								
7.62R SVD Dragunov	+1	+2	2d6+1	+1	10	15	48/14	2H
.30-06 Springfield M1903	+1	+1	2d6+1	+1	5	13	47/12	2H
.30-06 M-1 Garand	+0	+1	2d6+1	+1	8	15	45/11	2H
.450 M H&H African	+0	+2	2½d6	+1	2	16	52/11	2H
Assault Rifles								
.30 M-2 Carbine	+0	+1	1½d6	+0	30	14	45/13	2H, AF5
5.56mm Colt M16/M16A1	+1	+1	2d6	+1	30	13	63/19	2H, AF5
7.62mm R AK-47/AKM-47	+1	+1	2d6	+1	30	14	63/18	2H, AF5
7.62mm FN-FAL	+1	+2	2d6+1	+1	20	16	74/22	2H, AF5
Shotguns								
12 gauge Shot	+0	+0	2½d6	+1	5	10	60/13	2H, AE1, LR(40m), RR, RP
12 gauge Slug	+0	+0	2½d6	+1	5	10	50/12	2H, LR(100m)
Heavy Weapons								
7.62mm M60 LMG	+1	+1	2d6+1	+1	250	16	117/32	AF10, Bulky
.50 M2HB HMG	+1	+4	3d6	+1	110	20	141/37	AF10, Bulky, Crew3
M72A3 LAW Rocket	+0	+1	6½d6 X	+1	1	12	201/34	2H, AP, ET(EP), SFW
Wire Guided Missile	+0	+0	8d6 X	+1	1	12	420/62	AP (x2), Crew4, ET(1T), IMR2, NRM
57mm M18 Recoilless Rifle	-1	+3	6d6+1	+1	1	15	145/25	2H, AP, Crew2
FIM-92A Stinger SAM	+2	+0	5d6 X	+1	1	12	191/29	2H, Crew2, ET(1T), IMR2, NRM, SFW
Science Fiction Pistols								
Blaster Pistol	+1	+0	9d6N E	—	32	8	58/23	
Gyrojet Pistol	+2	-1	2d6	+1	16	7	41/13	
Laser Pistol	+1	+0	2d6 AP E	+0	32	9	47/16	

FIREARMS TABLE (CONTINUED)

Weapons	OCV	RMod	Damage	STUNx	Shots	STR Min	A/R Cost	Notes
Neutron Pistol	+1	+0	4d6 N NND	—	32	7	47/19	
Science Fiction Rifles								
Blaster Auto Rifle	+1	+2	12d6 N E	—	64	12	124/40	AF5, 2H
Gyrojet Auto Rifle	+2	+1	3d6	+1	32	10	72/22	2H
Laser Auto Rifle	+1	+2	3d6 AP E	+0	64	12	105/32	AF5, 2H
Neutron Auto Rifle	+1	+2	5d6 N NND	—	64	11	66/22	2H
Science Fiction Special Weapons								
Micro-rocket Launcher	+0	+0	3d6	+0	6	5	45/14	
Bolo Gun	+0	+0	6d6 Entangle	—	6	10	60/20	2H
Grenades								
Fragmentation	+0	+0	2d6 X	+0	1	—	45/10	RBS
Concussive	+0	+0	8d6 NX	—	1	—	45/10	RBS

KEY

2H: Two-Handed

AE1: Area Of Effect (1m Radius)

AF: Autofire; the number after the letters indicates the maximum number of shots

ACP: Automatic Colt Pistol

AP: Armor Piercing

Crew: Requires Multiple Users (number indicates standard size of crew)

ET: Extra Time (1T means 1 Turn; EP means Extra Phase)

IMR: Increased Maximum Range (the number indicates the multiplier)

LR("X"): Limited Range (number indicates range)

M: Magnum

N: Normal Damage

NRM: No Range Modifier

RBS: Range Based On STR

RP: Reduced Penetration

RR: Reduced By Range

SFW: Shoulder-fired weapon (characters need WF: Shoulder-Fired Weapons to use properly)

X: Area Of Effect (Explosion)

NOTES

OCV: This is applied as a bonus or penalty against all attacks made with the weapon; see the Hand-To-Hand Weapons Table for more information.

RMod: This represents a modifier to the weapon's accuracy at Range; see the Muscle-Powered Ranged Weapons Table for more information.

Damage: The amount of damage the weapon does. An "N" indicates Normal Damage; otherwise damage is Killing.

STUNx: This is the STUN Multiplier for Killing Damage weapons (a +0 means "no modification"; use the standard ½d6 STUN Multiplier). Apply the STUNx modifier to the STUN Multiplier roll (or to the STUNx for the Hit Location struck, if the campaign uses Hit Location rules). For example, if a character with a Colt M1911A (STUNx +1) shot an opponent in the Head, the total STUNx would be 6.

Shots: The standard amount of ammunition in the gun's cylinder, magazine, or battery. Once a weapon depletes its ammunition, the shooter must reload it; this typically takes one Phase.

STR Min: The STR Min necessary to use the weapon effectively; see 6E2 199. Remember that guns don't get bonus damage or other benefits from exceeding the STR Minimum. The STR Minimum simply indicates the STR needed to effectively use the weapon — to hold, draw, and/or cock it.

A/R Cost: The Active Point/Real Point Cost of the weapon, in Character Points.

Notes: This catch-all category includes any information not listed elsewhere.



TOOLKITTING: CHANGING AMMUNITION

The listed damage for Ranged weapons assumes they're using ordinary ammunition — the "standard" arrows or bullets for the setting and time period. However, in many cases other types of ammunition that make the weapon deadlier or more effective are available. In a sense, you can think of a gun or bow simply as a "delivery system," with the damage done depending just as much (if not more) on the type of ammunition used.

If a character gets his weapons for free (as in most Heroic campaigns), he can switch between various types of ammunition easily — he just changes one magazine for another, or pulls a different arrow out of his quiver. The only issue is how much extra ammo he can "realistically" carry.

However, if a character pays Character Points for a weapon, switching ammunition can present game balance problems. It's possible for a character to buy his weapons as Multipowers, with each slot representing a different type of ammunition, but that can become needlessly complicated. It may be simpler for the GM to charge the character a fixed cost for a defined number of shots' worth of a different ammunition — for example, 3 Character Points for 10 bullets of any non-standard type. The GM sets the cost for this based on campaign balance considerations, how easy he wants to make things for the character, and similar considerations.



Explosives

Characters in *HERO System* games may occasionally (or frequently) want to use explosives — say, to blow up a dam, rescue innocents trapped under a rockslide, obliterate an invading alien ship, you name it. The possibilities are limitless.

The accompanying table lists some common explosives characters might use. To hit a target with an explosive, the attacker need only hit the target point — not the target itself. The listing for each explosive includes the amount used, amount and type of damage done, and other notes. These are only estimates; the exact damage done by an explosive varies according to the shaping of the charge, nearby structures, and many other factors. The type of explosive can also affect the damage: black powder detonates less efficiently than dynamite, which itself works less well than plastique. GMs should add or subtract damage if the explosive being used is somehow extraordinary.

EXPLOSIVES

Explosive	Damage	Notes
Fragmentation Grenade	2d6 EX	Thrown; Range Based On STR
Concussion Grenade	6d6 N EX	Thrown; Range Based On STR
Dynamite (1 stick)	5d6 N EX	
Dynamite (2 sticks)	6d6 N EX	
Dynamite (4 sticks)	8d6 N EX	
Nitroglycerine (1 Liter)	12d6 N EX	
Gas Tank (48 Liters)	15d6 N EX	
Plastic Explosive (1 block)	15d6 N EX	
Mortar Round	4d6 EX	
Howitzer Round	5d6 EX	Loses 1 DC per 4m
Heavy Bomb	6d6 EX	Loses 1 DC per 6m

Poisons

When explosives and guns are too crude for the job, the more subtle touch of poison may be what a character needs. Characters buy lethal poisons as RKAs, NND Does BODY (defense is appropriate Life Support [Immunity]; +1); OAF Fragile (poison and possibly some means of projecting it, injecting it, or having it ingested, -1¼), No Range (-½), 1 Charge (-2) (total -3¾); Damage Over Time usually also applies, as does No Knockback (-¼) in campaigns that use the Knockback rules. Nonlethal poisons are typically bought as Drains; some lethal poisons have a Linked Drain CON (since even if someone survives the poison, it makes him weak and ill).

Curare (blade poison): RKA 4d6, NND (defense is appropriate Life Support [Immunity]; +1), Does BODY (+1) (180 Active Points); Common Limitations (-3¾), Blade Attack Must Do BODY (-¼). Total cost: 36 points.

Cyanide Gas: RKA 5d6, Area Of Effect (14m Radius; +¾), NND (defense is appropriate Life Support [Immunity]; +1), Does BODY (+1) (281 Active Points); Common Limitations except for No Range (-3½), Doesn't Work In Winds Or Rain (-¼). Total cost: 59 points.

Strychnine: RKA 1d6, NND (defense is appropriate Life Support [Immunity]; +1), Does BODY (+1), Damage Over Time (symptoms begin from immediately to fifteen minutes after injection/ingestion, death occurs from two minutes to two hours after injection/ingestion; in game terms, consider this 5 damage increments occurring possibly as quickly as once every 30 Segments; +1¾), Invisible Power Effects (hide cause of death after rictus grin fades; +¼) (60 Active Points); Common Limitations (-3¾). Total cost: 13 points.

ARMOR

Characters may want to wear armor to partially or wholly protect themselves from damage. Personal armor can range from a policeman's kevlar vest to a knight's plate hauberk. Most armor functions as both PD and ED Resistant Protection, although some armor only protects against one category of attacks. All the body armor listed in the accompanying table is Resistant, although a character could have armor that was Normal (like a padded suit).

The protective value of armor derives from the material it's constructed from, and the skill with which it was put together. Armor is often heavy, although high-tech armor can be lightweight. Most armor only covers a portion of the body, so it is only effective some of the time (see *Sectional Defenses*, 6E2 110).

Buying Armor

Character buy armor with the Power *Resistant Protection*. The Armor Types Table lists the defense provided by various materials. For ease of game play armor provides equal amounts of PD and ED (listed under the header "Defense"), but the GM can change that if he wants. For example, in a "realistic" setting, metal armor isn't likely to provide much protection against electricity.

After choosing an appropriate amount of Resistant Protection, apply the Limitations *Focus* (OIF; -½), *Real Armor* (-¼), and *Mass* (varies). Real Armor signifies several things. First, the character must spend time cleaning, repairing, and maintaining his armor, or it begins to fall apart on him, providing less and less defense until it becomes completely ruined and useless. As a rule of thumb, for every two weeks during which a character doesn't maintain his armor, subtract 1 from its defense. Second, the armor may provide little or no protection against some attacks, such as falling damage or having heavy objects dropped on the character. Third, the character must put the armor on and take it off (often a time-consuming chore),

and it may restrict his ability to swim, become extremely uncomfortable in many climates, and so forth.

The *Mass* Limitation represents the fact that armor is heavy, which factors into Encumbrance and may even slow the character down enough to affect his DCV or movement. A full coverage suit of armor has a mass based on the armor's largest defense. The base mass is equal to 5.0 kg. at 2 PD/2 ED, and doubles for every +2 PD/ED. If the defense is an odd number then use a base mass of 7.0 kg. at 3 PD/3 ED, and doubles for every +2 PD/ED. Some armors (such as modern-day kevlar body armor) weigh less than this, and therefore get a correspondingly lesser Limitation. Consult the Weight Table and Armor Coverage Table for a quick method of calculating the weight of a character's armor.

The fact that a suit of armor doesn't cover all of a character's body is simulated by applying an unmodified Required Roll (*i.e.*, an Activation Roll). The Armor Coverage Table provides Limitation values based on the amount and locations of the body the armor protects. See *Sectional Defenses*, 6E2 110, for more information.

Shields

Shields protect a character by raising his DCV against frontal attacks. A shield is assumed to be "in the way" even when a character isn't performing a Block maneuver. If a character performs a Block maneuver he can add his Shield DCV bonus to his OCV.

Build shields as +1 (or more) DCV with the *Focus* (OAF) and *STR Minimum* Limitations applied to them. For every 5 points (or fraction thereof) a shield's user's STR is below the shield's STR Minimum, reduce the DCV bonus it provides by 1.

SHIELD TABLE

Shield	DCV	Weight (KG)	STR Minimum	A/R Cost
Small Shield	+1	2	5	5/2
Normal Shield	+2	4	13	10/4
Large Shield	+3	7	18	15/5



WEIGHT TABLE (KG)

Defense	Required Roll							Full coverage
	8-	9-	10-	11-	12-	14-	15-	
1	.9	1.3	1.8	2.2	2.6	3.1	3.3	3.5
2	1.3	1.9	2.5	3.1	3.8	4.4	4.8	5.0
3	1.8	2.6	3.5	4.4	5.3	6.1	6.7	7.0
4	2.5	3.8	5.0	6.3	7.5	8.8	9.5	10.0
5	3.5	5.3	7.0	8.8	10.5	12.3	13.3	14.0
6	5.0	7.5	10.0	12.5	15.0	17.5	19.0	20.0
7	7.0	10.5	14.0	17.5	21.0	24.5	26.6	28.0
8	10.0	15.0	20.0	25.0	30.0	35.0	38.0	40.0
9	14.0	21.0	28.0	35.0	42.0	49.0	53.2	56.0
10	20.0	30.0	40.0	50.0	60.0	70.0	76.0	80.0

ARMOR TYPES TABLE

Fantasy Armor	Defense
Cloth	1
Leather	2
Boiled Leather	3
Brigandine	4
Scale	5
Chain	6
Plate and Chain	7
Full Plate	8

Modern Armor	Defense
Soft Body Armor	6†
Hard Body Armor	9†
Advanced Body Armor	11†

Science Fiction Armor	Defense
Light Reflect	+3 ED§
Full Reflect	+6 ED§
Advanced Polymers	12†
Plasteel	15†

†: x½ Mass

§: x¼ Mass

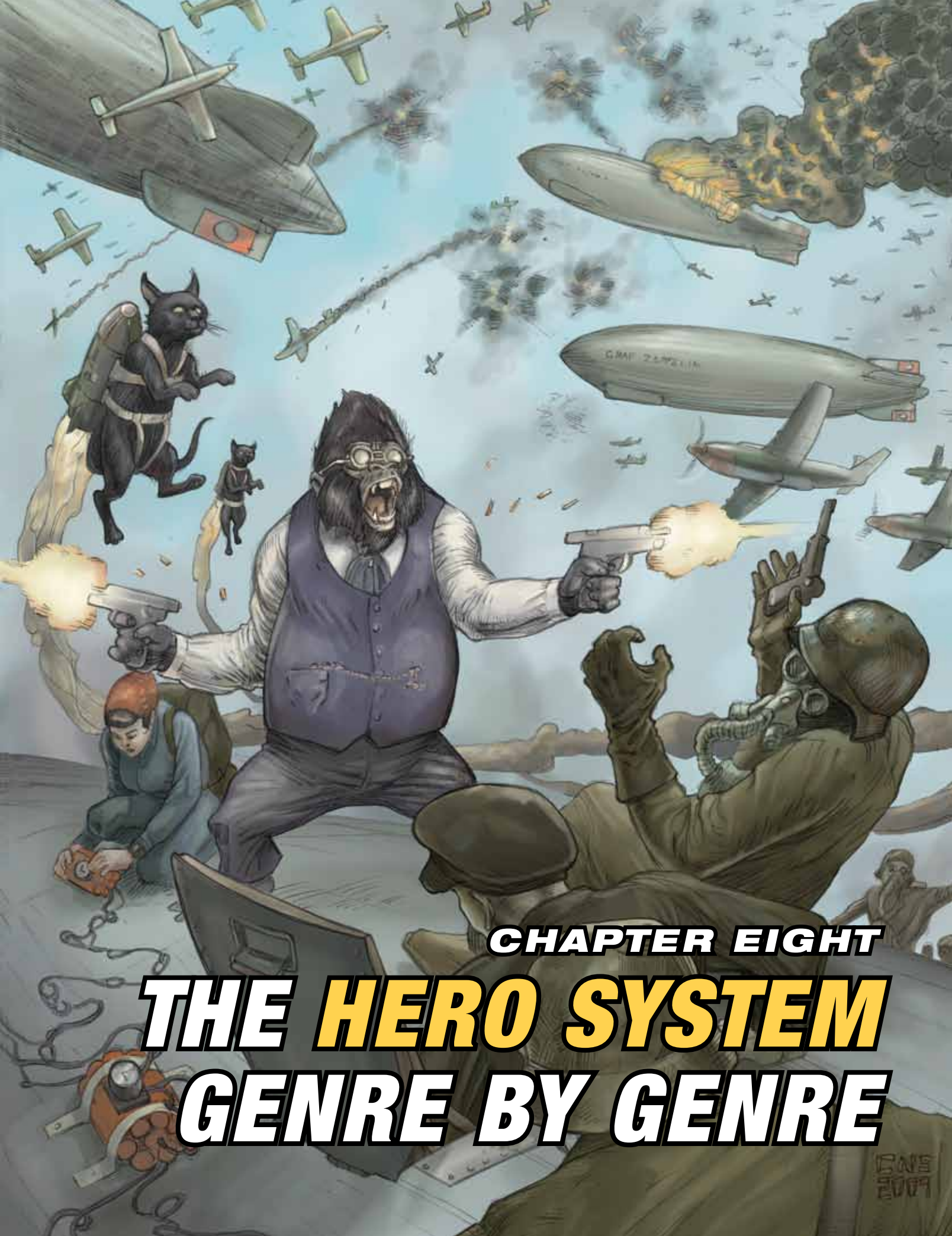
ARMOR COVERAGE TABLE

Protects Locations	Limitation (Value)	Example
12-13	8- (-2)	Short Vest
11-13	9- (-1½)	Standard Vest
10-13	10- (-1¼)	Cap, Long Vest
4-5, 9-13	11- (-1)	Helmet, Jacket
3-5, 9-14, 16-18	12- (-¾)	Full Coverage Helmet, Long Jacket, High Boots
3-5, 7-14, 16-18	14- (-½)	Full Coverage Helmet, Long Jacket with Sleeves, High Boots
3-14, 16-18	15- (-¼)	Full Coverage Helmet, Long Jacket with Gauntlets, High Boots

The GM can modify these numbers as he sees fit. He should make sure characters don't get too much protection for their points.

ARMOR LIMITATIONS

Limitation	Value
Mass	
No Mass	-0
Half Mass	-½
Normal Mass	-1
Double Listed Mass	-1½
Real Armor	-¼



CHAPTER EIGHT

**THE HERO SYSTEM
GENRE BY GENRE**

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2009



COMIC BOOK SUPERHEROES: CHAMPIONS

GENRE BY GENRE

One of the best things about the *HERO System* is that once you learn the rules, you can use it to create games for *any* genre, time period, or setting. Campaigns as diverse as gritty modern espionage, Fantasy tales featuring demigods, epic Science Fiction wars with starships and battlemechs, and crimefighting four-color superheroes all work with the *HERO System*.

To help you get started learning the *HERO System* and deciding what sort of game you want to run, this chapter provides a brief overview of the major genres common to roleplaying games, and shows you how to play characters and campaigns in them using the *HERO System*. It reviews some of the major elements or important features of each genre, and explains how you can simulate them with the *HERO System* rules. Each section also includes one or two sample characters you can use as guidelines for creating your own characters or NPCs for scenarios you plan to run.

Men with the strength to lift battleships, flying through the air wearing gaudy, caped costumes. Mighty heroes in armor made not of simple leather and steel, but advanced polymers and alloys and circuitry, and equipped with enough weaponry to defeat a tank battalion. Beautiful women who can fire power-bolts from their eyes. Megalomaniacal villains determined to conquer the world... or destroy it. Villainous organizations, powerful occult conspiracies, the highest of high technology. All this, and more, you can find in the pages of comic books — and in the roleplaying campaigns inspired by them.

Campaign Guidelines And Standards

In *HERO System* terms, *Champions* campaigns are almost always Superheroic. Typically characters are built as Standard Superheroic characters, with 400 Total Points and 75 Matching Complications. Gamemasters who prefer slightly less powerful characters are more likely to choose Low-Powered Superheroic (300 Total Points with 60 Matching Complications); other GMs want their players to have more points to work with, and use the High-Powered or even Very High-Powered guidelines.

As discussed on 6E2 282, many *Champions* GMs choose to impose restrictions, or “ceilings,” on the amount of Active Points a *Champions* character can have in any one power. Fifty, 60, or 75 point ceiling are the most common for a typical Standard Superheroic game, 40 or 50 points for a lower-powered game, and sometimes as much as 90 points or more for higher-powered campaigns. The other guidelines and restrictions listed in the tables on 6E1 y35 are usually also applied. On the other hand, some GMs prefer not to set point or effectiveness ceilings and just evaluate each character and his powers individually.

Genre Conventions And Features

The Superhero genre is so large and varied that it's difficult to provide any sort of capsule description of it. Even when two comic books look similar from the outside, they can prove to have very different stories and artistic styles on the inside. The genre ranges from the most ridiculous and childish of four-colored stories, to the darkest and grimmest “realistic” heroes, with everything in between appearing somewhere during the history of the medium. So, the possibilities for a *Champions* campaign are just about endless.

Nevertheless, there are a few common “bits” that most people associate with comic book superheroes. Here are a few of them, and how you can simulate them using the *HERO System* rules.

Costumes: More than anything besides superpowers, what distinguishes superheroes from heroes in other genres is their clothing — or, more precisely, their costumes. Ranging from skin-tight suits, to powered armor, to stylish leathers, costumes tend to be bright and colorful, often revealing without being too risqué, or in other ways attention-grabbing. Even costumes supposedly designed for stealth are usually visually distinctive. Many come with masks (to hide the character's identity) and capes.

In game terms, there's usually nothing you have to do to “build” or create your costume — you just get to have fun dreaming it up, and maybe even drawing it (or having someone draw it for you). However, in some cases, the costume itself provides powers — a suit of powered armor has defensive and weapons technology, a magical cape allows its wearer to fly, a high-tech headband grants the owner psychic powers. Costumes like that you have to pay Character Points for. To create them, you buy whatever Powers or abilities you want, and then apply an appropriate Limitation. Costumes are usually a Focus, though it's better to buy some costumes (such as some types of powered armor) with the Limitation *Only In Alternate Identity* (-½) instead.

Impossible technology and super-science: Most comic books are full of amazing technology that simply cannot exist in the real world — everything from blaster pistols, to suits of powered armor that increase the wearer’s strength a thousandfold, to time travel devices, and beyond. This sort of “super-science” (and characters able to manipulate it) are a staple of most comic book settings.

In *HERO System* terms, most personal items of technology (such as weapons, shields, and magic wands) are bought as Powers with the Limitation *Focus*. If the Focus is easily taken away from a character (like a gun, an enchanted amulet, a power-staff, or a shield), it’s an Accessible Focus. Foci that are harder to remove (suits of armor, power rings, bracers) are Inaccessible. Most Foci in a superheroes campaign are Obvious, but a few are Inobvious.

Bigger types of technology — vehicles, secret headquarters, robots, and the like — are bought differently. Chapter Seven of 6E2 has rules for creating Automatons (robots, golems, the undead, and so forth), Bases, Vehicles, and Weapons using the *HERO System*.

Radiation accidents: “Radiation accident” is the slang term for the amazing coincidences and accidents that give ordinary people superpowers. Most superhumans have far-fetched — but fun! — explanations for how they got their powers.

The origin you choose for your character may have all sorts of consequences in the game. Primarily, it explains where your character’s superpowers come from, and what they’re like. As you develop the origin story more, and think about your character in more detail, you may think of additional powers your character should have, or that he might acquire someday. Additionally, your character’s origin may help you determine who his enemies are, why he fights crime, and many other fascinating details.

Secret identities: In most comic book settings, most superheroes maintain secret identities. Because they don’t want their homes and loved ones threatened by maniacal supervillains and other enemies, they wear masks and take other steps to keep their true names and identities concealed from the world at large.

In *HERO System* terms, a secret identity is a Social Complication your character can buy. See 6E1 428 for more information.

Superpowers: What makes a superhuman a superhuman is that he has *superpowers* — strange abilities beyond those of ordinary men. The range of superpowers is virtually infinite, ranging from super-strength, to super-speed, to the power to walk through walls (or up them), to the ability to control other peoples’ minds, to anything in between.

The *HERO System* is ideally suited for creating superhero characters because its rules offer you complete flexibility in the creation of these all-important superpowers. Using Powers, Power Modifiers, and other game elements, you can create just about any ability you can think of. If you don’t want to create your own right away, you can use the hundreds of example powers listed in the sidebars of Chapter Five of 6E1. You can also look at example characters, like the ones in this chapter, and use their powers as guidelines and inspiration.

Superteams: Unlike many other adventure genres, the comic book superheroes genre has a long and proud tradition of using groups of characters — superteams — instead of focusing on just a single character all the time. This makes the genre a good one for gamers, who usually play in gaming groups.

Superteams typically have something in common, be it a mutual origin, common goals (like “protect the world from evil and injustice!”), or ties of friendship and romance. They often share resources, such as vehicles and headquarters. In *HERO System* terms, you can take Perks like *Vehicle/Base* to represent a team’s technology, *Fringe Benefit: National Police Powers* to represent their government sanction, and the Power *Enhanced Senses* to create advanced communicators for each member to carry.

Truth, justice, and the American way: Most comic books feature heroes who obey strict, if informal, codes of conduct. They don’t use unnecessary violence, and in particular they never kill their opponents. They stand for all that’s right and good, promoting “truth, justice, and the American way” not only through their actions on the battlefield, but their conduct in day-to-day life. They don’t hesitate to oppose injustice or risk their lives to save others.

Because living up to the “superhero code” can restrict a character’s actions and make him put himself in danger, the *HERO System* represents it through a Complication called *Psychological Complication*. Characters can express the superhero code through many different types of Psychological Complications. The most common is *Code Versus Killing*; in other campaigns, characters take *Fearlessly Heroic*, *True-Blue Hero*, or *Code Of The Hero* instead of, or in addition to, a “CVK.”

Of course, not every superhero follows the code; some famous and beloved characters achieved their popularity in part because they choose to fight crime a different way. You can do the same thing with your character in most games. If you have any questions or concerns, talk with the GM to determine what sort of characters he wants to have in his campaign, and how he suggests you represent them with Psychological Complications.

World threats: In comic books, particularly those featuring entire teams of superheroes, the freedom, security, and/or existence of Earth itself become endangered from time to time (sometimes, almost every issue!). Whether it's a megalomaniacal supervillain bent on world conquest, an alien armada sent to subjugate humanity, or a madman's threat to unleash a fatal plague, the heroes find themselves pitting their might against their enemies in contests where the fate of the entire world is on the line.

In game terms, the basic outline of the plot or story the characters participate in is up to the GM. He may decide to start a story in which, say, Mechanon threatens to kill everyone on Earth. But it's up to the players to decide how their characters oppose this threat and what they do to stop the fiendish robotic master villain.

Character Archetypes

Because the superhero genre is so varied, you can create a character with just about any combination of powers and abilities you can think of. But to at least some degree, most characters tend to fall into certain “archetypes.” Some of these archetypes are:

BRICK

“Brick” is gamer slang for characters whose main superpowers are super-strength and superior resistance to injury. Examples from the comics include Superman, the Hulk, the Thing, and the Rhino. In game terms, a brick character usually has high STR (usually as high as the campaign standards allow), CON, and PD and ED. He may buy Resistant (+½), Damage Negation, and/or Resistant Protection so he can bounce bullets off his skin. Using Powers, you can build all sorts of “Brick Tricks” for the character, such as the ability to clap his hands together so hard he creates a deafening shockwave (a Hearing Group Flash Attack with the *Explosion* Advantage).

ENERGY PROJECTOR

An “energy projector” is a character with the ability to manipulate some form of energy, be it fire, ice, a mysterious “cosmic energy,” or the weather. Examples from the comics include the Human Torch, Storm, and Green Lantern. Most “EPs” (as some gamers call them) have Blast, Flight, and Resistant Protection that costs END among their typical powers, and often some other, unusual abilities (like Absorption, Aid, Telekinesis, or Teleportation).

GADGETEER

The gadgeteer is a hero who relies upon his skill with technology and devices — “gadgets” — to fight crime. He doesn't usually possess superpowers himself, but instead builds them in the form of jetpacks (Flight), blaster pistols (Blast), personal cloaking screens (Invisibility), defensive shields (Resistant Protection), and so on. (A few gadgeteers do have powers like the ability to manipulate machines with their minds, however.)

Some examples from the comics include Hank Pym (at some stages of his career) and in some respects Batman.

There are two main ways to create a gadgeteer character using the *HERO System*. The first, and easiest for someone new to the game, is simply to buy each gadget the character wants individually. The GM might let you place some gadgets in a Power Framework to save points. The other way, which is more complicated but also more flexible, is to use a Variable Power Pool. A VPP gives your character the ability to change his gadgets in mid-game, but that requires some work on your part. See Chapter Eight of 6E1 regarding VPPs; there's even an example “Gadget Pool” you can use.

MARTIAL ARTIST

A martial artist uses his skills at fighting to combat crime. He's usually been trained in the fighting arts (*i.e.*, he has the *Martial Arts* Skill; see 6E1 80, 6E2 90), and he typically has other acrobatic and athletic abilities as well. Examples from the comics include Batman, Daredevil, Moon Knight, and Shang-Chi.

Most martial artists spend a lot of points on Skills — by percentage, significantly more than other characters. However, they often supplement their Skills with various powers and equipment, such as weapons, extra meters of Running or Leaping, reconnaissance gear, heightened senses, and so forth. With clever use of Powers (and Talents), you can create all sorts of interesting abilities for them.

MENTALIST

A mentalist (also called a “psi”) relies on the awesome powers of the mind. He can control the will of others, create illusions so real they injure their enemies, locate another person's mind from miles away, blast his enemies with psychic attacks, and so forth. Examples from the comics include Professor X, Marvel Girl/Phoenix, and Moondragon.

To create a mentalist character, you should increase his EGO (which is important for mental combat) and then buy him plenty of Mental Powers, often in a Multipower or Variable Power Pool. Some mentalists favor psychokinetic powers, which they can simulate with Telekinesis, Barrier, Deflection, and the like. For an unusual surprise attack, a mentalist can use the *Alternate Combat Value* and *Attack Versus Alternate Defense* Advantages to create unusual mental attacks.

METAMORPH

“Metamorph” is a catch-all term for superhumans who can change the shape, size, or structure of their bodies. Some can become much larger (or smaller) than normal humans, while others can contort their bodies in all sorts of ways. Examples from the comics include Mr. Fantastic, Antman, Changeling, Apocalypse, Giant-Man, and the Atom.

If you want to create a metamorph, take a look at the Body-Affecting Powers (6E1 146) and Size Powers (6E1 160). Most of the abilities you want

you can find listed among those Powers. For a stretching character like Mr. Fantastic, Stretching is obviously the way to go; for a character who can change his shape, look into Multiform or Shape Shift.

MYSTIC

A “mystic” is a character who relies on his ability to evoke and control magical forces, or his magical nature, to fight crime. A mystic might be a powerful spellcaster, a kindhearted person cursed with lycanthropy, an enchanted warrior from another dimension, or a demon kicked out of Hell for being too nice. Examples from the comics include Dr. Strange, Dr. Fate, the Phantom Stranger, and John Constantine.

Like gadgeteers, mystics can be difficult to build, because you want to allow for a wide range of abilities while keeping the character easy to play. The main ways to do this are the same, too: either buy the character’s main abilities individually (or perhaps, in part, through a Power Framework), or use a “Magic Pool” created with a Variable Power Pool. You should also consider some appropriate Knowledge Skills and perhaps some other interesting abilities (such as Martial Arts) to round the character out.

PATRIOT

A “patriot” is a character whose outlook, abilities, and/or appearance embody some concept or theme (typically one associated with the United States or some other nation, hence the name). Examples from the comics include Captain America and Captain Britain.

Patriots don’t have any particular unifying set of powers, since their abilities derive from whatever theme or subject they embody. A patriot who’s the living manifestation of surrealism has very different abilities from one embodying the fighting spirit of America. Thus, most patriots also fit into some other archetype (often martial artist or brick).

POWERED ARMOR

A “powered armor” character (sometimes also called a “battlesuit”) derives his powers from a suit of high-tech armor that contains defensive and offensive capabilities. As such, he combines features of the gadgeteer and the energy projector, sometimes with aspects of the brick and the weaponmaster as well. Examples from the comics include Iron Man, War Machine, and the Red Ranger.

Powered armor characters often have a lot of different powers, but most fall into a few specific categories. First, they have at least one strong defensive power — usually Resistant Protection, but sometimes Damage Negation and/or Damage Reduction. Second, they have built-in weaponry, usually defined as a Multipower of Attack Powers. They may also have high STR. Third, they have Flight (a few armored suits rely on other forms of movement). Fourth, they have a collection of miscellaneous useful abilities built into their armor — Enhanced Senses, Life Support, and so on.

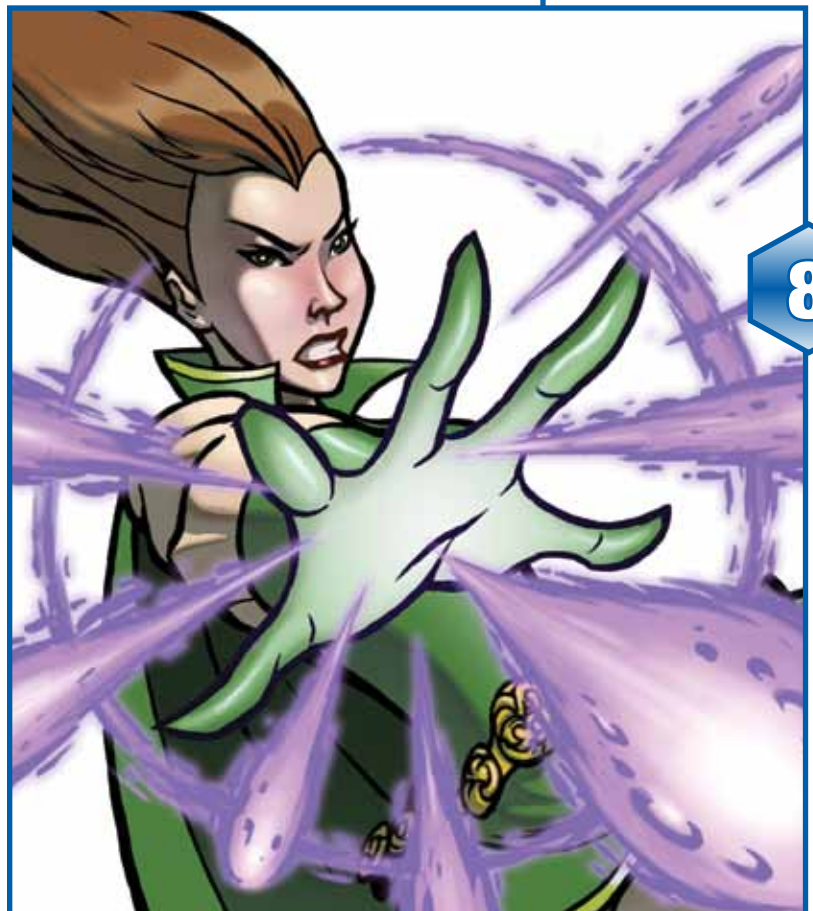
Most powered armor characters define their armor as an Obvious Inaccessible Focus, taking that Limitation on most (if not all) of the Powers they buy. For greater security, some prefer to use the *Only In Alternate Identity* Limitation instead. Most also have some Skills and abilities they can use when not in their armor (including the Skills needed to create the armor in the first place) — after all, it’s not very heroic to be helpless most of the time!

SPEEDSTER

A speedster is a character who relies on movement, usually very rapid movement, as his primary superpower. Examples from the comics include the Flash, Quicksilver, and Northstar and Aurora.

To create a speedster, you first need to choose your character’s primary movement power, and buy a lot of it. Most speedsters rely on Running (or on a variant, Flight *Only In Contact With A Surface*, so they can easily run up buildings and across the surface of bodies of water). However, speedsters based on Flight, Teleportation, or other forms of movement are possible.

In combat, speedsters find ways to use their ability to move at hypervelocity to hurt or impair their foes. They often have Combat Skill Levels and/or extra defenses for performing Move Bys and Move Throughs, or create special abilities like “super-fast punching” (a large HA, defined as “I punch him 100 times in the blink of an eye”) or “dismantle gadgets” (typically bought as a type of Dispel). Plenty of possibilities exist.



WEAPONMASTER

A weaponmaster character picks a particular type of weapon, such as the bow or the sword, and becomes so skilled with it that he can compete in the superhuman arena. Alternately, he may possess a weapon with special properties or magical powers. Examples include Green Arrow, Hawkeye, and the Black Knight.

To create a weaponmaster, first you need to make sure he has the right type of weapon. It might be an ordinary weapon, a heavily-modified high-tech version of a normal weapon, or even an enchanted (or otherwise unique) weapon. Many weaponmasters define their weapons with Multipowers, since they can do so many things with them, but this isn't required. A weaponmaster usually also has a generous helping of Skills — Combat Skill Levels with his weapon, Martial Arts for when an enemy disarms him, stealth and infiltration abilities, and so forth.

Subgenres

There are many different “subgenres” and styles of superhero game, each simulating or reflecting a particular period in comics history, or a particular type of character or storytelling.

GOLDEN AGE CHAMPIONS

“The Golden Age” refers to the comics in the period around World War II and some years thereafter, and usually focuses on the activities of superheroes and villains during the War. While the adventures typically consist of fighting enemies and villains on the homefront, some campaigns allow the PCs to invade Europe, participate in famous battles, and the like.

Golden Age Champions superheroes are usually built on fewer points than other heroes (often the Low-Powered variant of 300 Total Points with 60 Matching Complications), and are usually simpler and easier to construct. They tend not to have complicated or unusual powers — after all, at this stage of history, superhumans are a new thing, and just having a plain old Blast or Flight ability is remarkable enough without slapping lots of Advantages on it!

SILVER AGE CHAMPIONS

Comics historians and fans use the term “the Silver Age” to describe the period from roughly 1956 to 1972 (although some choose different dates). During this time, many classic characters (including all the most famous Marvel characters) were created or re-defined, and many motifs and themes now common to comics (such as a focus on the perils and problems that come from being a superhero) emerged. The style is eclectic, often retaining some of the innocence and pure heroism of the Golden Age, but tinged (particularly later on) with the social awareness and “realism” that became important in comics in later years. Heroes are typically colorful, with bright costumes and larger-than-life attitudes.

In many ways, Silver Age Champions represents the “typical” or “default” type of *Champions* campaign. It's a great era for teams of superheroes, and features all the common “bits” without altering any of them too much. It appeals to gamers who don't want their games to become too serious or “gritty” — who enjoy a combination of action and humor touched by drama. Silver Age heroes are usually built on the Low-Powered total of 300 Total Points with 60 Matching Complications.

BRONZE AGE CHAMPIONS

“The Bronze Age” refers to the comics of the 1970s and early '80s. Comics during this period are marked primarily by a slow shift away from the “Comics Code”-oriented stories and characters of the Silver Age to more mature themes. Heroes sometimes found themselves confronting issues of mortality, societal unrest, drug abuse, and the like.

Bronze Age heroes are usually built on the Standard 400 Total Points with 75 Matching Complications. Some variations on the theme focus on lower-powered heroes and how they interact with normal humans (who are much more of a potential threat to them than they are to normal, four-color superheroes).

IRON AGE CHAMPIONS

“The Iron Age” refers to comics from the mid-1980s until the present day. During this time, the trends that began in the Bronze Age continued. The Comics Code was often ignored altogether, as heroes and stories shifted from gaudy costumes and “simple” heroic attitudes and conduct, and more towards “realism” and “grittiness”: characters favor darker costumes, leather, and the like; they're more likely to kill or seriously injure their opponents; they have a harder, more practical, attitude toward superheroing; and they spend more time coping with the “realistic” implications of having superpowers, the effects of their powers on the world around them, and so forth. The settings are often more likely to be inner-city environments or other “realistic” places instead of a supervillain's secret headquarters or a space station. In short, the heroes often are no longer “four-color,” as gamers sometimes call Golden and Silver Age characters. Iron Age heroes are usually built on the Standard 400 Total Points with 75 Matching Complications.

GALACTIC CHAMPIONS

“Galactic Champions” refers to superhero campaigns taking place away from Earth, in the far future, and/or in which characters are built on very large amounts of Character Points. The superheroes in this case are usually similar to Silver Age heroes, but come from a dizzying variety of sentient species and planets. In many cases a hero's powers are not true superpowers *per se*, but simply manifestations of abilities native to his species — it's just that his species is so rarely encountered that he's distinctive in the regions where the team operates.

Galactic Champions characters are usually built with High-Powered, or greater, Superheroic character guidelines. After all, they're fighting crime on a cosmic scale, saving the entire universe from all kinds of threats. They have to be tough — most of them need to be able to survive unprotected in the vacuum of space, or in unusual atmospheres. Given the high-tech nature of the setting they usually operate in, most have a few technical Skills as well.

TEEN CHAMPIONS

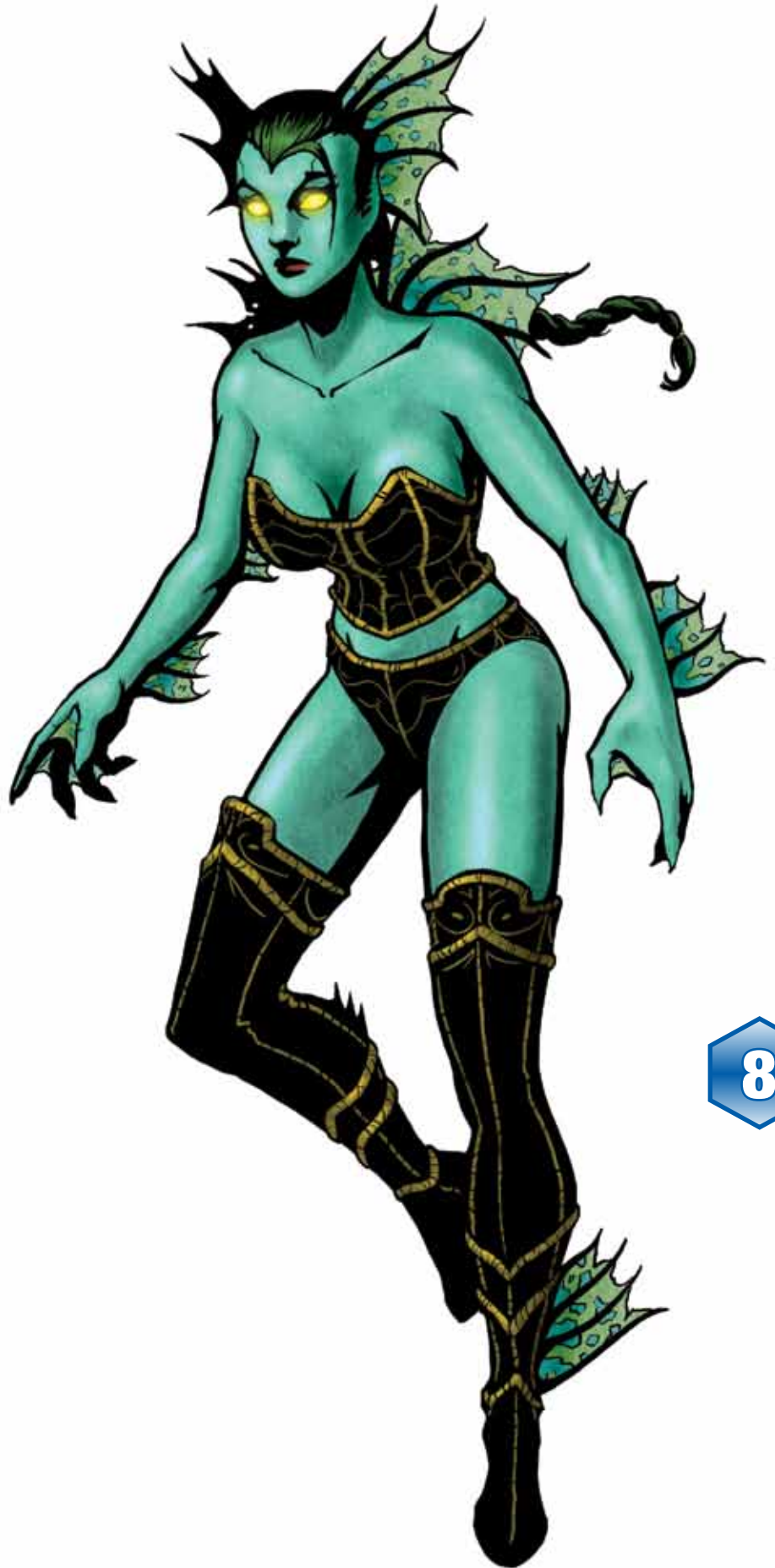
Comic books sometimes focus on superheroes who are young and new to crime-fighting — teen heroes such as the early X-Men, their successors the New Mutants, the early Teen Titans, and so forth. Characters in these campaigns are usually powerful but one-dimensional. They're new to their powers and haven't learned how to use them to full effect yet. Instead of having a Multipower of different Blasts, they have a single Blast — and no Combat Skill Levels. They may have speedster powers, but they can't always stop in time or keep them under control. They can teleport, but only themselves and only over short distances. As time goes by and they gain more experience (in game terms, Experience Points), they develop more powers, learn how to use their powers more effectively, and so forth.

Teen Champions campaigns also focus on the characters' real lives. It's tough to save the world when you have a term paper due the next day and you haven't asked anyone to the prom yet! There's a lot of potential for humor, drama, and gaming fun.

To get the right feel for a Teen Champions campaign, most GMs require players to build Low-Powered Superheroic characters, or sometimes characters with even *fewer* Character Points (say, 275 Total Points with 50 Matching Complications). That way they can't buy a lot of powers and have to "grow into" their abilities.

CHARACTER TYPE-SPECIFIC CAMPAIGNS

Some comics and *Champions* campaigns focus on a particular type of character, rather than on a setting, time period, or social theme. Perhaps the most common example here is the "Mystic World" campaign, which features characters with magic powers and abilities exclusively. The PCs are heroic mystics who oppose dimensional conquerors, powerful demons, evil sorcerers, and the like in a shadowy war that most of humanity has no knowledge of.



Sample Characters

Here are four sample *Champions* characters: Taurus, a super-strong hero; Eagle-Eye, a hero who uses his heightened senses to fight crime; Hardpoint, an armored hero; and Maelstrom, a villain with energy powers.

Taurus

Background/History: Mark Burluson was once an ordinary college student with a major in history and a place on the Millennium City University track and field team. All that changed when the villainous organization VIPER kidnapped him for use as a “guinea pig” in their experiments mixing human and animal genetic material. When they infused Mark’s body with the genetic material of a bull, it triggered a latent mutation that caused his body to transform into a minotaur-like shape, with the head of a bull and the body of a man. The change also made him immensely strong and resilient. He broke free and destroyed the VIPER lab, but it was too late — there was no way to reverse the process. His life had been changed forever.

Not one to dwell on misfortune, Mark decided to put his abilities to good use, so he became a superhero. As Taurus, he’s fought many battles and teamed up with other heroes on many occasions. VIPER wants him back so it can analyze what happened in the experiment (and, hopefully, duplicate the effect). Since Mark can’t pass as a normal human, he never bothered to maintain a secret identity — with the unintended consequence of causing his little brother Billy, a high school freshman, to want to tag along on his “adventures.”

Personality/Motivation: On the surface, Taurus is everything people think a superhero should be: altruistic, self-sacrificing, and willing to risk his life to protect innocent people against evil. Without a thought for his personal safety, he has charged into danger time and time again to rescue trapped disaster survivors, save crime victims, and stop supervillains dead in their tracks. Despite his enormous strength, he tries not to inflict serious harm on his enemies, and would never even think of trying to kill another human being.

But himself, that’s another matter. Although he’s deeply repressed them, Taurus has significant feelings of bitterness and anger over his transformation. He feels cut off from humanity, alone, and unlovable. His willingness to risk his life in the service of others is a way of trying to connect with the world at large — and a subconscious way of expressing his secret belief that his life really isn’t worth much anymore. In time, he can probably overcome these feelings and learn to accept himself for who and what he is, and to be glad of the silver lining behind the cloud, but it’s going to be a hard road before he gets there.

Quote: “You think you can beat me? Bull!”

Powers/Tactics: Taurus’s powers derive from his immense strength and minotaur form. He’s particularly good at charging opponents, using the speed he developed as a runner and the strength of his transformed body to knock his foes out (or, if they’re robots or other unliving enemies, he might gore them with his horns instead). He’s even learned how to brace himself to bounce attacks off his super-strong body, and how to smash his fists into the ground to cause a small shockwave around him that can hurt anyone standing on the ground. (The GM should note that the “shockwave” power significantly violates the Active Point cap in most *Champions* campaigns, and scale it back accordingly if it causes game balance problems.) The GM may allow him to pull other “tricks” with his Strength using his *Brick Tricks* Skill (which is based on DEX, to reflect his control over his abilities).

Appearance: Taurus resembles a classic minotaur. He has the body of a man, the head of a bull (complete with horns), and hooves instead of feet. Short black-grey fur covers his body, with an especially thick patch covering up his midsection. He often wears golden bracers on his wrists.



TAURUS

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
50	STR	40	19-	Lift 25 tons; 10d6 HTH damage [5]
23	DEX	26	14-	
30	CON	20	15-	
14	INT	4	12-	PER Roll 12-
12	EGO	2	11-	
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
8	OCV	25		
8	DCV	25		
4	OMCV	3		
4	DMCV	3		
5	SPD	30		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
20	PD	18		Total: 20 PD (10 rPD)
20	ED	18		Total: 20 ED (10 rED)
20	REC	16		
60	END	8		
20	BODY	10		
60	STUN	20		

Total Characteristics Cost: 278

Movement: Running: 22m
Leaping: 12m

Cost	Powers	END
21	Shockwave: Area Of Effect (Surface 4m Radius; +½) for up to 50 STR Hole In The Middle (1m radius; +¼); Can Only Be Applied To Horizontal Surfaces (floors and the ground; -¼), Extra Time (Extra Segment; -½)	3
15	Bull's Horns: HKA 1d6 (2d6 with STR)	1
10	Tough, Leathery Skin: Resistant (+½) for 10 PD/10 ED	0
10	Charge!: Running +10m (22m total)	1
4	Strong Legs: Leaping +8m (12m forward, 6m upward)	1
6	Animal Senses: +2 PER with all Sense Groups	0

Perks

- 2 **Money:** Well Off
- 4 **Positive Reputation:** heroic "monster" (in the United States) 11-, +2/+2d6

Skills

- 16 +2 HTH
- 1 Computer Programming 8-
- 3 Deduction 12-
- 2 AK: Millennium City University 11-
- 2 KS: History 11-
- 2 KS: The Superhuman World 11-
- 2 KS: Track And Field 11-
- 2 KS: Trivia 11-
- 1 KS: VIPER 8-
- 1 Language: German (basic conversation; English is Native)
- 17 Power: Brick Tricks 21-
- 1 Systems Operation 8-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 122

Total Cost: 400

400 Matching Complications (75)

- 15 **DNPC:** Billy Burleson (little brother) (Frequently, Normal)
- 25 **Hunted:** VIPER (Frequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
- 20 **Psychological Complication:** Code Versus Killing (Common, Total)
- 15 **Social Complication:** Public Identity (Matt Burleson) (Frequently, Major)

Total Complications Points: 75

Experience Points: 0

Eagle-Eye

Background/History: Patrick Penhurst seemed like an ordinary boy growing up, but that changed when he reached puberty and his mutant powers manifested. Suddenly his senses went into overdrive — he could hear conversations from a block away, see clearly in the dark of night, feel the slightest breeze rasp across his skin. The onslaught of sensory stimuli threatened to drive him insane; he spent many years in almost total isolation while undergoing medical and psychological treatments.

Eventually, Patrick learned to master his phenomenally acute senses, though even today he finds intense stimuli painful and debilitating. He did so in part by training his body to a peak of physical fitness, the better to resist pain and keep himself under control. He soon supplemented his exercise regimen with acrobatics and martial arts training. As time went by, his senses continued to develop. He even manifested a strange radar-like sense that went beyond the normal five human senses.

A chance encounter with organized crime put him on the path of heroism. One evening he chanced to hear, from across a crowded classroom building, one of his criminology professors being

shaken down by mobsters. It seemed his professor had a gambling problem, and owed the Cabrana mob more than a little money. Covering his face with a ski mask, Patrick charged to the rescue, using his karate skills to knock the mobsters out cold.

Finding he enjoyed being a hero, and that his heightened senses made him a powerful combatant, Patrick decided to become a superhero. Sewing himself a costume, he took the name “Eagle-Eye” and set out to help keep the streets safe.

Unfortunately, all did not go as planned. Eagle-Eye soon got involved in a serious war with the Cabrana mob (and sometimes other Mafia families), and they decided to get rid of him. Rather than simply kill him, they framed him for murder — he showed up at the scene of a hit right before the police did, and all the evidence pointed to him. Unwilling to take his chances in court, Eagle-Eye fled, and has been wanted by the police ever since. Despite the fact that he keeps on fighting the mob, as far as the public’s concerned, he’s just another costumed criminal trying to make a name for himself.

When not fighting crime, Patrick makes a living as a writer. He’s attempting to put his experiences to work and become a true-crime journalist. So far he’s sold enough articles to keep himself fed, but what he really needs is a book contract. His girlfriend Lila (who has no idea he’s secretly Eagle-Eye) keeps telling him it’s just a matter of time.

Personality/Motivation: Eagle-Eye is a genuinely heroic individual, someone who’s taken a condition that could have crippled him for the rest of his life and turned it into an asset in the war on crime. He’s a striver, the sort of person who’s never satisfied with things the way they are, always looking for a way to make them better — and to do better and be better himself. It’s that sort of passion that’s driven him to conduct a one-man war against the Mafia. Between his own experiences, and what he’s learned through his criminology studies, he knows just what a plague organized crime is on society, and he’s determined to end it. Sometimes his enthusiasm verges into obsession, but so far he’s kept himself under control.

Quote: “You can’t get away from me, Franetti... I can smell that cheap cologne you were wearing yesterday.”

Powers/Tactics: Eagle-Eye is a gifted martial artist and naturally talented athlete and acrobat, but his real powers come from his heightened senses. Besides simply remaining hyper-aware of his surroundings, he’s learned to use them to sense the weaknesses in his opponent’s defenses and the predictable elements in their attack patterns. That lets him use his powerful punches and kicks to deliver devastating blows. But he’s always careful to hold back so he doesn’t cause death or serious injury.



EAGLE-EYE

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
20	STR	10	13-	Lift 400 kg; 4d6 HTH damage [2]
24	DEX	28	14-	
20	CON	10	13-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
12	EGO	2	11-	
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
8	OCV	25		
8	DCV	25		
4	OMCV	3		
4	DMCV	3		
6	SPD	40		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
10	PD	8		Total: 21 PD (11 rPD)
8	ED	6		Total: 19 ED (11 rED)
8	REC	4		
40	END	4		
10	BODY	0		
30	STUN	5		Total Characteristics Cost: 186

Movement: Running: 18m
Leaping: 20m
Swinging: 30m

Cost Powers

Martial Arts: Karate

Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4 Atemi Strike	-1	+1	4d6 NND(1)
4 Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4 Disarm	-1	+1	Disarm, 50 STR
4 Dodge	+0	+5	Dodge all attacks, Abort
3 Legsweep	+2	-1	9d6; Target Falls
4 Knifehand Strike	-2	+0	1d6+1 HKA (2½d6 with STR)
4 Punch/Snap Kick	+0	+2	10d6 Strike
5 Side/Spin Kick	-2	+1	12d6 Strike
16 +4 Damage Classes (already added in)			

END

Eagle-Eye has two main weaknesses. First, he lacks the ability to attack at range; he has to close with his opponent to fight. As he gains more experience, he'll probably learn to use some throwing weapons to compensate for this. Second, and more seriously, he has difficulty handling intense sensory input — Flash attacks, mainly, but also any extremely loud noise (e.g., a gun going off right next to his head), bright light, or strong smell. They have extra effect on him, and cause him brief but extreme pain. Try as he might, he can't overcome this problem; it seems his augmented senses are sometimes a curse as well as a blessing.

Appearance: Patrick Penhurst is a young white man in his middle 20s, six feet tall, brown hair and eyes, with the well-developed physique of an athlete who has intense, regular workouts. As Eagle-Eye, he wears a blue bodystocking, boots, gloves, and half-face mask, with a gold or darker blue stylized eagle motif on his torso and shoulders.

16	Bulletproof Costume: Resistant Protection (8 PD/8 ED) 0 OIF (-½)	0
7	Swingline: Swinging 30m OAF (-1)	0
6	Fast Runner: Running +6m (18m total)	1
8	Strong Leaper: Leaping +16m (20m forward, 10m upward)	1
12	Uncanny Senses: +4 PER with all Sense Groups	0
5	Uncanny Eyes: Nightvision	0
10	Uncanny Ears: Targeting for Normal Hearing	0
15	Radar-Sense: Radar (Radio Group)	0

Talents

6 Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)

Skills

32	+4 HTH	
3	Acrobatics 14-	
3	Acting 12-	
3	Breakfall 14-	
3	Climbing 14-	
3	Concealment 13-	
3	Contortionist 14-	
3	Criminology 13-	
3	Deduction 13-	
2	KS: Millennium City Underworld 11-	
3	Lockpicking 14-	
3	Persuasion 12-	
2	PS: Writer 11-	
3	Security Systems 13-	
3	Shadowing 13-	
3	Sleight Of Hand 14-	
3	Stealth 14-	
3	Streetwise 12-	

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 214

Total Cost: 400

400 Matching Complications (75)

20	Psychological Complication: Code Versus Killing (Common, Total)
10	Negative Reputation: wanted criminal (Frequently)
15	Social Complication: Secret Identity (Patrick Penhurst) (Frequently, Major)
10	Susceptibility: takes 1d6 damage instantly from Flashes and other intense sensory stimuli (Common)
20	Vulnerability: 2 x Effect from Flashes (Common)

Total Complications Points: 75

Experience Points: 0



Hardpoint

Background/History: Mark Tanagawa, son of a Japanese father and an American mother, displayed a talent for gadgeteering from an early age. When he was only four, he took apart some of his toys, built a “shock pistol” with the pieces, and used it to shoot the family dog with joy buzzer-like zaps. His parents quickly put him in a special program for “gifted and talented” children where his abilities could be nurtured... and watched.

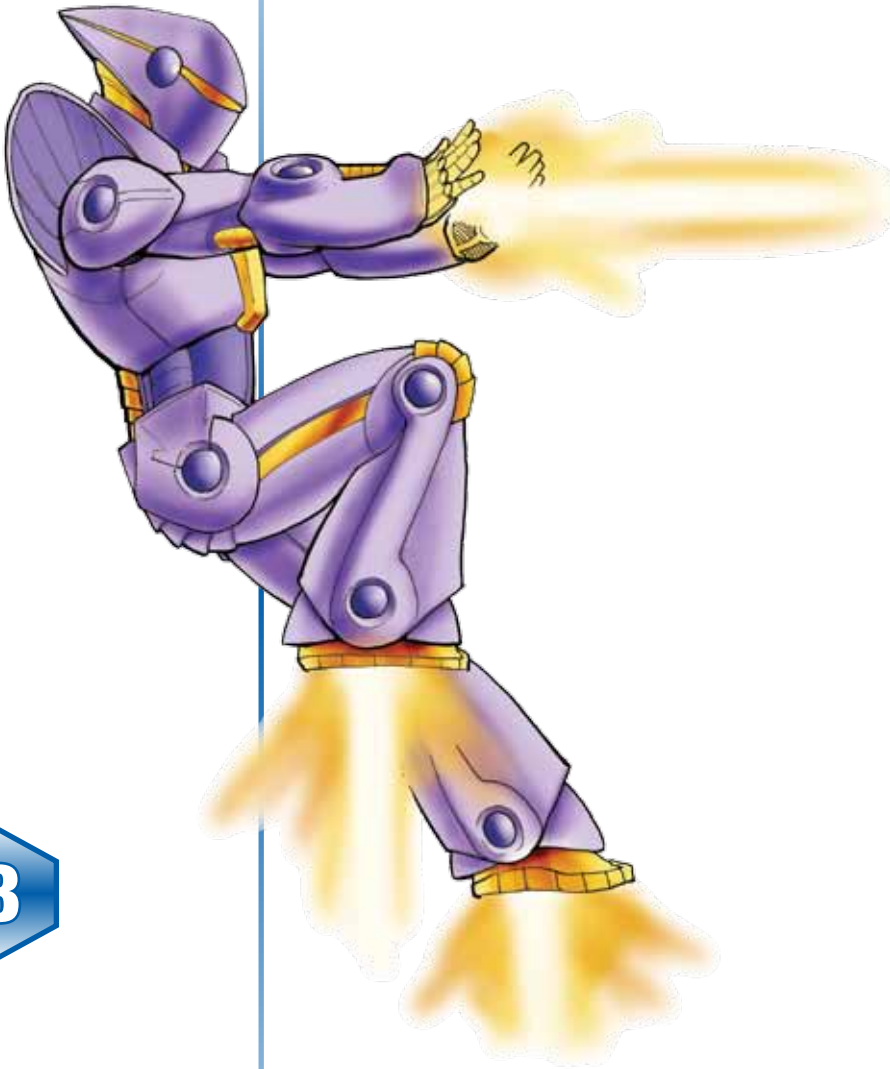
After finishing college at age 20, Mark was at a loss for what to do. He was already making enough money off his patents to live on, and didn't much like the idea of a research or teaching job. Inspired by his love of Japanese *anime* videos and superheroes, he decided to become a hero himself! Taking his cue from one of his favorite heroes, Defender, he built himself a suit of powered armor and hit the streets (and skies) as Hardpoint, protector of the innocent!

Personality/Motivation: Hardpoint is still a little new to crimefighting, and it shows. His heart is in the right place, and his armor is pretty powerful, but his tactics and flashy methods aren't as effective as they could be. In particular, he doesn't want to look “weak,” cowardly, or stupid, and doesn't respond well to taunts, dares, or the like (especially when pretty women are around to see him fight). The word has gotten around among the supervillain community, and some of his foes have learned to use his macho bravado against him.

Quote: “I'm not afraid of you, Maelstrom — eat pulsions!”

Powers/Tactics: Hardpoint hasn't yet developed a lot of tactical sophistication. Typically he shows up, confronts his opponent head-on, and attacks with pulsion blasts until his enemy falls. If necessary he switches to tangle bombs or flare blasts, or even raw strength, to get the job done, but those are rarely his first options.

Appearance: Hardpoint's powered armor is sleek and aerodynamic, with an aesthetic heavily (though not entirely) influenced by Japanese anime and manga. Overall it's a sort of purple-mauve, with golden highlights and trim. The helmet flares back slightly, something like a bicyclist's headgear. The armor's gauntlets and boots are (slightly) oversized, in the anime style. The suit's main weapons are built into the gauntlets and fire from nozzles in the palms. Out of his armored suit, Hardpoint is a white male, about 5'9" tall. He's got a fairly athletic build, but is by no means muscular.



HARDPOINT

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
40	STR	20*	17-	Lift 6,400 kg; 8d6 HTH damage [4]
25	DEX	20*	14-	
30	CON	13*	15-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll 13-
15	EGO	5	12-	
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
8	OCV	25		
8	DCV	25		
5	OMCV	6		
5	DMCV	6		
5	SPD	20*		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
5	PD	3		Total: 20 PD (15 rPD)
5	ED	3		Total: 20 ED (15 rED)
20	REC	11*		
100	END	11*		
12	BODY	2		
36	STUN	8		

Total Characteristics Cost: 198

*: OIF (Powered Armor; -½)

Movement: Running: 12m
Flight: 40m

Cost	Powers	END
40	Weapons Array: Multipower, 60-point reserve All OIF (Powered Armor; -½)	
4f	1) Pulson Blast: Blast 12d6 OIF (-½)	6
4f	2) Pulse-Blast: Blast 8d6 Autofire (5 shots; +½); OIF (-½)	6
1f	3) Laser Bolt: RKA 3d6 OIF (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x4 END; -1½), Required Roll 14-, Burnout (-¼)	16
3f	4) Tangler Bombs: Entangle 6d6, 6 PD/6 ED OIF (-½), 12 Charges (-¼)	[12]
4f	5) Flare Blast: Sight Group Flash 12d6 OIF (-½)	6
4f	6) Enervator Ray: Drain STR 6d6 OIF (-½)	6
30	Powered Armor: Resistant Protection (15 PD/15 ED) OIF (-½)	0

40	Boot-Jets: Flight 40m Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF (-½)	
6	Communications Suite: HRRP (Radio Group) OIF (-½), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)	0
3	Heat Sensors: Infrared Perception (Sight Group) OIF (-½)	0
3	Nightsight Sensors: Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group) OIF (-½)	0
7	Sealed Systems: Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing) OIF (-½)	0

Skills

6	+2 with Weapons Array Multipower
8	+1 HTH
6	+2 with Electronics Skills (Computer Programming, Elec- tronics, Systems Operation)
3	Computer Programming 13-
3	Electronics 13-
3	Inventor 13-
2	CK: Millennium City 11-
2	KS: Anime And Manga 11-
2	KS: The Tech World 11-
2	KS: The Superhuman World 11-
3	Mechanics 13-
2	PS: Play Guitar 11-
3	Security Systems 13-
2	SS: Chemistry 11-
3	SS: Physics 13-
3	Systems Operation 13-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 202

Total Cost: 400

400 Matching Complications (75)

20	DNPC: Sherry Chen (girlfriend) (Frequently; Normal; Unaware Of Hardpoint's Social Complication: Secret Identity)
20	Hunted: ARGENT (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
20	Psychological Complication: Code Versus Killing (Common, Total)
15	Social Complication: Secret Identity (Mark Tanagawa) (Frequently, Major)

Total Complications Points: 75

Experience Points: 0



Maelstrom

Background/History: Emilio Franconi was once an unscrupulous scientist working for the technological corporation ARGENT. Despite the fact that he was well paid for his work, his greed got the best of him and he sold some of ARGENT's technological data to the supervillainous mercenary the Warlord. When ARGENT's leaders found out, they used Franconi as a "test subject" for a dangerous experiment involving a process they called "energy infusion."

To their astonishment, the process didn't kill him — it gave him strange energy manipulation powers. Eager to make use of this new asset, they brainwashed him into serving them. After several years of forced servitude, Franconi (now known as Maelstrom) broke free when a superhero's punch knocked him into a generator and the electrical shock eliminated the mind-control effect.

Since then, Maelstrom has been a freelance supercriminal, sometimes working for himself, sometimes for others. As long as the money's good, he doesn't care. ARGENT remains on the lookout for him, since it wants to bring him back into the fold.



Personality/Motivation: Maelstrom is tough and powerful... and he knows it. His powers have given him a hefty dose of overconfidence. He thinks he can beat just about anyone, despite repeated evidence to the contrary. He often wastes time or energy in combat doing things he thinks are "impressive" because he's so certain he's going to win.

Maelstrom's other main motivation is greed. He loves money and luxuries, and wants all he can get. He rarely wastes his talents on penny-ante takes, though he's been known to break into stores and steal items that captured his fancy even though they weren't particularly expensive.

Quote: "Now, feel the power of... the Maelstrom!"

Powers/Tactics: Maelstrom's body has been infused with the strange energies of an ARGENT experimental device, giving him the power to manipulate those energies for various effects. He can project devastating blasts, surround his fist with energy to create a devastating punch, or use energy to shield himself or fly. Most spectacularly, he can emit a swirling field of energy around his body that damages anyone and anything within about 25 feet of him.

In combat, Maelstrom usually relies on the Blasts in his Multipower. He'll turn on his Maelstrom Field if it's tactically advantageous or he wants to impress someone. If possible he maintains a distance between himself and his foes.

Appearance: Maelstrom is a white male standing nearly six and a half feet tall, with proportionately broad shoulders and a well-muscled body. His eyes are now the golden-orange energy that fills his body; this energy can also be seen when he opens his mouth. His hair seems to be made of the same energy. When he uses his powers, wisps and streamers of this energy surround his body, whirling around him almost like a helix or a hurricane (hence his name).

Maelstrom wears a blue and green costume. The inner half of both of his legs are green, with the green flowing up over the belt and into a "starburst" sort of pattern in the center of his chest. The rest of the costume (including gloves and boots) is royal blue, though his gloves change color to match his energy when he fires one of his Blasts. He wears no mask; the costume ends at his neck in a sort of stylized collar.

MAELSTROM

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 HTH damage [1]
23	DEX	26	14-	
23	CON	13	14-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
11	EGO	1	11-	
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
8	OCV	25		
8	DCV	25		
4	OMCV	3		
4	DMCV	3		
6	SPD	40		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 1
13	PD	11		Total: 23 (10 rPD)
17	ED	15		Total: 27 (10 rED)
10	REC	6		
50	END	6		
14	BODY	4		
40	STUN	10		Total Characteristics Cost: 198

Movement: Running: 12m
Flight: 20m

Cost Powers

Cost	Powers	END
60	Energy Powers: Multipower, 60-point powers	
6f	1) Power Blast: Blast 12d6	6
6f	2) Power Blast II: Blast 8d6 Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
6f	3) Power Blast III: Blast 8d6 Penetrating (+½)	6
6f	4) Stun-Blast: Blast 6d6, NND (defense is ED Resistant Protection that Costs Endurance; +1)	6
2f	5) Powered Punch: HA +5d6 Hand-To-Hand Attack (-¼)	2

40	Maelstrom Field: Blast 6d6 Area Of Effect (8m Radius; +½), Personal Immunity (+¼), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); No Range (-½)	2
30	Force-Field: Resistant Protection (10 PD/10 ED) Perceivable (-0)	0
30	Power-Flight: Flight 20m Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0

Skills

9	+3 with Energy Powers Multipower
1	CK: Millennium City 8-
3	Stealth 14-
3	Streetwise 12-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 202

Total Cost: 400

400 Matching Complications (75)

10	Psychological Complication: Greedy (Common, Moderate)
15	Social Complication: Secret Identity (Emilio Franconi) (Frequently, Major)
30	Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from Electricity attacks (Very Common)
20	Vulnerability: 2 x Effect from Drains (Common)

Total Complications Points: 75

Experience Points: 0



CYBERPUNK: CYBER HERO

Street fighters “chromed” with advanced cybernetic and biological systems, making them as much machine as man. Computer wizards, surfing the “virtual reality” of the Cybernet, living their lives more in the world of silicon and data than the world of flesh and bone. Powerful megacorporations, flouting the laws or making their own laws as they choose. Rampant consumerism, societal decay, and urban blight. Welcome to the world of Cyberpunk Science Fiction — the world of *Cyber Hero*.

Technically speaking, *Cyber Hero* is really not a genre by itself, but a subgenre of *Star Hero*, since Cyberpunk is a type of Science Fiction. But it's so distinctive, and so popular among gamers, that it deserves some discussion of its own.

Campaign Guidelines And Standards

In *HERO System* terms, *Cyber Hero* campaigns are usually Heroic. Most characters are built on the Standard Heroic point totals of 175 Total Points with 50 points of Matching Complications. However, since cyberware (technological, and sometimes biological, enhancements of the body) is a common element of the setting, some GMs prefer the higher point totals of Powerful or Very Powerful Heroic characters, to give the PCs more points with which to augment themselves. As with most Heroic campaigns, in *Cyber Hero* games characters typically obtain normal equipment (but not cyberware) with in-game money instead of Character Points, are subject to Characteristic Maxima by default, and use the Hit Location rules and many other such options.

Genre Conventions And Features

Cyberpunk stories typically take place in the near future — during the mid-to-late twenty-first century — rather than the far future like most Science Fiction. This allows them to portray a setting somewhat different than, but clearly derived from and ultimately grounded in, the modern day.

The Cyberpunk genre has a lot of features that distinguish it from other types of Science Fiction, and from modern-day action campaigns (though it shares some elements of both those genres). Here are a few common “bits” most gamers associate with Cyberpunk, based primarily on the writings of authors such as William Gibson, Walter Jon Williams, and Bruce Sterling.

Computers and Cyberspace: Computers crop up constantly in Cyberpunk stories, not only as tools the characters use, but as obstacles they must overcome, weapons for their enemies to use against them, and sometimes even direct threats. In fact, so prevalent have computers become in Cyberpunk settings that they're all linked together in a vast “virtual reality” referred to as “cyberspace,” “the Net,” or “the matrix.” A character “jacks in” to the Cybernet using a piece of cyberware called a dataport to directly interface his mind with the machine. Once inside, he sees a vast electronic world in which telephone lines are roads and paths, and collections of data are represented by buildings, fancy icons, geometric symbols, or similar constructs. Programs with defined functions, such as security, often have distinctive appearances as well — for example, a program for locating a particular type of data might look like a cybernetic bloodhound.

The best way to represent the Cybernet is with Extra-Dimensional Movement. Although the character doesn't really enter another “dimension” in the classic sense, he does enter another “world,” and while he's there he no longer truly interacts with the real world. (Other possibilities for simulating cyberspace include Duplication and the special effects of bonuses to the *Computer Programming Skill*.) The dataport, unlike most forms of cyberware, qualifies as an OIF — it's easy to block or plug it so the character can't use it.

Here's an example:

The Cybernet: Extra-Dimensional Movement (any location in the Cybernet corresponding to the physical location where the character jacks in), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (33 Active Points); OIF (dataport; -½), Meat Body (character's body remains in the real world, but cannot move, perceive, or act, and damage to either the virtual form [in cyberspace] or the real body [in the real world] can hurt or kill the character; -1). Total cost: 13 points.

The programs a character buys for use in cyberspace are usually defined as Skills or Powers with the Limitations *Only In Cyberspace* (-2) and *OAF* (the cyberdeck the character stores his programs on). Thus, to create a security-penetration program, a character might go for the stealthy approach (*Invisibility*), the puzzle-solving approach (*Lockpicking* and *Security Systems*), or the brute force approach (*HKA*). There are lots of options and possibilities for creative use of the *HERO System*.

Consumerism and the power of money: The Cyberpunk ambience is shot through with cynical reminders of the hold exerted by the consumer mentality on the minds of PCs and NPCs alike. Most characters know the brand name or manufacturer of their equipment, identify themselves through the brands they use or scorn, and so forth. It's modern American consumer culture taken to a greater extreme, and clever GMs use it to give their *Cyber Hero* settings more appeal. Just spending a few minutes assigning manufacturer and product names to the weapons and gear used frequently in the campaign goes a long way toward bringing this element into the game.

Corporate power: In Cyberpunk settings, corporations are large and powerful — in fact, so powerful, they're often beyond the reach of ordinary governments, and may even have taken their place! They maintain "corporate enclaves" where their laws, not civil law, apply, they have their own security organizations and military units, and they basically can do whatever they want — unless another corporation objects, in which case espionage, assassination, and financial maneuvering becomes the order of the day.

Cyberware: Characters in Cyberpunk settings often undergo surgical procedures in which surgeons install special technology — cyberware — in their bodies. Cyberware either augments normal functions, replaces weak tissues with something stronger, or provides a character with abilities he lacks. Examples include "handrazors" (blades that can pop out from beneath the fingernails), cybereyes, metal lacing to make bones unbreakable, dermal armoring to provide protection against blades and guns, artificial muscles sewn to existing ones to enhance strength, and many, many more.

Similarly, characters are often bio-engineered or genetically altered. This ranges from replacing

existing organs with better ones (for example, an enhanced liver that can filter venoms and poisons from the character's body), to changing the character's form and structure, to grafting DNA from animals into the character's body to improve him somehow (for example, to give him a cat's reflexes).

As discussed on 6E2 393, the Limitation *Restrainable* at the -¼ level is appropriate for many types of cyberware. Typically electromagnetic pulses, electric shocks, and the like can disable or destroy them (a fact security guards and cops take advantage of frequently!). On the other hand, things like bone lacing and replacement organs usually aren't Limited much, if at all, and are usually just bought as normal Powers or abilities.

Because cyberware can unbalance the game, many *Cyber Hero* GMs establish rules regarding how much a character can have. They may limit the total Active Points' worth of cyberware and other modifications each character can buy, or the total Real Points, or establish some other system (like "10 Active Points per point of BODY the character possesses").

Globalism: In the world of Cyberpunk, Earth is a small place. Rapid travel from one side of the planet to the other is possible and frequent (though also too expensive for most people). High-tech products are manufactured all over the world ("Hey, do you guys have any of those hot new chips from Bali?"), and the influence of Asian cultures on the rest of the world, particularly America, is marked. Chinatowns have grown in size and influence, and especially in the large urban areas like New York and California the Japanese and/or Chinese exert a lot of behind-the-scenes control. Many American businessmen have to learn Asian languages just to do business.

In game terms, GMs can simulate this element by including KS: Asian Culture in the Everyman Skill list for the campaign, putting 1 Character Point worth of Chinese in the Templates for many professions, and so forth.

Societal decay: Cyberpunk settings usually feature a high degree of societal decay. Cities are vast urban blights where one often takes one's life in one's hands just by going for a walk. The gap between the enormous numbers of the poor, and the few ultra-rich, is wide and marked — which is one reason for the well-protected corporate enclaves mentioned above. Corruption, scandal, bribery, and crime are rampant. Often the characters' goals include survival and prosperity before anything else — though, if they're to be true heroes, they have to grow beyond that.

Violence: In a Cyberpunk world, violence, ranging from fistfights to brutal murders, is a fact of everyday life. Characters usually go around armed to the teeth, carrying everything from boot knives to salvaged chainguns. In game terms, this is just a matter of having a well-stocked equipment list for the PCs to choose from, and including a fight or two in almost every adventure.

EXAMPLE CYBERWARE

Bone Lacing: Resistant Protection (1 PD/1 ED) (total cost: 3 points) plus Resistant Protection (3 PD/3 ED) (9 Active Points); Only Works Against BODY Damage (-1), Only To Protect Against Breaking Bones (-2) (total cost: 2 points) plus HA +2d6 (10 Active Points); Hand-To-Hand Attack (-¼) (total cost: 8 points). Total cost: 13 points.

Enhanced Chemoreception: +2 PER with Smell/Taste Group (total cost: 4 points) plus Tracking for Normal Smell (total cost: 5 points). Total cost: 9 points.

Hot Reflexes II: +2 SPD (20 Active Points); Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x4 END; -1½), Restrainable (-¼). Total cost: 6 points.

Cybernetic Arm: +10 STR (10 Active Points); Only When Using The Right Arm (-¼), Restrainable (-¼). Total cost: 7 points.

Character Archetypes

The archetypes in *Cyber Hero* games usually aren't quite as pronounced as they are in *Champions* or *Fantasy Hero*, but they do exist. They include:

THE COMPUTER WIZARD

Also called a “console cowboy,” “decker,” “technomancer,” or “hacker,” this character specializes in using the computer, working in cyberspace, and so forth. He always has Computer Programming and a dataport, and he often branches out to include Cryptography, Electronics, Lockpicking, Security Systems, and Systems Operation in his Skill suite.

THE CORPORATE SUIT

“Corporate suit” refers to any character who works for one of the corporations dominating the campaign setting — or who at least looks and acts like he does. Skills such as Conversation, High Society, KS: High Finance, Language: Japanese, Persuasion, and PS: Businessman predominate, and the character also tends to have a lot of Contacts, Fringe Benefits, and other Perks.



THE DRIVER/PILOT

Some characters specialize in operating vehicles, either ground, air, or both. In some Cyberpunk settings, they can “jack in” to the vehicle, the same way a computer wizard jacks into his computer, to almost “merge” with the vehicle and get better performance out of it. The character must have Combat Driving (and/or Combat Piloting), and probably has Mechanics and a bunch of TFs as well.

GANGER

This character survives by belonging to (or perhaps leading) a street gang that controls part of the turf in one of the major cities of the campaign setting. He typically has plenty of streetfighting skills (Martial Arts: Dirty Infighting, WF: Blades), TF: Two-Wheeled Motorized Ground Vehicles, perhaps a small bit of cyberware (or two), and lots of minor (but useful!) KSs and Contacts related to his “turf.” If he leads the gang, he can buy them as Followers.

SAMURAI

The ultimate street warrior, the samurai is heavily “chromed” (filled with cyberware and other modifications). The chrome is his calling card, his mark of distinction — it's how his employers know they're getting a skilled professional, not some thug off the street. In addition to paying Character Points for lots of cyberware, samurai have plenty of fighting Skills (Demolitions, Martial Arts, WFs, Weaponsmith) and relatively high Characteristics (also resulting from cyberware, typically).

SAMURAI TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

20	20 points' worth of cyberware
10	Martial Arts
2	WF: Small Arms
9	9 points' worth of Skills from the following list: Bribery, Combat Driving, Combat Piloting, Computer Programming, Fast Draw, Lockpicking, Security Systems, Stealth, Streetwise, Systems Operation, Tactics, any Background Skill

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 41

Value Complication

5	Distinctive Features: Chromed (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)
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Total Value Of Template Complications: 5

Sample Character

Here's Slash, an example of the "samurai" archetype. You can bring him into your game as an NPC or PC, or use his cyberware for other characters.

Slash

Background/History: Hernan Flores born in the worst part of Hudson City in 2057. Growing up in grinding poverty, he quickly took to petty crime. Only an interest in computers, and a fair bit of skill with them, kept him going to school. But it wasn't easy. Small and skinny, Hernan was picked on and beaten up a lot by bigger kids. He learned the hard way that success went only to the strong.

Unwilling to become nothing more than a glorified electron jockey for some corporation

after he finished school, he used his computer skills to steal enough money to hire a cyber-surgeon to augment him. His normal muscles were interwoven with high-strength artificial muscle fiber. Armored plastics were implanted just beneath his skin, making him tough. His eyes were replaced with artificial versions that can see in the dark. Best of all, long, sharp "razors" were implanted underneath his fingernails, just waiting for him to flex his muscles the right way to "snik" out of their sheaths. Hernan practiced long and hard with the razors, becoming a skilled streetfighter.

When he'd healed from the operations and finished his training, Hernan hit the streets, picking up work as a bodyguard and enforcer. His technical skills got him some jobs that wouldn't go to ordinary "samurai," earning him more money and contacts. Today, he's well-known around the Hudson City underworld.

SLASH

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 HTH damage [1]
18	DEX	16	13-	
15	CON	5	12-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
6	OCV	15		
6	DCV	15		
3	OMCV	0		
3	DMCV	0		
4	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
7	PD	5		Total: 10 PD (3 rPD)
5	ED	3		Total: 8 ED (3 rED)
6	REC	2		
30	END	2		
10	BODY	0		
30	STUN	5		

Total Characteristics Cost: 98

Movement: Running: 18m

Cost Powers

Cost	Powers	END
7	Handrazors: HKA ½d6 No STR Bonus (-½)	1
	Martial Arts: Razor Dancing	
	Maneuver	OCV DCV Damage/Effect
4	Block	+2 +2 Block, Abort
4	Dodge	— +5 Dodge, Affects All Attacks, Abort
5	Jab	+1 +3 Weapon Strike
4	Slash	+2 +0 Weapon +2 DC Strike

9	Dermal Armoring: Resistant Protection (3 PD/3 ED)	0
6	Enhanced Legs: Running +6m (18m total)	1
5	Cybereyes: Infrared Perception (Sight Group)	0
3	Hot Reflexes I: +1 SPD Restrained (-¼), Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x4 END; -1½)	4

Skills

5	+1 with Razor Dancing
3	Bribery 12-
3	Computer Programming 11-
2	Gambling (Card Games) 11-
2	KS: Hudson City 11-
3	Lockpicking 13-
3	Security Systems 11-
3	Stealth 13-
3	Streetwise 12-
3	WF: Small Arms, Hand Razors

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 77

Total Cost: 175

175 Matching Complications (50)

5	Distinctive Features: Chromed (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)
15	Hunted: Detective Murrow (Infrequently, As Pow, NCI, Capture)
15	Psychological Complication: Resists Corporate Influence (Common, Strong)
15	Social Complication: Lacks National Security Number (can't vote, pass through secured checkpoints, use many government services, and so forth) (Frequently, Major)

Total Complications Points: 50

Experience Points: 0

Personality/Motivations: Hernan — or “Slash,” as he’s known on the street — may be successful and relatively well-off, but he’s not satisfied. After years of looking out only for Number One, he’s slowly come to the realization that he doesn’t like himself, or society, very much. After a lot of studying, he’s concluded that the real problems in society stem mostly from undue corporate influence over... well, over pretty much every aspect of people’s lives! He’s decided he doesn’t like that very much, and intends to do something about it. Although he still puts up the usual “tough street fighter” facade, he’s begun working against the corps on his own, and taking jobs against them for cheaper than normal fees. He tends to react negatively to anything corporation-related, even if it’s a corporate suit offering him a high-paying job. The corps have responded by having him labeled a terrorist, and siccing one of their pet cops, Detective Murrow, on his trail. It’s only a matter of time before he and Murrow meet face-to-face and find out who’s the better man....

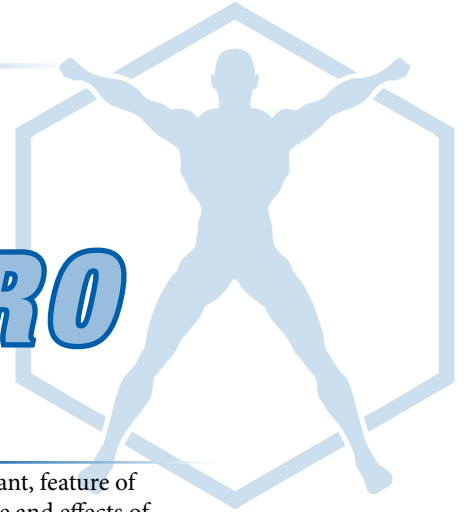
Quote: “Cash, up front. No refunds. Your guarantee is that you’re hiring me — when I take the money, I get the job done.”

Powers/Tactics: Slash’s abilities are a combination of chrome and training. He’s been extensively cybernetically augmented, and in fact hopes to undergo even more cyber-surgery in the near future (he’s got his cyber-eyes on a sweet little bone augmentation package, and this great hot-reflex upgrade...). But what sets him apart from a legion of other cyber-samurai are his other skills — his deft touch with a computer keyboard, and his ability to bypass security and locks without tripping alarms.

Slash usually goes heavily armed. Besides his handrazors, he always carries at least one small “holdout” pistol. If he’s expecting trouble, he’ll have a large pistol with him, and maybe even some military-spec weaponry to boot.

Appearance: Slash is a short (5’9”) Hispanic male in his early 20s, with black hair and dark eyes. His body has obviously been cybernetically enhanced; the dermal armoring shows wherever his skin is visible, and even on casual inspection his eyes were clearly made in a factory. He dresses stylishly, in clothes tailored to fit his small but oddly bulky frame. He never wears fingered gloves, wanting to have his razors ready for action at all times.

FANTASY: FANTASY HERO



Armed knights hunting dragons to keep the lands safe from their depredations. Mighty wizards able to quell the storm, blast their foes with lightning, and summon demons with but a word and a gesture. Wise priests invoking the powers of mighty gods who still, sometimes, walk the world. Wily thieves using their skills to obtain illicit wealth and outwit their foes. Mighty kings in tall-spired castles. Alchemists, swords, prophecies, monsters, ancient magics, and much, much more. Such is the stuff of Fantasy.

Campaign Guidelines And Standards

In *HERO System* terms, *Fantasy Hero* campaigns are usually Heroic, with characters built on the Standard Heroic 175 Total Points with 50 points of Matching Complications. However, Fantasy encompasses many settings and styles of play, and in some games the characters are so powerful they are built with more points, or even on Superheroic standards. In Heroic *Fantasy Hero* campaigns, characters typically obtain normal equipment (but not necessarily enchanted items) with in-game money instead of Character Points, are subject to Characteristic Maxima by default, and use the Hit Location rules and many other such options.

Genre Conventions And Features

“Fantasy” is so broad — broader even than the Superhero genre — that it defies easy description. Even a casual discussion of major genre “bits” would be too long for this chapter, and a thorough review of the elements of the genre could easily fill an entire book! However, three things stand out as defining what “Fantasy” is for gaming purposes: magic; alternate worlds; and low technology.

MAGIC

The first, and most important, feature of Fantasy is *magic*. The existence and effects of magic almost define “Fantasy” by themselves; only in the lowest of Low Fantasy (see below) is there no magic whatsoever. Magic ranges from minor and rare to extremely commonplace and powerful, depending on subgenre. In many cases it consists of cast spells and evoked effects that PCs can control (or be harmed by); in other settings it’s mostly an element of the ambience, something that may help or hinder the characters indirectly, but over which they exert little control.

CREATING AND CASTING SPELLS IN THE *HERO SYSTEM*

The *HERO System*’s flexibility and adaptability allow you to create pretty much any sort of magic system you can imagine, whether it’s a copy of one you read about in a novel, or an original creation of your own. You simply use the game elements to define what spells do, how characters cast them, and any related effects.

In *HERO System* terms, spells are usually created using Powers (and sometimes Talents or Skills), with appropriate Advantages and Limitations. In most *Fantasy Hero* campaigns, the following Limitations apply to most spells: Focus (a wizard’s staff, a material component the spell consumes, or the like); Gestures; Incantations; and Requires A Magic Roll (*Magic* being a use of the *Power Skill*; for priests, you might call this *Prayer*, *Piety*, or *Faith* instead). Concentration, Extra Time, and Side Effects are also fairly common. The accompanying sidebar provides several example spells, and there are dozens more in the sidebars in Chapter One.

The GM also needs to decide how characters pay for spells. First, does a spellcaster have to buy a Skill (like *Magic*), or perhaps a special Perk or Talent, to cast spells, or can pretty much anyone work magic? Does a character have to buy each spell individually, or can he put them in a Power Framework? Does the setting impose any restrictions on how many spells a character can learn, or have active at one time, or cast during a single day? The answers to each of these questions shape how magic works in the campaign, and how characters can best make use of it.

EXAMPLE SPELLS

Levitation Spell:

Flight 10m (10 Active Points); OAF Expendable (feather; -1), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Only To Go Straight Up And Down (-½), Requires A Magic Roll (-½). Total cost: 3 points.

Magesight: Detect Magic (INT Roll), Discriminatory (10 Active Points); OAF (wizard's staff; -1), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½). Total cost: 3 points.

Magic Bolt: RKA 1d6, NND (defense is Power Defense; +1), Does BODY (+1) (45 Active Points); OAF (wizard's staff; -1), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½). Total cost: 15 points.

Spell Of Many Tongues:

Universal Translator (INT Roll) (20 Active Points); OAF Expendable (jadeite pebble with rune of comprehension etched on it, Difficult to replace; -1¼), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½). Total cost: 6 points.

Thendric's Spell Of Concealment:

Invisibility to Sight Group (20 Active Points);

OAF Expendable (small piece of shaped and polished glass, Difficult to replace; -1¼), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½). Total cost: 6 points.

Vandular's Chaotic

Corruscations: Blast 6d6, Area Of Effect (10m Radius; +¾) (52 Active Points); OAF (wizard's staff; -1), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½). Total cost: 17 points.



Casting a spell usually counts as an Attack Action (though this may depend on the type of spell used). If the spell has the *Requires A Roll* Limitation, or other Limitations controlling whether (or how) it functions, the caster must comply with all those restrictions to make it work properly. If not, the spell fails or cannot be cast.

ALTERNATE WORLDS

The second feature of Fantasy is an *alternate world*. Although a few types of Fantasy (such as Urban Fantasy) take place here on good old Earth, most Fantasy stories are set in an alternate reality that bears some resemblance to our own in terms of technology and customs, but has plenty of differences to distinguish it. Even fantasies set in earlier eras on Earth, or in “secret places” in our world, essentially take place in “alternate worlds.” For many Fantasy gaming campaigns, the better realized the world — the more detailed and flavorful the GM makes it, the more “dramatic verisimilitude” it has — the better the game.

LOW TECHNOLOGY

The third feature of Fantasy is low technology. Characters in Fantasy games can't call each other on the phone, don't have indoor plumbing, and lack modern medicine. They use swords, not guns; they ride on horses, not in cars; they have to use muscle power instead of engines and electricity. There are some exceptions (such as, again, Urban Fantasy, or games where magic essentially takes the place of technology), but most *Fantasy Hero* campaigns follow this rule.

WEAPONS AND ARMOR

The most prevalent examples of the low technology in Fantasy worlds are the implements of violence: swords, bows and arrows, armor, and the like. Most characters are at least familiar with them, and characters such as warriors are quite skilled with them.

Chapter Seven of 6E2 contains plenty of weapons and armor suitable for *Fantasy Hero* games, and rules on how to create more if you want to. In many Fantasy games, GMs ignore the standard Encumbrance rules when it comes to armor, instead imposing a straightforward DCV penalty (typically -1 DCV per 3 PD/3 ED, or some similar formula) to represent the bulkiness and hindering effects of armor. That makes “light fighters” (characters who use speed and accuracy to fight effectively, instead of brute strength and defense) a viable option in many campaigns.

HORSES

Many *Fantasy Hero* characters know how to ride, since that's usually the fastest way to cross land in a Fantasy campaign (aside from magic, of course!). 6E2 178 has a writeup for a typical Light Warhorse. For information on mounted movement and combat, see 6E2 30.

Character Archetypes

Although Fantasy is a broad and varied genre, in most cases Fantasy characters fall into one of several standard archetypes. These include:

PRIEST

A devotee of a god or gods, gifted by his patron deity(ies) with magical powers. Usually priests' magic relates to healing, defense, and succoring the weak, but some priests are more militant, using their divinely-granted gifts to smite the foe and convert the pagan. Many priests are skilled with weapons as well, but some prefer the paths of peace. Common Skills for a priest include Healing (Paramedics), Oratory, Persuasion, Power: Faith, and various Knowledge Skills relating to the liturgy, cosmology, and lore of the priesthood he belongs to and god(s) he serves.

ROGUE

“Rogue” is a catch-all term for characters who live primarily by their wits and guileful skills, rather than strength of arms or magical prowess. The category typically includes thieves, scouts, explorers, treasure-seekers, bards, assassins, burglars, game designers, and bounty hunters. Some of these rogues rely on skills of deception (Disguise, Mimicry, Ventriloquism), others on skills of persuasion and trickery (Charm, Conversation, Persuasion, Sleight Of Hand), and others on skills of infiltration (Lockpicking, Security Systems). Almost all have Stealth and Streetwise, and the ability to use at least some weapons (typically small, easily-concealed ones like daggers, short swords, slings, and hatchets). A few, such as the assassin and bounty hunter, emphasize fighting prowess more than the others.

WARRIOR

Warriors rely primarily on skill at arms to overcome their enemies and achieve their aims. In addition to lots of Weapon Familiarities, they often have Skills like Martial Arts (weapons-based fighting arts, usually), Oratory (for rallying the troops), Riding, Stealth, Survival, Tactics, Tracking, and Weaponsmith.

Many gamers divide warriors into two broad groups: heavy fighters and light fighters. Heavy fighters use high STR, heavy armor, and large weapons to cause lots of damage to their foes. Light fighters prefer little or no armor, favoring DEX, speed, and accuracy over brute force. Fortunately, the *HERO System's* flexibility allows you to mix and match elements to achieve just the right blend for the character you have in mind.

You can make the ordinary warrior more interesting by tailoring his abilities and background a little. Examples include:

- the *barbarian*, a primitive tribesman who relies on his wilderness skills and powerful muscles to overcome more sophisticated foes. Barbarians typically have high STR and use large weapons, but prefer light (or no) armor so they can dodge and move quickly.
- the *knight*, a heavy fighter who's also a skilled horseman. Knights commonly use weapons such as swords, lances, and axes, and are often bound by oaths of loyalty to a liege-lord or beloved lady.
- the *paladin*, a knight-like warrior who promotes some holy cause. Paladins often have divinely-granted powers similar to, but less flexible than, the spells of priests.
- the *ranger*, a warrior specializing in wilderness campaigns and scouting. Rangers usually have high Survival, Stealth, and Tracking rolls, and are skilled with Ranged weapons such as the bow.

WIZARD

Wizards are masters of arcane lore with the ability to cast spells and manipulate magical effects. In many Fantasy worlds, they know little (if anything) about arms and armor, since they rely on their learning and powers instead of mundane means of combat. Wizards typically have a *Magic Skill*, lots of appropriate Knowledge Skills, relatively low Characteristics (except for INT, EGO, and PRE, which they favor), and lots of points devoted to buying spells.

In many Fantasy games, wizards “specialize” in a particular type of magic: Necromancy, Alchemy; Thaumaturgy; Conjuratation; and so on. Sometimes this is because of the way people learn and teach magic in the campaign world, other times it relates to specific game benefits and rules established by the GM.

CROSSWORLDS FANTASY

One sort of Fantasy sub-subgenre is *Crossworlds Fantasy*, in which the heroes are people from the real world (often children) who somehow cross over into a Fantasy world and become involved in adventures there. Often the heroes are the subjects of prophecy, or possess some power, ability, or insight that inhabitants of the Fantasy setting lack. Crossworlds Fantasies usually involve Epic or High Fantasy worlds.

Examples of Crossworlds Fantasy include *The Chronicles Of Narnia* by C. S. Lewis, *The Chronicles Of Thomas Covenant* trilogy and *Mordant's Need* duology by Stephen Donaldson, and Alan Garner's *The Weirdstone Of Brisingamen*.

Subgenres

Fantasy has many subgenres. Some of the most important include:

EPIC FANTASY

Epic fantasies are grand, romantic, monumental stories of the heroes' struggle against a vast, and often overwhelmingly powerful, enemy. Typically this entails a great quest to find, destroy, create, or awaken the person or talisman needed to defeat the enemy. Epic Fantasy stories feature detailed worlds with extensive histories (and often lots of prophecies); magic that's usually subtle, flavorful, and evocative, and usually low-key though not necessarily low-powered; and conflicts on scales small and large, where the actions of both individual heroes and entire armies are necessary for victory.

The quintessential Epic Fantasy is, of course, J.R.R. Tolkien's magnificent *Lord Of The Rings*; many stories that imitate his work also belong to this category. Other examples include Patricia McKillip's "Riddlemaster of Hed" trilogy, *The Belgariad* series by David Eddings, and some bodies of myth and legend (such as the Arthurian tales or some parts of Norse mythology).

HIGH FANTASY

High Fantasy is a subgenre characterized mainly by extensive, common, and/or powerful magic. Unlike Epic Fantasy, where wizards are something of a rarity, in some High Fantasy games you can't take ten steps without tripping over someone who can cast spells. In some High Fantasy games, magic controls the fate of entire kingdoms (or worlds), and can devastate entire regions; in others it substitutes for technology (cities have magical lighting at night, everyone has running water because of aquamancy spells, and people drive self-propelling enchanted wagons).

In a gaming context, High Fantasy campaigns usually feature a plethora of sentient races — elves, dwarves, gnomes, little sneaky people, orcs, hobgoblins, trolls — though in literature this is much less common. They also often have a lot of magical creatures and fantastic beasts. At their best, they allow for the creation of grand and wondrous stories of adventure and enchantment, and verge toward Epic Fantasy. At their worst, they often descend into nigh-mindless hack-and-slash campaigns devoted solely to killing monsters, getting treasure, and acquiring magical items.

Examples of High Fantasy include the typical *Dungeons & Dragons* gaming campaign, *Master Of The Five Magics* by Lyndon Hardy, the *Earthsea Trilogy* of Ursula LeGuin, some bodies of myth and legend (such as certain Greek myths), the *Deed Of Paksemmarion* trilogy by Elizabeth Moon (though many of its High Fantasy elements are rather muted), and some of the tales written by Lord Dunsany and James Branch Cabell.

LOW FANTASY

Low Fantasy is the opposite of High Fantasy — it features little magic (sometimes none whatsoever). What magic does exist is usually difficult to cast (it's hard to learn, or tires the user out), relatively low-powered and/or subtle, and quite rare. The characters are most likely to face mundane opponents — city guards, the king's soldiers, political rivals, or the like — instead of hordes of orcs or a rampaging dragon.

Examples of Low Fantasy include most of the Fantasy novels of Guy Gavriel Kay, the various Deryni novels of Katherine Kurtz (which feature about as much magic as a story can have and still remain "Low Fantasy"), and John Morrissey's *Iron Angel* trilogy.

SWORDS AND SORCERY

Swords And Sorcery Fantasy focuses on primarily on warriors, emphasizing that only the tough survive and that fighting skills are, in most cases, better than other types of skills. The sword-wielding hero fights terrible monsters, rescues helpless maidens, and thwarts evil plots all with the strength of his mighty muscles and his refusal to become corrupted by the "softness" of more civilized life.

Wizards and priests get short shrift in Swords And Sorcery tales. Typically magic is so slow, or so limited, that a sword-wielding hero can cleave a spellcaster in two before he can complete his magic (which often involves a curse, or the conjuration of some monster). However, this changes in Swords And Sorcery tales where the hero himself can wield some magic.

Examples of Swords And Sorcery Fantasy include Robert E. Howard's Conan stories, Michael Moorcock's stories about Elric of Melniboné, Fritz Lieber's tales of Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser, Karl Edward Wagner's novels about Kane, and many others.

URBAN FANTASY

Urban Fantasy mixes modern-day, real world settings with magic. Typically there's a "hidden history" — a secret, underground, and/or behind-the-scenes community of spellcasters and fantastic creatures most people remain completely oblivious to. The magic is usually relatively low-powered, and often flavorful. The hero often gets involved in some conflict between the forces of good and evil, or has to find a way to use magic to correct some societal problem.

Examples of Urban Fantasy include many of the novels of Charles deLint, Tim Powers, and Simon Hawke, as well as some of Lord Dunsany's marvelous short stories.

Sample Characters

Here are two sample characters to get you started in *Fantasy Hero*: Darien, a bold warrior; and Belakar, a wizard who uses the example spells from the sidebar accompanying this section.

Darien the Bold

Background/History: The fifth son of a noble of moderate power, Darien learned early in life that he stood to inherit little or nothing. Thus, the only roads to success, prosperity, and power for him were the priesthood or service in the King's Army. Lacking any religious vocation, he chose the latter course, and soon distinguished himself as a skilled warrior. Although he has not yet been knighted, he has proven himself in the King's service so many times that the King sends him whenever there's a "special mission" to be performed. In truth, the King does this not just because he knows of Darien's abilities as a warrior, but because he's aware of the love that has grown between his daughter, the Princess Arellia, and Darien, and seeks to put an end to it... one way or another.

Personality/Motivation: Darien's motivations are those of the code of chivalry: love of adventure; loyalty to his liege-lord; and living up to the adoration of a good woman. He asks for little more from life than the chance to live well, smite evil, and enjoy the company of boon companions.

Darien has always enjoyed a greater share of good fortune than most other men; his luck has kept him safe through more than one dangerous situation that left equally skilled warriors dead. As a result, Darien has come to believe the gods have blessed him and given him a great and noble purpose to fulfill, and this has made him bold, even overconfident. There may come a time when he relies on his luck once too often, and finds himself in greater danger than he can handle....

Quote: "Hold, dog! My lord commands that I bring you before him, and bring you I shall — be you in one piece, or cut in two by my blade."

Powers/Tactics: Darien is a skilled warrior, trained primarily in the use of the broadsword (his *Weapons Combat* Martial Art is usable with Blades), but quite able to use other weapons as well. When traveling, he carries two broadswords, a medium lance, a medium longbow, a dagger, and a shield, and wears well-polished chainmail. He prefers to fight from horseback when possible, but is no stranger to getting down on foot and slogging it out in the mud with his enemies.

Appearance: Darien the Bold is a tall, well-muscled warrior of 24 winters. His hair is black, and his eyes brown. His countenance is usually cheerful, but quickly turns stern, even frightening, when battle approaches or he enters a dangerous situation.

Belakar

Background/History: Growing up as a limner's son, Belakar was apprenticed to a local wizard after he displayed an aptitude for the Arts Arcane. He studied under the wizard for several years, until his master died. He then apprenticed himself to another wizard, Gardak, later known as Gardak the Necromancer. After several months, when he finally perceived the evil nature Gardak hid beneath a facade of civility, Belakar fled, taking several of Gardak's most precious tomes with him. To this day, Gardak pursues him, hoping to recover the grimoires.

After several years of studying on his own, Belakar became an adventuring mage, using his powers to work with other like-minded people to destroy evil, perform heroic deeds, and perhaps recover a bit of treasure in the process. He continues down this path today, ever seeking to expand his knowledge, earn a reputation for his skills, and serve the good people of the world — even though most of them fear his sorcerous powers.

Personality/Motivation: Belakar has taken the path of the adventuring mage mainly because that's the best way for him to uncover ancient magical artifacts, old lorebooks and spellbooks, and like valuables. Such things fascinate him, and he'll go to extremes to recover them. But stronger still than that is his sense of honor and duty. If he gives his word, he keeps it, and he always conducts himself in an honest and forthright manner.

Quote: "Look at this! It's the work-book of a mage of the Crimson Shield Dynasty! Who knows what secrets it might contain?"

Powers/Tactics: Belakar is a mage who can cast several useful spells. His main weakness is that he has no defensive magics (yet). He has to take care, hide behind cover when he can, and dodge if he must. When possible, he uses Thendric's Spell of Concealment to shield himself from the eyes of potential attackers.

Appearance: Belakar is a man in his mid-30s, with dark skin and eyes. He's mostly bald, with just a few wisps of hair here and there on his head. He wears robes (similar to those of many wizards), carries a staff, and never seems to be without a book or two.

WHITHER THY

SHEETS, SIRRAH?

You can find Darien the Bold's and Belakar's sheets on the following pages.

DARIEN THE BOLD

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
18	STR	8	13-	Lift 300 kg; 3½d6 HTH damage [2]
15	DEX	10	12-	
18	CON	8	13-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
5	OCV	10		
5	DCV	10		
3	OMCV	0		
3	DMCV	0		
4	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
6	PD	4		Total: 6 PD (0 rPD)
5	ED	3		Total: 5 ED (0 rED)
6	REC	2		
35	END	3		
12	BODY	2		
30	STUN	5		
Total Characteristics Cost: 90				

Movement: Running: 14m



Cost Powers END

Martial Arts: Weapons Combat (Usable with Blades)

Maneuver *OCV* *DCV* *Notes*

5	All-Out	+1	-2	Weapon +6 DC Strike
4	Attack	+0	+2	Weapon +4 DC Strike
4	Defend	+2	+2	Block, Abort
5	Probe	+1	+3	Weapon +2 DC Strike
8	+2 Damage Classes (already added in)			

2 **Fleet-Footed:** Running +2m (14m total) 1

2 **Sharp-Eyed:** +2 PER with Normal Sight 0

15 **Blessed By The Gods:** Luck 3d6 0

Skills

16	+2 HTH
2	Animal Handler (Equines) 12-
3	Courtier (High Society) 12-
2	KS: Heraldry 11-
2	KS: Military History 11-
3	Riding 12-
3	Stealth 12-
3	Tactics 11-
1	Trading 8-
5	WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons, Lances

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 85

Total Cost: 175

175 Matching Complications (50)

10	DNPC: Princess Arellia (his true love, and the King's daughter) (Frequently; Normal, Useful Noncombat Position)
15	Hunted: Shattered Skull orc tribe (Frequently, Mo Pow, Limited Geographical Area, Kill)
10	Hunted: the King (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
15	Psychological Complication: Code Of Chivalry (Common, Strong)

Total Complications Points: 50

Experience Points: 0

Typical Equipment

Broad Sword (HKA 1d6+1, STR Min 12)
 Medium Lance (HKA 1½d6, STR Min 13)
 Medium Longbow and 20 Arrows (HKA 1½d6, +1 RMod)
 Dagger (HKA 1d6-1 STR Min 6)
 Chain Mail (PD 6/ED 6)
 Normal Shield (+2 DCV)
 Medium Warhorse

BELAKAR

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 HTH damage [1]
14	DEX	8	12-	
13	CON	3	12-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll 13-
15	EGO	5	12-	
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
5	OCV	10		
5	DCV	10		
5	OMCV	6		
5	DMCV	6		
3	SPD	10		Phases: 4, 8, 12
3	PD	1		Total: 6 PD (3 rPD)
5	ED	3		Total: 8 ED (3 rED)
4	REC	0		
25	END	1		
10	BODY	0		
24	STUN	2		Total Characteristics Cost: 85

Movement: Running: 12m

Cost Powers

Spells

3	Levitation Spell
3	Magesight
15	Magic Bolt
6	Spell Of Many Tongues
6	Thendric's Spell Of Concealment
17	Vandular's Chaotic Corruscations
11	More spells of the GM's creation (11 points' worth)

Talents

6	Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)
---	-------------------------

Skills

3	KS: Arcane And Occult Lore 13-
3	KS: Legends And Lore 13-
1	Language: 1 point's worth (player's choice)
1	Literacy
15	Power: Magic 19-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 90

Total Cost: 175

175 Matching Complications (50)

- 10 **Hunted:** Shattered Skull orc tribe (Infrequently, Mo Pow, Limited Geographical Area, Kill)
- 15 **Hunted:** Gardak the Necromancer (Infrequently, Mo Pow, Kill)
- 15 **Psychological Complication:** Honorable (Common, Strong)
- 10 **Social Complication:** Feared By The Common Folk (Frequently, Minor)

Total Complications Points: 50

Experience Points: 0

Typical Equipment

- Staff (used as a club — 4d6 Normal Damage, STR Min 10)
- Dagger (HKA 1d6-1 STR Min 6)
- Cloth Armor (PD 1/ED 1)
- Silver medallion (a gift from his first master)
- Wineskin of fine wine

END





MARTIAL ARTS: NINJA HERO

Masters of unarmed combat, able to take on armies of armed men and defeat them using just bare hands and feet. Feuds and rivalries between different schools of the fighting arts. Characters with such acrobatic prowess that they can literally run right up walls! This type of excitement and action, and more, characterizes the martial arts genre.

Campaign Guidelines And Standards

In *HERO System* terms, most *Ninja Hero* campaigns are Heroic, with characters built on the Standard Heroic 175 Total Points with 50 points of Matching Complications. But some martial arts subgenres — wuxia and video-game, for example — require more points, so that players can create characters able to perform fantastic stunts and feats. Some even verge into the Superheroic. In Heroic *Ninja Hero* campaigns, characters typically obtain normal equipment with in-game money instead of Character Points, are subject to Characteristic Maxima by default, and use the Hit Location rules and many other such options.

Genre Conventions And Features

Regardless of the point totals or characters involved, the themes of martial arts adventures remain basically the same from subgenre to subgenre. Some of the more common “bits” include:

Amazing fighting prowess: Of course, every player character and important NPC in a *Ninja Hero* campaign has the *Martial Arts Skill* — indeed, many characters know every maneuver in their chosen style, and some have studied multiple styles. Competition between fighters to prove that “my kung fu is better than your kung fu!” occurs frequently. Combats in a martial arts campaign, if properly described and envisioned, can be spectacular!

To bolster their fighting skills, many *Ninja Hero* characters buy Combat Skill Levels. Other common Skills include Defense Maneuver, Fast Draw, Two-Weapon Fighting, and Weapon Familiarity. Talents like Combat Luck, Combat Sense, Danger Sense, and Lightning Reflexes are also worth considering.

Masters and students: Most characters have to learn martial arts from someone — a master. In most *Ninja Hero* adventures, the PCs’ master is old, wise, and skilled, but too feeble or slow to oppose the enemies of his school or style (thus, the job falls to the PCs). Masters of evil or rival schools are often more robust, since they represent a major opponent for the PCs to overcome. But first, of course, the enemy master makes the PCs fight his students and lieutenants, and observes them as they do so.

Within a given school, the PCs can also develop friendships and rivalries with fellow students. Sometimes the worst enemy they can face is not another master, but a former comrade who’s turned against them out of greed, wickedness, or misunderstanding.

Ninja: These stealthy, supremely skilled spy-assassin-scouts appear in numerous martial arts stories. In some cases, they are utterly deadly — even one of them is enough to challenge an entire group of PCs. In other stories, they’re like Nazis in *Pulp Hero* games — standard “cannon fodder” for the heroes to wade through on their way to the *really* dangerous opponents. Sometimes they even function as comic relief.

Personal honor and sacrifice: To a *Ninja Hero* character, his personal honor (however defined) is everything. It dictates how he lives his life, whom he serves, and the way he conducts himself in a fight or crisis. At times, the course of an adventure puts him in the untenable position of having to do something terrible to uphold his honor, or violate his honor to do the “right thing” (like keeping a promise to a dying friend). That, however, plays into a related element of the genre, the theme of personal sacrifice. *Ninja Hero* PCs often have to give something of themselves — up to and including their lives — to accomplish a noble goal. And that’s fine; they usually don’t even blink an eye at what’s required. To refuse would, after all, be dishonorable.

In *HERO System* terms, many martial artists take Psychological Complications such as *Code Of Honor* or *Honorable* to reflect this element of the genre.

Revenge: Many *Ninja Hero* plots are driven by a desire for revenge — whether it's the PCs or their enemies seeking it. An ancient defeat, a real (or supposed) insult, or any action that causes dishonor can lead to a quest for vengeance. Often revenge is a to-the-death affair; the story only ends when the target of the revenge is killed, or kills his antagonist.

Rivalries and feuds: Related to both the “master and student” and “revenge” elements is the theme of rivalries and feuds. Clans, martial arts schools, and specific characters often develop rivalries with their peers, which sometimes develop into feuds lasting for generations. Dealing with these conflicts and their consequences can occupy a lot of the PCs' time and energy.

The supernatural: Ghosts, curses, prophecies, and strange Oriental magic abound in many *Ninja Hero* campaigns. Sometimes the PCs themselves can work magic, but more often magic is used against them as they oppose evil Chinese sorcerers, fearful undead minions, and the like.

Character Archetypes

Since martial arts campaigns can vary wildly among different subgenres and time periods, it's sometimes difficult to pin down distinctive archetypes common to the genre. But certain character types, often defined more by personal philosophy, lifestyle, and fighting style than common powers or equipment, do exist. They include:

THE AMERICAN FROM THE ORIENT

This character is a Westerner who's lived in the Orient so long, or spent so much time in Chinatown, that he's become an expert on the culture, and adopted Eastern philosophies and fighting styles. Even if he mixes in a few Americanisms, his behavior is more Asian than American.

To create a character like this, you need to mix a few distinctive Background Skills, Perks, and Complications into the usual martial artist character sheet — things like City Knowledges of American cities, or Contacts in the American government or business community.

THE HONORABLE NINJA

This character is a member of a ninja clan who, for reasons of his own, has turned his back on the wicked and/or mercenary ways of his brethren to walk a brighter path. He now uses his skills and abilities for noble and honorable causes, such as preventing evil landlords from throwing hapless widows and orphans out into the street.

THE IRRITABLE STUDENT

An Irritable Student, unlike most of his fellows, is hot-tempered and easily frustrated. He's got a lot of talent and potential, but he chafes under the slow and philosophical pace of instruction set by his master. He wants to learn how to fight, not perform meaningless chores! In the best martial arts stories, the Irritable Student eventually comes to understand the value of his master's choices, but never wholly loses his slightly renegade approach to the martial arts.

In the *HERO System*, you can create the Irritable Student by giving your martial artist an appropriate Psychological Complication, such as *Aggressively Impatient*. He should start the game with a minimal number of maneuvers and related Skills. As the game progresses, he quickly learns other maneuvers and abilities, thanks to his natural potential.

THE KICKBOXING COP

The Kickboxing Cop is a law enforcement officer (or sometimes soldier) who uses his martial arts skills to keep himself safe on the streets and get his job done. Often considered something of a hothead or a renegade, he keeps his position because he consistently gets results when other cops are stymied.

In addition to buying an appropriate Martial Arts style (often Kung Fu or Karate), when building a Kickboxing Cop you need to select some cop Skills and abilities for him: Criminology, Deduction, Streetwise, various KSs, WF: Small Arms, Fringe Benefit: Local Police Powers, and so forth.

THE MONK

This character is a religious ascetic, often on a pilgrimage from one temple to another, or on a mission to seek alms or help for the poor. Modest, unassuming, and quiet, he looks like a helpless pushover to bandits and thugs — but in truth he's mastered the martial arts and can easily look out for himself. After his attention is attracted to some injustice, he uses his skills to help right it and save innocent people from oppression and evil.

The best way to represent the Monk in a *Ninja Hero* game (besides his fighting style) is with certain Complications — Psychological Complications for vows of poverty or a requirement to help those in need, Social Complications reflecting his place in a rigidly hierarchical society, Destitute, and so forth. Certain Fringe Benefits (like *Right To Marry* or *Right To Shelter*) are also appropriate.

THE NAIVE HERO

The Naive Hero (or Heroine) possesses tremendous fighting skills — but little or no knowledge of the world outside the temple, monastery, or compound where he's been training most of his life. He's so sheltered that he's easily fooled by con artists and villains, which can lead to situations both comedic and tragic.

The Naive Hero should have a lot of points in Martial Arts and related Skills and abilities, plus appropriate Complications such as Psychological Complication: *Naive*.

THE SAMURAI

Most appropriate to games set in medieval Japan, the Samurai is a warrior trained in the use of the katana (and other Japanese weapons), and who follows a special code of honor called *bushido*. Bushido mandates obedience to one's liege-lord, resolute acceptance of death and danger, and personal sacrifices when necessary to achieve one's goals. Masterless samurai, or *ronin*, also exist, and often become mercenaries or troublemakers.

Characters in other places and times often adopt the samurai mentality (and even training), and so qualify for this archetype. In some campaigns (such as *Star Hero* games), characters may encounter entire races or species that qualify as "samurai" for game purposes.

The Samurai should have one or more appropriate Martial Arts styles (definitely Kenjutsu, possibly also Jujutsu), plus other warrior skills. *Code Of Bushido* is a Psychological Complication.

THE UNWILLING FIGHTER

This character, although possessed of tremendous fighting skills, is reluctant to use them. He's a pacifist, or for some other reason eschews violence. Unfortunately, the events of the story inevitably sweep him up and put him in a position where he has to fight — often to seek vengeance on evil men who've wronged him or his loved ones.

You can build an Unwilling Fighter similar to a naive hero — lots of points in Martial Arts and related abilities, plus a Psychological Complication like *Pacifist* (Common, Total; 20 points).

Subgenres

Although most types of *Ninja Hero* campaigns do share some story themes, features, and archetypes, they also have some significant differences. Some of the subgenres of this genre include:

REALISTIC MARTIAL ARTS

A realistic martial arts story or campaign involves plenty of fighting action, but attempts to model the "real world" fairly closely. The PCs cannot perform incredible stunts, there is no element of the supernatural, and so forth. The characters' enemies include rival martial artists, criminals, Asian organized crime, and so forth.

Realistic martial arts campaigns are Heroic, with characters typically built on 175 Total Points with 75 points of Matching Complications.

CINEMATIC MARTIAL ARTS

Cinematic martial arts are a sort of intermediary step between "realistic" and "wuxia" — the events, characters, and abilities portrayed veer away from absolute realism, but not into the completely outrageous. Many martial arts action movies fall into this category.

Cinematic martial arts campaigns are usually Heroic, but with higher point totals than realistic campaigns (Powerful or Very Powerful Heroes).

8



WUXIA MARTIAL ARTS

Wuxia (“woo-shee”) ratchets the action and spectacular effects of a cinematic martial arts campaign up a notch. In a *wuxia* campaign, characters can run up walls, stand on thin branches or narrow poles to fight, leap tremendous distances, and perform other impossible feats. Many have their own “secret” fighting techniques, honed by years of practice.

Wuxia PCs are usually Superheroic, either Low-Powered or Standard. This gives them enough points to buy all the amazing powers they have. They should normally pay points for weapons and equipment as well (especially since many of them use unique, or uniquely powerful, weapons).

VIDEO-GAME MARTIAL ARTS

This style of martial arts campaign simulates American and Japanese “fighting” video games. In some ways it mingles with *Champions*, in that the characters are often extremely unusual (aliens, lizardmen, cyborgs, and so forth) or possess blatant superpowers (like armored skin, fiery fists, or energy projection). The characters are built on a Standard Superheroic scale.

ANIME MARTIAL ARTS

“Anime” martial arts campaigns derive from or imitate Japanese animated cartoons. These campaigns can take place in any time period or setting the GM desires; what sets them apart are the incredible powers displayed by the characters — powers even more amazing than those of video-game martial artists. They can project energy bolts powerful enough to affect entire buildings, punch someone a hundred times in the blink of an eye, run so fast others can only see their afterimages, transform their bodies into stone or metal, and so forth. They’re built using Superheroic guidelines (the GM determines the exact level and amount of points, based on the setting for the game).

Sample Character

Here’s a sample cinematic martial arts character, Yeung Li, for you to use if you like. You can easily beef him up to *wuxia* or greater levels by changing the campaign parameters and giving him more points.

Yeung Li

Background/History: Yeung Li was abandoned on the doorstep of a monastery by his mother and grew up among the monks in their cloistered society. He spent all his time doing chores and practicing martial arts. Today, grown into a young man, he is strong and fit, and a skilled fighter.

Due to an unfortunate circumstance, Yeung Li was forced to leave the monastery to seek his fortune in the wide world. The head monk had a mistress, Ma Mei, who developed an affection for Li instead — an affection he returned. The head monk cast him out in disgrace, into a world he knew very little about. Still consumed by jealousy, the head monk often pursues Yeung Li, or has friends who owe him favors harass the young man. Thanks to their influence, Yeung Li is widely regarded as a hotheaded troublemaker, causing local officials to keep a careful eye on him (even though, in truth, he’s unassuming and heroic).

Yeung Li ran into difficulties almost as soon as he left the monastery. While traveling to the nearest town, he encountered some bandits robbing a family. Without a thought for his own safety, he leapt into the fray and drove the robbers off with his fierce fighting. Unfortunately, the thugs were part of a large and influential gang led by Shòu Min, the notorious “Bandit Queen” of the central provinces. Furious that one man could thwart her desires so easily, Shòu has ordered her men to track him and kill him on sight.

Unaware of Shòu Min’s enmity toward him, Yeung Li continues his journey, never seeking adventure, but always seeming to find it somehow.

Personality/Motivation: Yeung Li is a classic Naive Hero. Though quite skilled at fighting, and possessed of a strong sense of honor and desire to right wrongs, he knows little of the world at large, or of the ways people interact with each other. He’s constantly committing *faux pas* and having to apologize or otherwise make amends. Despite these difficulties, he remains intensely curious about the world around him. He’s eager to meet new people, see new sites, and do new things.

Quote: “There is more to kung fu than knowing how to punch or kick. There is honor, there is understanding.”

Powers/Tactics: Yeung Li is a gifted practitioner of the martial arts, who’s been studying Long Fist Kung Fu for nearly all his life. He favors punches and throws in most situations. If necessary, he can use his *jien* (broadsword) or *chiang* (spear), but he usually prefers to rely on fists and feet rather than sharpened steel.

Appearance: Yeung Li is a young Chinese man of average appearance. He wears the typical robes of a monk (usually quite dusty from his travels, and perhaps a bit scuffed or torn after his fights), and carries himself with a monk’s demeanor.

YEUNG LI

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
20	STR	10	13-	Lift 400 kg; 4d6 HTH damage [2]
18	DEX	16	13-	
18	CON	8	13-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
6	OCV	15		
6	DCV	15		
3	OMCV	0		
3	DMCV	0		
4	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
8	PD	6		Total: 8 PD (0 rPD)
6	ED	4		Total: 6 ED (0 rED)
6	REC	2		
30	END	2		
10	BODY	0		
30	STUN	5		

Total Characteristics Cost: 108

Movement: Running: 18m
Leaping: 14m



Cost Powers END

Martial Arts: Long Fist Kung Fu

Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4 Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4 Dodge	+0	+5	Dodge all attacks, Abort
5 Kick	-2	+1	10d6 Strike
4 Knife Hand	-2	+0	HKA 1d6+1 (3d6 with STR)
4 Punch	+0	+2	8d6 Strike
3 Throw	+0	+1	6d6 +vel/5, Target Falls
4 Tien-hsueh Strike	-1	+1	3d6 NND (1)
8	+2 Damage Classes (already added in)		

6 **Swift:** Running +6m (18m total) 1
5 **Leap Of The Grasshopper:** Leaping +10m (14m forward, 7m upward) 1

Skills

5 +1 with Kung Fu
3 Acrobatics 13-
3 Breakfall 13-
3 Stealth 13-
6 WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons, Common Martial Arts Weapons

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 67

Total Cost: 175

175 Matching Complications (50)

20 **Hunted:** Shòu Min and her bandit gang (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Kill)
15 **Psychological Complication:** Honorable And Noble-hearted; Must Help Those In Need And Fight Fairly (Common, Strong)
15 **Rivalry:** Professional and Romantic (with head of monastery regarding fighting prowess and the affections of Ma Mei; Rival Seeks To Harm/Kill Yeung Li)

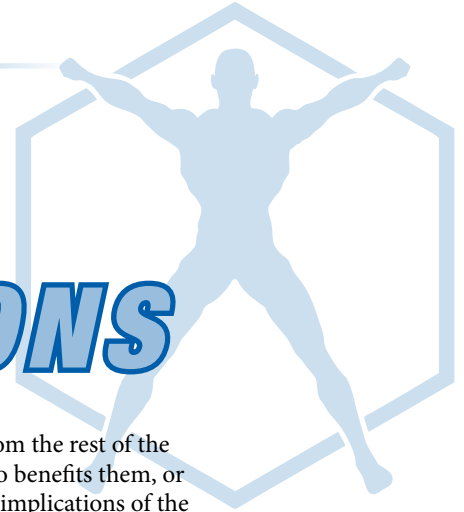
Total Complications Points: 50

Experience Points: 0

Typical Equipment

Jien (Chinese broadsword; HKA 1d6, STR Min 10)
Chiang (Chinese spear; HKA 1d6+1 or HA +3d6, STR Min 12)
Monk's clothes and accouterments

MODERN-DAY ACTION-ADVENTURE: DARK CHAMPIONS



Well-armed costumed vigilantes, opposing killers and crime syndicates the police can't possibly hope to stop. Suave spies dressed to the nines but ready to spring into action at the drop of a poker chip. Criminals more evil, more cruel, than any four-color supervillain. Soldiers, mercenaries, assassins, and terrorists. All these people, and many more, inhabit the world of *Dark Champions* — a world of action, adventure, and deadly excitement.

Campaign Guidelines And Standards

In *HERO System* terms, *Dark Champions* campaigns are usually Heroic, typically with Powerful or Standard characters. Characters typically obtain normal equipment with in-game money instead of Character Points, are subject to Characteristic Maxima by default, and use the Hit Location rules and many other such options.

Genre Conventions And Features

Dark Champions campaigns can vary pretty dramatically from one GM to another, but most share certain features or elements. These include:

Gritty, dramatic action: First and foremost, *Dark Champions* games are characterized by a sort of “gritty, dramatic realism” and action. They feature characters who are more or less “realistic” — ordinary humans, not superhumans, using training, equipment, and their wits to overcome obstacles and enemies. They take place more or less in the “real world,” even if weird phenomena or paranormal abilities and beings exist in the shadows. They focus on the problems and perils of the real world — organized and disorganized crime, societal decay, terrorism, war — rather than on the fanciful plots of supervillains or dark overlords.

Conspiracy: In many modern-day action stories, conspiracy plays a significant part. The characters often find themselves opposing, or even manipulated by, shadowy cabals of power-brokers who

want to conceal something from the rest of the world (either because doing so benefits them, or to protect humanity from the implications of the secret facts). The characters often find themselves in situations where things aren't as they seem, or where they don't have all the facts — thus forcing them to take extra steps to outwit their enemies and learn the truth.

Espionage: Espionage — ranging from the relative realism of John Le Carré novels to the over-the-top “spywork” of James Bond movies — factors into many *Dark Champions* campaigns. The characters (one, some, or all of them) may be spies, or have received training from an intelligence agency (either a real one, like the CIA, or a fictitious one created by the GM). Or they may find themselves entangled in espionage matters during the course of their adventures.

Guns and violence: *Dark Champions* is all about action, and that action often involves violence — be it a car chase, a brawl, or, most likely of all, a gunfight. Most *Dark Champions* characters go around heavily armed, ready at all times to defend themselves from their enemies or put a stop to crime.

Hot cars and cool gear: In addition to guns, *Dark Champions* characters use all sorts of gear and technological resources. From expensive sportscars (often tricked out with hidden weapons and gadgets), to high-tech lockpicks and security scramblers, to the latest laptops specially prepared for hacking and data theft, they've got all sorts of gear to help them get the job done.

Military and government: *Dark Champions* characters are as likely to find themselves involved in military or governmental matters as espionage. Many of them have military training in their backgrounds, and depending on the nature of the campaign they may still be in the military (and thus have the Social Complication *Subject To Orders*). Military-oriented adventures may include rescuing a lost or trapped group of soldiers, preventing the theft of nuclear or biological weapons (or recovering them after they've been stolen), or conducting special forces-style raids or assaults against targets designated by the characters' superiors.

Character Archetypes

In the *Dark Champions* genre, character archetypes are typically defined by the Skills they commonly possess and most frequently use during adventures, though a few (such as the Vigilante) are more defined by their attitude and activities. In many campaigns, each archetype essentially has a specific “job” within the team, based on his abilities (though a good team has enough overlap between characters’ abilities to keep it from becoming too dependent on any one member).

THE HACKER

The Hacker is a technology expert. As the name indicates, he’s usually got a high *Computer Programming* Skill, but most hackers go beyond that, learning *Electronics*, *Security Systems*, and/or *Systems Operation* in addition to whatever other abilities they might possess. If the team needs to retrieve some data from an encrypted hard drive, or plant a virus in an enemy’s system, the Hacker’s the man for the job.

THE SECURITY SPECIALIST

Often similar to the Hacker in many ways, the Security Specialist is an expert at infiltration and retrieval — breaking and entering, theft, and similar tasks. His Skills usually include *Concealment*, *Electronics*, *Lockpicking*, *Security Systems*, and *Stealth*, among others.

THE SOLDIER

The Soldier is a combat expert. Most *Dark Champions* characters have at least some combat abilities — a WF or two, if nothing else — but the soldier has special combat training. Often a veteran of a special force or elite unit, he not only has plenty of WFs, but often *Autofire Skills*, *Demolitions*, *Martial Arts*, *Stealth*, *Tactics*, *TFs*, and *Weaponsmith*. He usually carries the heaviest weapons in the group.

THE SPY

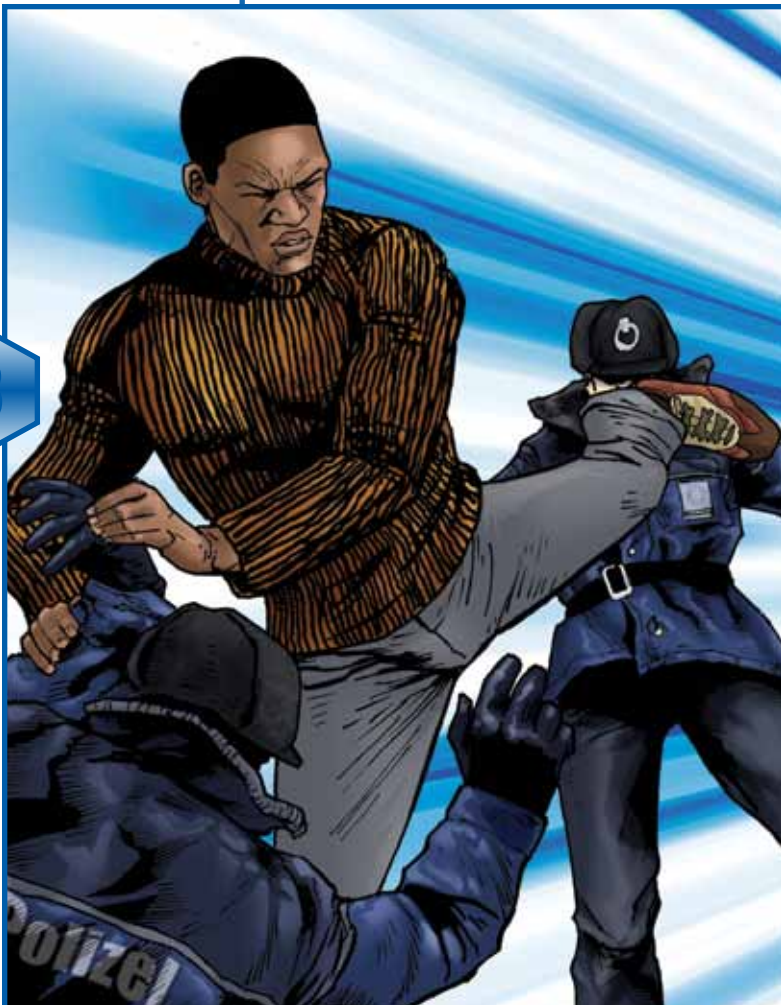
Trained in the arts of espionage, spycraft, and intelligence-gathering, a Spy has an eclectic blend of skills covering many subjects: guile and trickery (*Acting*, *Charm*, *Disguise*, *Mimicry*); covert information-gathering (*Bugging*, *Computer Programming*, *Conversation*, *Shadowing*); and combat (*Demolitions*, *Martial Arts*, *WFs*). Many spy characters have to pick one area to “specialize” in, then gradually expand the scope of their abilities as the campaign progresses. In keeping with the James Bond tradition, many have *Striking Appearance* and Skills like *Gambling* or *High Society*.

THE VIGILANTE

The Vigilante is a character who, disgusted with the rampant crime in modern society, has taken it upon himself to put an end to it — whether by beating up criminals and leaving them for the police, or more extreme methods. Often defined by his *Complications* (particularly *Psychological Complications* like *Obsessed With Crimefighting* or *Devoted To Justice*) as much as by his abilities, he can be a complex and intriguing character to play. He has a generous helping of combat Skills, plus Skills like *Computer Programming*, *Stealth*, and *Streetwise*.

THE WHEELMAN

A Wheelman is a specialist in driving and/or piloting. He’s the team’s getaway man, the guy who provides cover support, and the person everyone relies on when the bad guys try to get away by starting a car chase. *Combat Driving* and/or *Combat Piloting* are musts for this character, along with *Mechanics* and a generous helping of *Transport Familiarities*. Beyond that, the Wheelman often has support Skills that allow him to back up other members of his team.



Subgenres

Although they have a lot of overlap in most cases, there are several distinct subgenres in *Dark Champions*. They include:

VIGILANTE CRIMEFIGHTING

In its purest form, *Dark Champions* is about what its title refers to: vigilante crimefighting in a comic book style. Taking its cue from heroes such as Batman, the Question, and the Punisher, it features characters who, though often dressed in costumes of some sort, lack true superpowers. Instead, they get by with Skills, training, gadgets, and weapons (often special ones of their own devising). Depending on the GM's preferences, the game can become extremely grim and gritty, or remain closer to its roots in four-color comics.

DARK CHAMPIONS: THE ANIMATED SERIES

If a *Dark Champions* game gets *too* close to its four-color roots, what emerges is a sort of hybrid subgenre called *Dark Champions: The Animated Series*. DC:TAS campaigns typically feature characters who have the Psychological Complication *Code Versus Killing* (a rarity in this genre), and also more than a few other bits and pieces from the superhero genre: weird costumed villains, impossible technology, and the like. “Theme” villains, each patterning his costume, abilities, and crimes around a favored, but bizarre, concept (like puzzles, an animal type, or dark comedy), appear frequently.

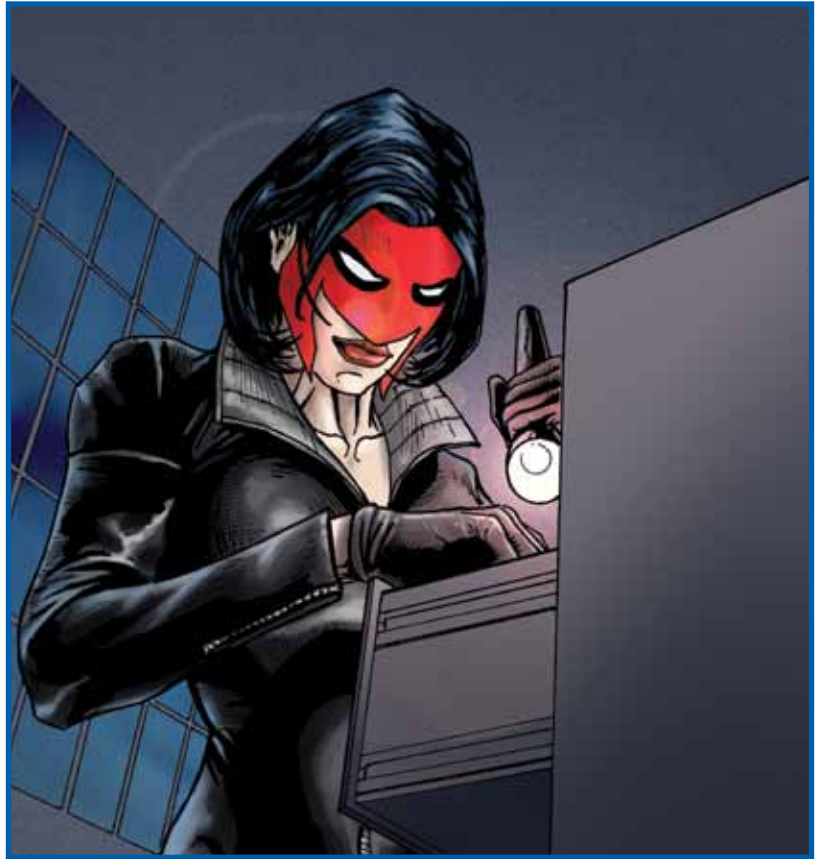
ESPIONAGE

Espionage campaigns (sometimes known as *Danger International* games) focus on the “great game” of intelligence-gathering and political intrigue. Typically they occur in the modern era or during the Cold War period, but sometimes GMs create fun variants, such as espionage-Fantasy or espionage-Science Fiction. The characters' opponents include enemy spies, enemy soldiers, terrorists, assassins, double agents, and large-scale criminal organizations (often fictitious ones, such as James Bond's long-time adversary SPECTRE).

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Some *Dark Champions* campaigns cast the characters in the role of law enforcement officers — anything from beat cops, to FBI agents, to members of a department's special crimes unit. The emphasis is usually on action and excitement, with gamers taking their cues from police movies like *Lethal Weapon*, rather than on true police procedure (which is often dull).

Characters in a law enforcement campaign usually have a Template to provide them with the mandatory Skills and abilities they need to function as cops. These include Streetwise, WF: Small Arms, and Fringe Benefit: Local Police Powers, among others.



MILITARY ACTION/SPECIAL OPS

In a military game, the characters are all soldiers of some kind — typically special forces operatives, or some sort of elite unit. Alternately, they may be mercenaries of some kind. In either case, the characters are called on or hired to do what they do best: fight, capture, destroy, and emerge victorious. They may have to pin down an enemy regiment so it can't get to a battle elsewhere, sneak into a heavily-guarded installation to rescue hostages or steal valuable technology, or lead the invasion of an enemy nation. Compared to other *Dark Champions* characters, military PCs usually have access to much more firepower and force, and have a much greater chance of effecting lasting change in the world around them.

WEIRD CONSPIRACY

Popularized by television shows such as *The X-Files*, this subgenre introduces an element of the weird and the occult into *Dark Champions*. The premise of the campaign is that there's more out there than humanity knows about (or can comfortably acknowledge), and the PCs have to both investigate this concept and deal with its ramifications. In a weird conspiracy game, things like aliens and UFOs, Bigfoot, cults with magic (albeit low-powered magic) that actually works, bizarre genetic throwbacks of men and animals, and much, much more actually exist. The genre also often features conspiratorial groups trying to hide or exploit these phenomena for vague and shadowy reasons the Player Characters can never quite pin down. Investigation, mystery, and an eerie feel are the hallmarks of this subgenre, not gunfights and car chases.

Sample Characters

To get you started in this genre, here are two sample characters: the Verdict, a *Dark Champions* vigilante; and Alena Drake, a spy working for the CIA.

The Verdict

Background/History: After completing a tour of duty in the U.S. Army, Robert Markham returned home, attended law school, and got a job with the local public defender's office. He worked there for nearly a decade, becoming progressively more and more disgusted with "the system." Every day it was his job to try to free people so socially maladjusted, so dangerous, that they ought to be locked up forever, not given a slap on the wrist. The final straw was when a client he'd successfully defended robbed him, beating him half to death in the process.

After he healed, Robert quit the PD's office — it wasn't the place for him anymore. He should be *opposing* the criminals, not helping them. And not by joining the prosecutor's office, either; it was time for... more *direct* action.

After withdrawing his life savings from the bank, Robert vanished. He spent over a year intensively training and studying, building himself into a warrior capable of taking on the scum of

the underworld on their own turf and beating them. He acquired weapons, and even designed a distinctive suit of form-fitting body armor to protect himself from bullets and knives.

Since appearing on the streets last year, the vigilante who's identified himself only as "the Verdict" has been responsible for over 20 killings and many more brutal assaults. While the criminal element (except for the Cabróna mob, whom he's badly damaged with several raids) doesn't take the threat he poses seriously — yet — the police certainly do. A botched attack on a crackhouse several weeks ago, which was captured on film by a nearby TV camera crew, has brought him firmly into the public eye. He now finds himself completely isolated, pursued by both the law and the underworld, without anyone to turn to for help.

At least he knows who his enemies are.

Personality/Motivation: The Verdict's war on crime is motivated by two feelings. The first, and most important, is his devotion to the concept of right and wrong. He has a strong sense of justice, and it dismays him when those who deserve punishment somehow escape it. His most common targets are criminals who've escaped the law due to "loopholes," or who have so far eluded capture.

The Verdict's other motivation, one he'd never admit to, is vengeance. Robert Markham has a vengeful streak to him, which is one reason why it took an attack on him personally to finally turn him into a vigilante. Anyone who defeats or humiliates him becomes the complete focus of his attention until he gets even with them. It remains to be seen whether his desire for justice will ultimately diminish his vengeful nature, or his vengefulness will overwhelm him and his crusade.

Quote: "I'm not the judge or the jury, just the Verdict. And the Verdict... is death!"

Powers/Tactics: Since he fights crime by himself, the Verdict is cautious. He prefers to investigate a target thoroughly before attacking, using Skills like Bugging, Bureaucratics, Computer Programming, Criminology, Disguise, Lockpicking, and Shadowing to get the information he needs. Then he strikes at the most opportune moment — when his target is most vulnerable.

The Verdict prefers to use two customized .44 Automags. As a backup, he has a Walther PPK-S, with a silencer he can attach to it for times when stealth is necessary. He also carries two knives (one on the back of his belt, and another concealed in a boot) and a taser (for targets he needs to capture alive).

Appearance: The Verdict wears a suit of custom-designed body armor, complete with helmet. The armor is black, with dark red highlights; numerous straps and buckles reveal how it's fastened to his body. Robert Markham is a man in his early 30s, obviously fit and muscular, with piercing grey eyes, black hair, and a short black moustache and beard.



THE VERDICT

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 HTH damage [1]
15	DEX	10	12-	
18	CON	8	13-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll 12-
12	EGO	2	11-	
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
5	OCV	10		
5	DCV	10		
3	OMCV	0		
3	DMCV	0		
4	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
6	PD	4		Total: 9 PD (3 rPD)
4	ED	2		Total: 7 ED (3 rED)
6	REC	2		
35	END	3		
14	BODY	4		
30	STUN	5		

Total Characteristics Cost: 100

Movement: Running: 14m

Cost Powers

END

Martial Arts: Commando Training

Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
3 Aikido Throw	+0	+1	3d6 + vel/5, Target Falls
4 Boxing Cross	+0	+2	5d6
4 Choke	-2	+0	Grab One Limb, 2d6 NND (2)
4 Karate "Chop"	-2	+0	½d6 HKA (1d6+1 with STR)
4 Kung Fu Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort

2 Swift: Running +2m (14m total)	1
6 Sharp Senses: +2 PER with all Sense Groups	0

Perks

1 Fringe Benefit: License To Practice Law

Talents

6 Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)

Skills

20 +2 with All Combat
8 +1 with Ranged Combat
3 Acting 13-
3 Bugging 12-
3 Bureaucratics 13-
3 Combat Driving 12-
3 Computer Programming 12-
3 Concealment 12-
3 Criminology 12-
3 Deduction 12-
3 Disguise 12-
1 Electronics 8-
3 Fast Draw (Small Arms) 12-
3 Forensic Medicine 12-
3 KS: Criminal Law 12-
3 KS: (Campaign City) Underworld 12-
3 Lockpicking 12-
2 PS: Attorney 11-
3 Security Systems 12-
3 Shadowing 12-
3 Stealth 12-
3 Streetwise 13-
3 TF: Common Motorized Ground Vehicles, Two-Wheeled Motorized Ground Vehicles
3 WF: Small Arms, Blades

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 125

Total Cost: 225

225 Matching Complications (50)

20 Hunted: Cabrona Mafia Family (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Kill)
0 Hunted: Police (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
20 Psychological Complication: Devoted To Justice (Very Common, Strong)
10 Negative Reputation: murderous, out-of-control vigilante (Infrequently, Extreme)
0 Social Complication: Secret Identity (Robert Markham) (Frequently, Major)

Total Complications Points: 50

Experience Points: 0

Typical Equipment

.44 Automag (RKA 2d6, +1 Increased STUN Multiplier, 7 shots, two extra clips)
 Another .44 Automag
 Walther PPK-S (RKA 1d6, +1 OCV, -1 RMod, 7 shots)
 Silencer for Walther
 Taser (Blast 6d6, NND [defense is insulated rED]; No Range, 6 Charges)
 Knives (2) (HKA 1d6-1, STR Min 4)
 Customized Body Resistant Protection (6 PD/6 ED)

Alena Drake

Background/History: The daughter of a career diplomat and a political science professor, Alena Drake had an interest in government from an early age. Her excellent college grades, and equally good performance on federal service exams, earned her a job in the State Department. That, in turn, brought her to the attention of certain officials in the CIA who, recognizing her potential for intelligence work, arranged to have her transferred to the Agency.

After an extensive and grueling period of training, Drake began her career as a field agent. Since then she's performed admirably on several assignments. But she's not been without her share of mishaps and disasters; one mission resulted in a short but extremely unpleasant period of confinement that's left her mildly claustrophobic, and another revealed her activities to a Russian Mafia organization that's been trying to eliminate her ever since. But whatever challenges lie ahead, she's confident she can handle them.

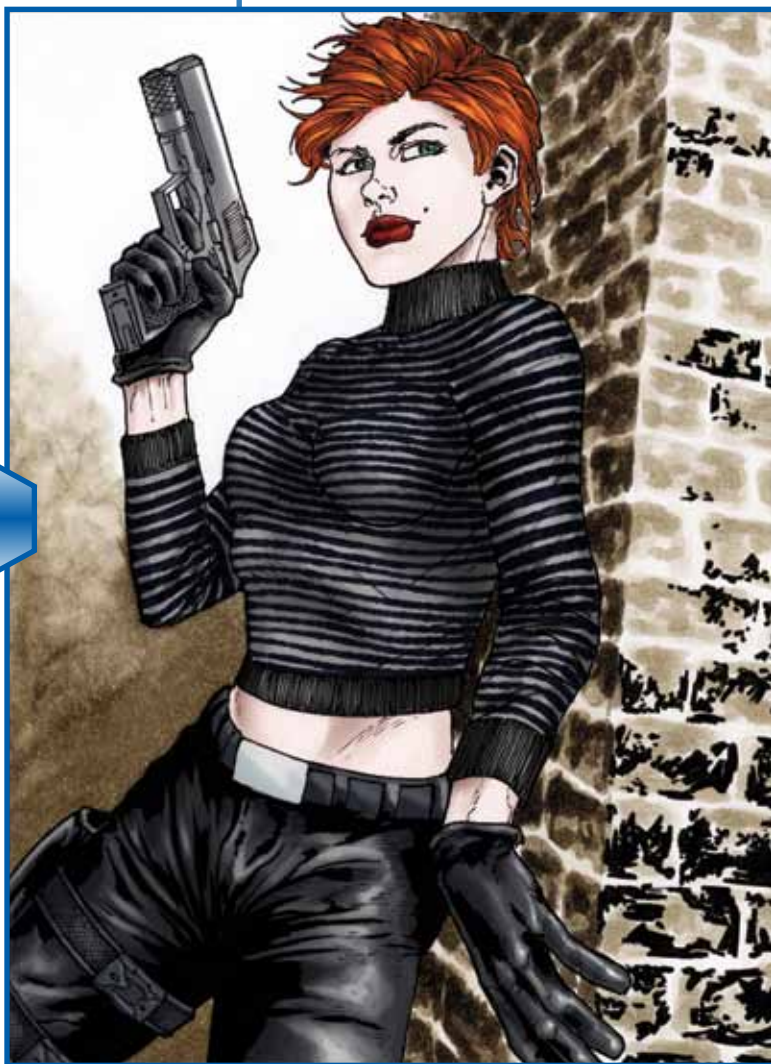
Personality/Motivation: Alena Drake is capable, self-assured, cool-headed in times of crisis, and quick-thinking. In short, she has attributes that make her well-suited to field work as an espionage agent. The only thing that tends to impair her efficiency is her curiosity; she's all too often tempted to stick her neck out just a little too far to learn about something that seems important or interesting.

Quote: "Please, General, tell me more. Your work is so fascinating to someone like me who knows nothing of military matters!"

Powers/Tactics: Alena Drake typically works "undercover," using a cover identity (Monica Rossington, wealthy dilettante) established for her by the CIA. This allows her to mingle with the rich and powerful without seeming threatening. Her supposed riches and obvious good looks gain her entrance to many places a male agent could never go.

Drake typically carries few (if any) weapons, preferring to rely on her wits as much as possible. For times when danger threatens, she keeps her Holdout Pistol (a small firearm specially designed for her by the Agency) hidden on her person, as well as other weapons and gear disguised as ordinary items. If she can't get to a weapon, she'll use her Aikido.

Appearance: Tall and slender, with an attractive figure, Alena Drake tends to grab attention wherever she goes. Short auburn hair frames her pretty face, with its green eyes. As Monica Rossington, she usually affects a slightly bored and distracted air; but when on the job in her true identity, she's focused, attentive, and wary.



ALENA DRAKE

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 HTH damage [1]
18	DEX	16	13-	
14	CON	4	12-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll 13-
14	EGO	4	12-	
18	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack: 3½d6
5	OCV	10		
6	DCV	15		
3	OMCV	0		
3	DMCV	0		
4	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
4	PD	2		Total: 7 PD (3 rPD)
3	ED	1		Total: 6 ED (3 rED)
6	REC	2		
30	END	2		
10	BODY	0		
28	STUN	4		

Total Characteristics Cost: 98

Movement: Running: 12m

Cost Powers

Martial Arts: Aikido

Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4 Dodge	—	+5	Dodge all attacks, Abort
4 Escape	+0	+0	35 STR versus Grabs
3 Hold	-1	-1	Grab Two Limbs, 30 STR for holding on
4 Joint Lock/Throw	+1	+0	Grab One Limb; 2d6 NND(1); Target Falls
5 Redirect	+1	+3	Block, Abort
3 Throw	+0	+1	4d6 + v/5; Target Falls
8	+2 Damage Classes (already added in)		

Perks

- 6 Contacts (defined by player or GM)
- 3 Fringe Benefit: Membership (CIA)
- 6 Fringe Benefit: Security Clearance (US Government)

Talents

- 6 Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)
- 3 **Beautiful:** Striking Appearance (+1/+1d6)

Skills

- 12 +1 Overall
- 3 Acting 13-
- 3 Charm 13-
- 3 Combat Driving 13-
- 1 Computer Programming 8-
- 3 Concealment 13-
- 3 Conversation 13-
- 3 Cryptography 13-
- 3 Disguise 13-
- 1 Electronics 8-
- 1 Gambling (Card Games) 8-
- 3 High Society 13-
- 3 KS: The Espionage World 13-
- 1 Language: Spanish (basic conversation; English is Native)
- 1 Language: Russian (basic conversation)
- 3 Lockpicking 13-
- 3 Persuasion 13-
- 3 PS: Spy 13-
- 3 Security Systems 13-
- 3 Shadowing 13-
- 3 Stealth 13-
- 3 Streetwise 13-
- 5 TF: Common Motorized Ground Vehicles, Basic Parachuting, Snow Skiing, Two-Wheeled Motorized Ground Vehicles
- 2 WF: Small Arms

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 127

Total Cost: 225

225 Matching Complications (50)

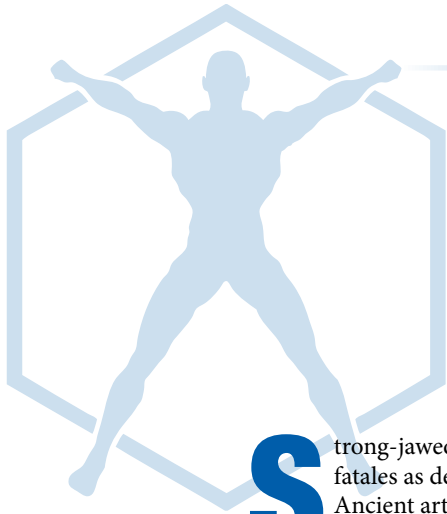
- 20 **Hunted:** enemy intelligence agency (defined by GM) (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
- 10 **Psychological Complication:** Curiosity (Common, Moderate)
- 0 **Social Complication:** Secret Identity (normally lives under the identity of Monica Rossington, wealthy dilettante) (Frequently, Major)
- 20 **Social Complication:** Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)

Total Complications Points: 50

Experience Points: 0

Typical Equipment

- Holdout Pistol (RKA 1d6+1, 4 shots)
- Lipstick Pistol (RKA 1d6, 1 shot, built into a functioning tube of lipstick)
- Jewelry Communicator (HRRP, disguised as a necklace, watch, or other piece of jewelry)
- Mission-specific covert equipment



THE PULP ERA: PULP HERO

Strong-jawed, two-fisted heroes. Femme fatales as deadly as they are beautiful. Ancient artifacts, lands of mystery, and lost civilizations. Explorers and great white hunters. The looming Nazi menace. Masked mystery men fighting the Mob with wit, skill, and thundering automatics. Weird science. Put them all together, and they mean one thing — Pulp-era adventure!

The “Pulp era” refers to the 1920s and ’30s, a time when the adventures of characters like the Shadow, Doc Savage, and Indiana Jones took place. Much of the world remains basically unexplored and strange, full of potential for exotic and dangerous adventures. With World War I past, and World War II growing ever closer, it’s a time of both great opportunities and great danger — in short, the perfect time for heroes!

Campaign Guidelines And Standards

In *HERO System* terms, *Pulp Hero* campaigns are usually Standard Heroic games, with characters built on 175 Total Points with 50 points of Matching Complications, but some feature Powerful Heroic characters instead. Characters typically obtain normal equipment with in-game money instead of Character Points, are subject to Characteristic Maxima by default, and use the Hit Location rules and many other such options.

Genre Conventions And Features

Although Pulp has a number of distinctive elements, such as the ones discussed below, the most important thing to preserve, but the hardest to grasp and use effectively, is the Pulp “feel.” Pulp-era adventures have a distinctive taste to them, one unlike any other action-adventure genre. The heroes are larger than life: strong-jawed, two-fisted, better, brighter — more grand and glorious, somehow, than heroes in other genres. Although they may appear hard-bitten and world-weary, they’re not — they’re noblehearted and true, without the bitterness and cynicism that marks so many modern-day heroes. They know a heroic attitude, a sharp mind, and a good right cross are enough to solve any problems they might encounter.

Conspiracy: Conspiracy abounds in many Pulp adventures, particularly those of the crime-fighting and mystery variety. Villains (and many heroes, for that matter) have networks of agents and contacts they use to accomplish their goals. Shadowy cabals of nefarious men plot the downfall of entire nations. Player Characters may find tackling these organizations difficult!

Exotic settings: Pulp adventures often take place in strange, mysterious, and exotic locations. Characters chase thugs down the darkened alleys of Shanghai, explore previously undiscovered lands in Africa, and duel villains to the death beside some enormous South American waterfall — they don’t just hang around the corner bar. Even in the crimefighting and mystery Pulp stories,



which often take place in a single city, characters often find hidden “grottoes” within the otherwise familiar cityscape.

Lands of mystery and lost worlds: Similarly, many Pulp adventures focus on lands of mystery, lost worlds, and hidden civilizations. Characters might discover a second “world” inside the hollow earth which they can enter through a hole in Antarctica, a South American plateau where dinosaurs still live, a long-forgotten valley in Africa where classical Greek civilization lives on, or the like. Such places are always full of excitement, intrigue, and danger.

Masterminds and mad scientists: Pulp heroes’ deadliest enemies are often masterminds who seek to use their power to rule the world, or mad scientists who have perverted their knowledge and training for selfish gain. The villains, like the heroes themselves, have a larger-than-life quality that makes them lovably easy to hate — and extremely enjoyable to defeat!

Nazis: Another common enemy in many Pulp campaigns is Nazis. With the Nazi party controlling Germany by 1933, the Nazis afflict almost half of the Pulp era with their twisted ideals and schemes of conquest. Given Hitler’s supposed interest in archaeology and the occult, GMs can even bring Nazis into games involving mysticism and weirdness. Like orcs in *Fantasy Hero* games, Nazis are the foe every Pulp hero can shoot without feeling guilty about it — though for best effect, the GM should occasionally introduce a Nazi villain who has a few noble or honorable qualities.

Science!: The pace of scientific and technological development was strong and steady during the first forty years of the twentieth century, and Pulp adventure stories take advantage of that fact. In addition to regular science and gadgetry, “weird science” — in the form of primitive jetpacks, devices able to pull meteors down from the skies to devastate entire cities, and more — also appears from time to time. Used properly, weird science can add a lot to Pulp adventures; just be careful not to overdo it.

You can create weird science gadgets using Powers (and sometimes Talents or Skills). Most have Limitations like *Activation Roll*, *Concentration*, *Extra Time*, or *Requires A Skill Roll* to reflect their primitive nature, tendency to breakdown, and the like.

Sidekicks: Pulp heroes often have sidekicks, agents, friends, and/or servants to help them. The Shadow’s corps of agents, Doc Savage’s five friends, and the Spider’s faithful manservant Ram Singh all participate in their adventures to some degree (even if only to get captured, thus providing the hero with plenty of motivation to defeat the villain). In some *Pulp Hero* campaigns, the Player Characters may actually *be* agents or “followers,” with their master a shadowy figure who occasionally gives them instructions.

Character Archetypes

The list of Pulp archetypes is just about endless, given the many “stock” characters that showed up in Pulp stories. Some of the more common, and appealing to RPG players, include:

THE AVIATOR

In the 1920s and ’30s, air travel is still a new, exciting, and often dangerous undertaking. “Barnstormers” and pilots are daring men, given to thrillseeking and adventure, and thus make perfect pulp heroes. An aviator character needs Combat Piloting, Mechanics, Navigation (Air), and all appropriate TFs, plus a few other Skills to give him things to do when his plane is on the ground.

THE EXPLORER

The explorer archetype includes any character driven to investigate and learn about the strange and mysterious places of the world — archaeologists, great white hunters, and true explorers who can’t wait to learn what lies over the next horizon. Explorers usually have a lot of AKs and CKs, a good Survival roll, Stealth, and other Skills appropriate to their chosen profession(s) (like SS: Archaeology for a seeker of ancient artifacts). Doc Savage and Indiana Jones both largely fall into this archetype (though Doc can do so many things it’s difficult to fit him into any one category).

THE HEROINE

In Pulp adventure stories, women are often every bit as competent as men. Some are of the “Oh, I’ve twisted my ankle!” variety, but they’re mostly NPCs. Female PCs, often women who’ve chosen not to accept the demure roll society tries to impose on them, can do anything men can do (but never seem to get too dirty or disheveled).

THE MASKED CRIMEFIGHTER

A staple of the crimefighting Pulp stories, the Masked Crimefighter is a precursor to the superheroes of *Champions*. Dressed in clothing that conceals his identity — often not just a mask, but a cape or cloak of some kind — he uses his skills and training (usually including matchless aim with handguns) to seek out and defeat ordinary criminals, mastermind villains, and anyone else who threatens his fair city. The Shadow and the Spider, two of the best-known Pulp heroes, provide perfect examples of this archetype.

Mystery men typically have Deduction, Stealth, Streetwise, and several WFs including Small Arms. Many other Skills and weird abilities (whether bought as Talents or Limited Powers) are also possible.

THE SCIENTIST

Some Pulp heroes are masters of the technologies and sciences of the era. They can construct all sorts of interesting gadgets and gizmos to help themselves, and their friends, through dangerous situations. Doc Savage falls into this archetype to some degree.

EXAMPLE WEIRD SCIENCE GADGETS

Jetpack: Flight 20m (20 Active Points); OIF (-½), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (1 Hour; -0), Requires A PS: Operate Jetpack Roll (-¼). Total cost: 11 points.

Wrist Communicator: HRRP (12 Active Points); OIF (-½), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½), Required Roll 13- (-½). Total cost: 5 points.

Stun Dart Gun: Drain STUN 4d6 (40 Active Points); OAF (-1), Required Roll 14- (-¼), 8 Charges (-½). Total cost: 14 points.

Nightgoggles: Nightvision (5 Active Points); OIF (-½), Required Roll 14- (-¼). Total cost: 3 points.



A scientist needs Skills like Electronics, Inventor, Mechanics, Science Skill (several), and Systems Operation. Scientist characters often have a unique gadget or two, built with the *Focus* and *Independent* Limitations, to help them during adventures.

THE TWO-FISTED HERO

Perhaps the most stereotypical pulp hero is the “strong-jawed” or “two-fisted” variety — a man possessed of nothing but heroic determination and the fighting skills of an honest American (*i.e.*, the Martial Arts style *Fisticuffs*). With his cleft chin, dashing good looks, strong muscles, friendly manner, implacable opposition to evil and injustice, and perhaps some experience or abilities learned during the Great War, he’s perfect for any type of pulp adventure.

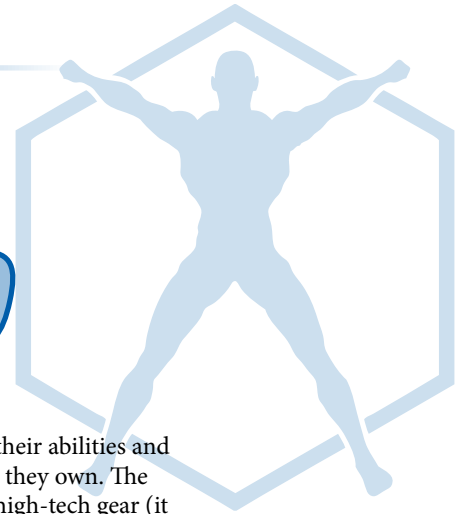
Subgenres

Pulp doesn’t have subgenres so much as it simply applies its aesthetics and “feel” to stories of many different types. Thus, you can have Pulp stories involving action/adventure, crimefighting, detectives and mysteries, espionage, exploration and discovery, horror and the occult, Science Fiction, suspense/thriller, Westerns, or the like. All the GM has to do is construct the campaign and its elements to ensure the Pulp “feel.” For example, in a Pulp Science Fiction story, characters often wear garish uniforms with fins on their helmets and rayguns, explore weird alien planets that look as much like bad movie sets or magazine cover paintings as actual new worlds, and encounter a lot of aliens that somehow speak English. Such campaigns often blend the *Pulp Hero* elements with elements from the other genre they belong to (*Star Hero*, in this case), but the exact mix depends on the GM, the players, and the course of the campaign.

Sample Character

For a sample character for this genre, see Randall Irons, 6E1 254.

SCIENCE FICTION: STAR HERO



Hotshot space pilots, daring to attempt maneuvers that scare everyone else. Enormous starships able to move faster than the speed of light. Strange new planets, filled with alien flora and fauna. And aliens themselves — sentient races with a thousand different forms from a thousand different worlds. Characters who can use eerie powers of the mind to help, or harm. All this, and more, awaits you in the many worlds of Science Fiction... the province of *Star Hero*.

Campaign Guidelines And Standards

In *HERO System* terms, *Star Hero* campaigns are usually Standard Heroic games, with characters built on 175 Total Points with 75 points of Matching Complications. (Some campaigns, particularly those with a heavy emphasis on psionic powers, use higher point totals.) Characters typically obtain normal equipment with in-game money instead of Character Points, are subject to Characteristic Maxima by default, and use the Hit Location rules and many other such options.

Genre Conventions And Features

Science Fiction, like Fantasy, is a broad and far-reaching genre. It encompasses everything from *The War Of The Worlds* and *20,000 Leagues Under The Sea* to *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, and *Dune*. Despite this breadth (and depth), a few elements are common to most Science Fiction. These include:

Technology: First and foremost, nearly all Science Fiction has the element of technology in common. In large part Science Fiction is about the relationship of man and technology — what technology enables men to do, the opportunities it offers, the perils it presents, the limitations it imposes (or abolishes). From blaster rifles, to teleportation devices, to time machines, to bio-engineering, advanced technology factors into almost every *Star Hero* story to some degree.

For the GM, the trick with technology is not to let it overwhelm the game. A *Star Hero* campaign

should be about the PCs and their abilities and accomplishments — not what they own. The PCs definitely need access to high-tech gear (it wouldn't really feel like *Star Hero* without it!), but too much access may cause problems if they come to rely on their equipment instead of on themselves.

In *HERO System* terms, technology is typically built with Powers (though sometimes Talents or Skills factor in as well). See Chapters Five of 6E1 and Seven of 6E2 for plenty of ideas and examples.

Aliens: Most Science Fiction also deals, at least to some extent, with Humanity's interaction with other sentient species — be they Klingons, Mon Calamari, Minbari, plasma-beings from another dimension, or something even stranger.

To represent alien beings, particularly alien species players can use for their PCs, most GMs create Racial Templates (6E1 37). In addition to any abilities native to the species (e.g., higher than Human-normal STR for a silicon-based species, or Life Support (Breathe Underwater) for a fish-based species), the GM should include in the Package any Skills and Talents common to the species that aren't represented by Everyman Skills.

Computers: One of the most common forms of technology to appear in Science Fiction is computers. They aren't absolutely necessary — one of the greatest Science Fiction epics ever written, *Dune*, doesn't really feature them at all — but they usually show up (especially these days, when computers have become so important a part of modern-day life that they can't help but intrude into the artistic consciousness). Many are artificially intelligent, which raises all sorts of interesting story possibilities (remember HAL from *2001: A Space Odyssey*?).

To create a computer in *HERO System* terms, see Chapter Seven of 6E2.

Exploration: Many Science Fiction stories are premised on the theme of "What's out there?" Space is enormous — more vast than the Human mind can comfortably handle, in some ways — so there's always a frontier to explore. The new planets, races, and astronomical phenomena characters encounter during their journeys of discovery are ripe with adventure possibilities. Many of the best *Star Trek* stories, for example, involve exploration.

Mecha: In some Science Fiction stories, mecha or battlemechs — giant anthropomorphic vehicles armed with all sorts of weaponry — play a prominent part. To create a mecha in *HERO System* terms, use the Vehicle design rules, and give it Extra Limbs so that its Ground Movement simulates “running” rather than wheels, tracks, or hover technology.

Psionics: In many Science Fiction settings, some or all sentient species have the capacity for mental powers — telepathy, telekinesis, and the like. These are collectively referred to as “psionics” in most roleplaying game campaigns. Whether psionics exist in your Star Hero campaign, what type of psionic abilities characters can have, and how strong those abilities can be depends on the GM.

To create psionic abilities for *HERO System* characters, use Mental Powers (6E1 148). In campaigns with a heavy emphasis on psionics, the GM may wish to allow players more Character Points to create characters with, since Mental Powers can get expensive.

Robots: Some Science Fiction settings, including *Star Wars* and Isaac Asimov’s *Robot* series, feature robots and androids — mechanical men, to use a crude and sometimes inaccurate term — as a common element. They can range from humanoid-shaped constructs able to do just about any job (and sometimes even to pass themselves off as true humans), to odd-shaped devices designed to perform one or two specific functions. In some settings, robots are governed by specially-programmed “laws” and ethical guidelines that prevent them from harming Humans (though the villains always seem to find a way to circumvent these “laws” at some point during the story).

To create a robot with the *HERO System*, you typically use the rules for Automatons (see Chapter Seven of 6E2). Extremely sophisticated robots and androids might be built using the normal character creation rules instead, with appropriate adjustments in the special effects involved. For example, when a sophisticated robot is Stunned by an attack, it’s not really “Stunned” like an organic being would be, it’s simply had its systems knocked offline for a second or two — but the game effect is the same.

Space marines: “Space marines” is a generic term referring to Science Fiction soldiers, though the name is most appropriate for the kind of warrior appearing in books like Robert Heinlein’s *Starship Troopers* — heavily armored, carrying weapons of mass destruction and other devices designed solely to cause havoc and death. In a lower-tech *Star Hero* campaign, a space marine might be an ordinary soldier with advanced body armor and ballistic weapons.

Starships: It’s hard to explore space, wage war against hostile aliens, or engage in interstellar trade if you don’t have a way to journey between the stars. So, starships — spacegoing vessels — appear in most Science Fiction stories. Some SF takes place entirely, or almost entirely, aboard a starship (much of *Star Trek* provides a good example of this). Most starships have FTL (faster-than-light) travel capability, defensive “shields” or “screens” of energy, and weapons such as energy beams or anti-matter missiles. Many other features or systems are of course possible.

To create a starship in the *HERO System*, use the Vehicle rules (see Chapter Seven of 6E2). For FTL flight capability, use the *FTL Travel Power* or *MegaScaled Movement*.



Time travel: Common in some SF settings (or even the basis for them, as with *Doctor Who*), but rare or absent in others, time travel presents all sorts of intriguing adventure possibilities. If the PCs are time travelers themselves, they can mix and mingle with history's most famous personalities, helping to ensure that historical events take the proper course. If they simply encounter other time travelers, they may find themselves dealing with events they don't fully understand, with potentially catastrophic consequences if they make the least slip.

To create time travel devices in the *HERO System*, use the Power *Extra-Dimensional Movement*.

Character Archetypes

Since Science Fiction settings can vary wildly from one to another, not all archetypes are common across the entire genre. But some character types do tend to crop up frequently, including:

THE EXPLORER

Many character types — prospectors, scouts, some types of scientists, personnel belonging to organizations like *Star Trek's* Starfleet — are defined primarily by their desire to see what lies beyond the next solar system. Their skills and abilities are eclectic, reflecting the need to live on a starship (Combat Piloting, Navigation (Space), Systems Operation, appropriate TFs), conduct scientific surveys (Science Skills), and survive in potentially hostile environments (Martial Arts, Survival, WFs).

THE PILOT

Just like in *Pulp Hero*, in *Star Hero* Pilot characters are usually cocky daredevils, willing to take all sorts of crazy risks for the thrill involved and the pride of the accomplishment. The difference is they fly fighters armed to the teeth with weapons capable of destroying asteroids, vast starships able to reduce entire planets to rubble, modified smuggler ships fast enough to outrun patrol vessels, and the like.

Star Hero pilots need Combat Piloting, Navigation (Space), Systems Operation, some appropriate TFs, and perhaps a few technical Skills (Computer Programming, Electronics, Mechanics) to make running the ship easier.

THE PSIONIC

In many Science Fiction stories and *Star Hero* campaigns, there's just one character in the group with psionic powers. That's his (or often, her) role to fill — he's "the guy with mental powers," instead of the sneaky guy or the guy with big guns. With the right selection of psychic abilities, a Psionic can be a fun and effective character to play in a wide variety of scenarios.

In roleplaying campaigns where multiple (or all) characters have psionic powers, a character who wants to stand out for his use of psionics should either have more psionic abilities than

average (*i.e.*, spend more Character Points on them than the other characters do), or should "specialize" in a particular type of psionic power (such as telekinetic abilities).

THE ROGUE

Gamblers, pirates, con men, smugglers, assassins, thieves, bounty hunters — all are types of Rogues who ply the spacelanes, seeking to make a dishonest credit. Some (particularly those who are PCs) really have "hearts of gold" and act heroically when they need to, but most are outright scoundrels who wouldn't hesitate to sell their own grandmothers on the Denebian Slave Exchange if it was worth their while. And that just makes them all the more fun to defeat.

Most Rogue characters have Skills like Charm, Computer Programming, Concealment, Conversation, Forgery, Gambling, Lockpicking, Security Systems, Sleight Of Hand, Stealth, and Streetwise. It all depends on what sort of crimes the Rogue prefers. A Rogue who makes his money cheating in the star-casinos has a far different set of Skills than a cat burglar or space pirate.

THE SCIENTIST/TECHNICIAN

With all the technology featured in *Star Hero*, and all the scientific puzzles characters are likely to encounter, it's not surprising that scientists (and their counterparts, technicians and engineers) crop up frequently as PCs. Armed with a wealth of technology- and science-oriented Skills (Computer Programming, Electronics, Inventor, Science Skills, Systems Operation, and more), they're valuable allies in a setting where keeping the ship's support systems functioning can mean the difference between life and death!

THE SOLDIER

Particularly common to the Military SF subgenre (of course), but also frequently appearing in other types of SF, the soldier (be he an actual ground-pounder, a starship naval officer, a fighter pilot, or what have you) can play many roles. As a PC, he usually fights the good fight, protects innocents from aggressive aliens, and helps to guard trade convoys and passenger ships traveling through dangerous areas. As an NPC, he may be an honorable enemy, an amoral mercenary, or simply an opponent the PCs must kill, or be killed by.

Soldier characters usually have lots of WFs, Martial Arts, Stealth, Systems Operation, Tactics, and other Skills useful in military situations.

THE TRADER

Many *Star Hero* characters focus, in whole or in part, on interstellar economics. Usually traveling in small ships they pilot themselves, these traders and merchants seek to buy low, sell high, and beat their rivals to the new markets. Acquiring, securing, and transporting cargo may sound dull, but when the PCs have cutthroat competitors to contend with, it can become a real adventure. And what happens when the valuable cargo itself proves dangerous...?



LOW SF

Often mingled with Hard SF, Low SF involves the lowest level of technology a story can feature and still qualify as “Science Fiction.” There are no blasters; characters fight with advanced ballistic rifles. There’s no FTL travel; characters have to cope with vectored thrust drives, sleeper ships, and the like. Humanity may not have even left its own solar system yet. But don’t let a lack of advanced technology fool you into thinking the game can’t have a grand, epic scope. After all, even though Frank Herbert’s *Dune* features very little high technology, it’s a fantastic Science Fiction story.

MILITARY SF

Military SF, obviously, focuses on the intersection of military stories and Science Fiction. A Military SF campaign may involve a vast interstellar war in which the PCs play a key role (as in the “Dominion War” story arc on *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*), a group of PCs who are a “special force” of space marines sent out to deal with crises (as with the characters in *Aliens*), a futuristic tank crew (as in David Drake’s novel *Hammer’s Slammers*), or the like. Military SF stories are often also Hard and/or Low SF stories.

SPACE OPERA

The opposite of Low SF, Space Opera features incredibly advanced technology — often tech so marvelous that it embodies Clarke’s Law (“Any sufficiently advanced

technology is indistinguishable from magic”). Disintegration weapons, artificially intelligent computers, FTL travel, teleportation, and more are casual, everyday matters. *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* both represent, to varying degrees, this type of Science Fiction. As a *Star Hero* campaign, Space Opera presents the GM with the problem of finding challenges for the characters which they can’t quickly and easily solve with gadgetry.

TIME TRAVEL

As described above, time travel stories usually involve protagonists who are time travelers themselves, or who encounter a time traveler and have to deal with the ramifications of his actions or the information he brings them. In a roleplaying game context, time travel works best if the PCs themselves are the time travelers (usually with an enemy group of time travelers they have to contend against). Before the game begins, the GM should develop a coherent theory of how Time and time travel functions in his campaign, so he can deal with the players’ questions and in-game conduct without too many difficulties.

Subgenres

Science Fiction has several gaming-friendly subgenres, including:

HARD SF

So-called “hard” Science Fiction is SF that pays close attention to “hard” scientific facts, deviating from them as little as possible. Complete scientific accuracy is rarely possible, but the creators of the story do their best to remain as accurate as they can. The resolution of the dilemma or conflict in the story often revolves around solving some scientific mystery.

Hard SF is difficult to pull off in a *Star Hero* campaign, unless the players and the GM alike are all interested in it and all highly scientifically literate. Even then, there’s the danger of the game devolving into arguments about scientific “facts” instead of focusing on the creation of a fun story. The GM has to pay close attention, and work hard, to keep the game flowing smoothly.

Sample Characters

To give you an idea of what *Star Hero* characters are like, here are two examples: Hur'shaas, a reptilian space pilot; and Jessica Fivedawns, a Human explorer.

Hur'shaas

Background/History: Hur'shaas is a Griinoq, a reptilian species from a swampy world in the Perseid arm. Like all Griinoq, he must keep his body moist and hydrated, or he begins to suffer painful (and possibly fatal) dehydration. On the other hand, he's stronger than the average Human, comes equipped with nasty fangs and claws, and has a handy tail and tough skin.

After aptitude tests revealed his qualifications for the Imperial Stellar Navy, Hur'shaas enrolled in the Piloting Academy, where he quickly distinguished himself. Since graduation, he's helped the Stellar Navy prosecute its long war against the forces of the Interstellar League, which wants to cut off the Empire's trading routes and strangle it economically. He enjoys his job a lot — it's exciting, patriotic, and romantic. The only thorns in his side these days are those pesky League fighter pilots (who don't seem to learn that he's better than they are, keep trying to kill him, and just get killed themselves) and Jagon Darr, a fellow Imperial pilot with whom he competes over number of dogfights won and the affections of the beautiful bartender at the spaceport's watering hole.

Personality/Motivation: Like many starfighter pilots, Hur'shaas is a thrillseeker — a daredevil who'll risk his ship and his life to perform some stunt or out-do another pilot. He's earned a bit of a reputation among his squadron for his daring raids on the League's capital ships. Some of his friends are concerned he's going to stick his neck out too far one of these days... and then the League's going to turn him into space debris.

Quote: "Hsss, four fighters coming in high and back on you, Commander! I'll get 'em!"

Powers/Tactics: Hur'shaas has received extensive starfighter pilot training at the Imperial Piloting Academy. He's qualified to fly any type of starship used in Imperial space, but most of his training specifically involves starfighters. If he's forced down, his priorities are to (a) preserve the integrity of his starsuit (so he doesn't dehydrate), and (b) use his blaster to defend himself until his distress beacon summons help. If the blaster runs out of energy-charge, he can resort to his claws and fangs if he must, though he finds this somewhat distasteful.

Appearance: Hur'shaas is a tall, slender reptilian humanoid, with a lizard-like face, long, flexible tail, and scaly skin with a pattern of dull green and dull orange. His hands have short claws, and his teeth are sharp.

Jessica Fivedawns

Background/History: Jessica Fivedawns, a Human of Cheyenne ancestry, has always had a nomadic soul. Even as a child, she was constantly wandering off to explore meadows and forests instead of staying put and playing in her family's yard. It didn't surprise anyone when she joined the Imperial Scout Service and became a professional explorer.

Since the war with the Interstellar League broke out, Jessica's job has become far more militarized than she'd like. Now she really has to act like a scout — she monitors enemy movements, finds new worlds for the Imperial Star Navy to use as forward bases, and so on. She'd much rather go back to looking for new worlds for colonization or scientific examination, and she hopes the war ends soon.

Personality/Motivation: Except for her perpetual wanderlust, which tends to get her in trouble occasionally (especially in time of war!), Jessica is a fairly ordinary person. As a scout, she's forced to be a loner by profession, so when she's off-duty she enjoys spending time around other people in space stations and starports. Since her work doesn't allow for long-term relationships, she's developed a habit of getting involved in short-term romantic flings; she figures when she finds a man who makes her want to stay home instead of go exploring, that will be the time to quit the Scout Service.

Quote: "Hmmm, that's an interesting reading. Looks like a potentially breathable atmosphere. C'mon, Ship, let's go take a look!"

Powers/Tactics: Aside from standard scout training, which includes basic weapons use and hand-to-hand combat skills, Jessica doesn't have any combat abilities. But she does have one unique power that often makes her job easier — low-strength psychokinesis. She's had it since she was 18 years old, when it suddenly manifested for no reason she could discern. Since she doesn't want to run the risk of being involuntarily inducted into the Imperial Psionic Institute (even though that would mean more pay and privileges), she keeps this power secret.

Appearance: Jessica Fivedawns is a 5'6" tall woman with long, straight black hair often tied back in a braid. When not in her scout armor, she typically wears pilot jumpsuits and other such unisex clothing.

HUR'SHAAS

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 HTH damage [1]
18	DEX	16	13-	
15	CON	5	12-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll 12-
10	EGO	0	11-	
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack: 2½d6
5	OCV	10		
5	DCV	10		
3	OMCV	0		
3	DMCV	0		
4	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
6	PD	4		Total: 8 PD (2 rPD)
4	ED	2		Total: 6 ED (2 rED)
6	REC	2		
30	END	2		
13	BODY	3		
30	STUN	5		
Total Characteristics Cost: 92				

Movement: Running: 12m
Swimming: 8m



8

Cost	Powers	END
4	Claws: HKA 1 point (½d6 with STR) Reduced Penetration (-¼)	1
5	Sharp Teeth: HKA 1 point (½d6 with STR)	1
6	Scaly Skin: Resistant Protection (2 PD/2 ED)	0
2	Reptilian Form: Swimming +4m (8m total)	1
6	Griinoq Senses: +2 PER with all Sense Groups	0
5	Tail: Extra Limb (1) Inherent (+¼); Limited Manipulation (-¼)	0

Perks

3 Fringe Benefit: Galactic Computernet Access Code

Talents

3 **Griinoq Dexterousness:** Ambidexterity (no penalties with either hand)

Skills

6 +2 with Ship's Weapons

1 Bribery 8-

3 Computer Programming 13-

7 Combat Piloting 15-

3 Electronics 12-

2 Gambling (Card Games) 12-

3 Mechanics 12-

4 Navigation (Space) 13-

3 Paramedics 12-

3 Persuasion 12-

3 Stealth 13-

7 Systems Operation 14-

2 TF: Science Fiction & Space Vehicles

2 WF: Small Arms

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 83

Total Cost: 175

175 Matching Complications (50)

10 **Dependence:** must keep body at least partly immersed in warm water or suffers Weakness after 20 minutes of dehydration (Very Common)

10 **Psychological Complication:** Hunts Enemy Pilots (Common, Moderate)

10 **Rivalry:** Professional And Romantic (with Jagon Darr, another pilot)

20 **Social Complication:** Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)

Total Complications Points: 50

Experience Points: 0

Typical Equipment

Blaster Pistol (Blast 9d6, 32 shots)
Griinoq starsuit (PD 4/ED 4, helps keep body hydrated)

JESSICA FIVEDAWNS

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 HTH damage [1]
15	DEX	10	12-	
16	CON	6	12-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
12	EGO	2	11-	
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
5	OCV	10		
5	DCV	10		
3	OMCV	0		
3	DMCV	0		
3	SPD	10		Phases: 4, 8, 12
5	PD	3		Total: 8 PD (3 rPD)
5	ED	3		Total: 8 ED (3 rED)
5	REC	1		
35	END	3		
12	BODY	2		
30	STUN	5		Total Characteristics Cost: 78

Movement: Running: 14m
Swimming: 6m

Cost	Powers	END
6	Weak Psychokinesis: Telekinesis (4 STR)	1

Martial Arts: Commando Training

Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
3 Aikido Throw	+0	+1	2d6 + vel/5, Target Falls
4 Boxing Cross	+0	+2	4d6
4 Choke	-2	+0	Grab One Limb, 2d6 NND (2)
4 Escape	+0	+0	25 STR vs. Grabs
4 Judo Disarm	-1	+1	Disarm, 20 STR
4 Karate "Chop"	-2	+0	½d6 HKA (1d6+1 with STR)
4 Kung Fu Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort

2	Swift: Running +2m (14m total)	1
1	Strong Swimmer: Swimming +2m (6m total)	1

Perks

- 2 Contact: Wulfram McGee 11- (a free trader)
- 3 Fringe Benefit: Galactic Computernet Access Code

Talents

- 6 Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)
- 3 Lightsleep

Skills

- 12 +1 Overall
- 3 Bureaucratics 12-
- 3 Combat Piloting 12-
- 3 Computer Programming 13-
- 3 Electronics 12-
- 3 Navigation (Land, Space) 13-
- 1 SS: Biology 8-
- 2 SS: Geology 11-
- 3 Stealth 12-
- 6 Survival (Mountains, Temperate/Subtropical, Tropical) 13-
- 3 Systems Operation 13-
- 2 TF: Science Fiction & Space Vehicles
- 3 WF: Small Arms, Blades

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 97

Total Cost: 175

175 Matching Complications (50)

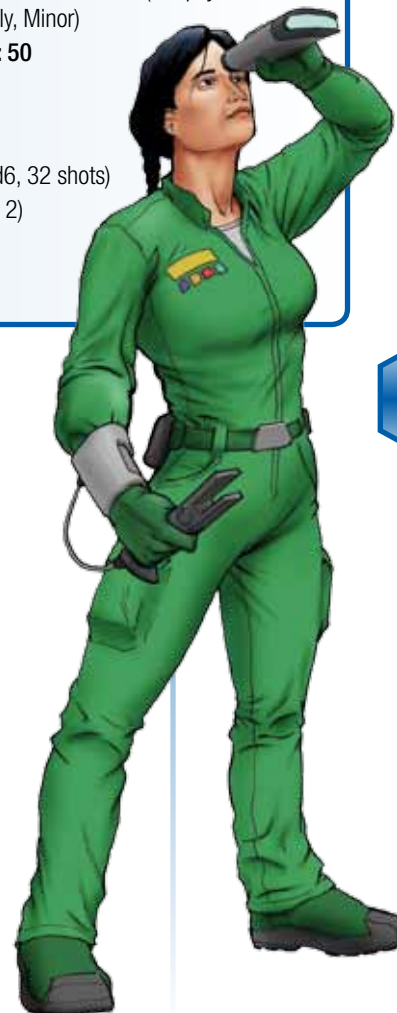
- 15 **Psychological Complication:** Wanderlust; Wants To Know What's Over The Next Horizon (Common, Strong)
- 10 **Rivalry:** Professional and Romantic (with another explorer)
- 20 **Social Complication:** Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
- 5 **Social Complication:** Harmful Secret (her psychokinetic power) (Infrequently, Minor)

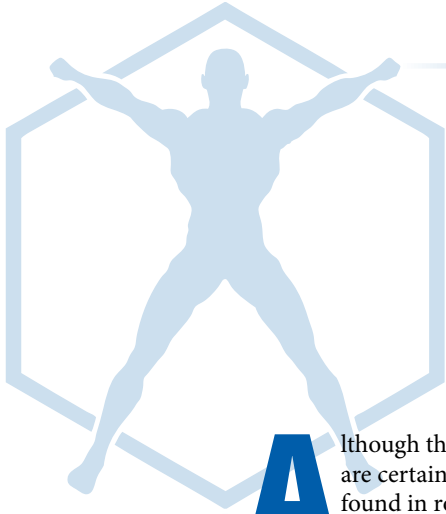
Total Complications Points: 50

Experience Points: 0

Typical Equipment

- Blaster Pistol (Blast 9d6, 32 shots)
- Scout armor (PD 2/ED 2)
- Machete (HKA 1d6)
- Field Sensor Unit





OTHER GENRES

Although the seven genres described above are certainly the most common ones found in roleplaying games, they're not the only ones — and since the *HERO System* can simulate any genre, gamers often use it to create unusual campaigns taking place in strange settings and eras. Some other genres you can play with the *HERO System* include:

Horror

A *Horror Hero* game involves suspense, paranoia, and of course fear. Characters are typically Standard Heroic PCs (at best) — if they're much more powerful than that, it becomes hard to frighten them. Typically they hunt monsters, investigate occult conspiracies, and cope with similar threats to life, mind, and soul. Given the *HERO System's* flexibility, GMs can use it to tailor monsters and other threats to suit the campaign and give the players the maximum scare.

To represent the long-term problems caused by stress and sustained fear, many *Horror Hero* GMs come up with a new Characteristic to represent a character's capacity to withstand the effects of horror. For example, you might create a *Sanity* (SAN) Characteristic, which costs 1 Character Point for each 2 points. Characters lose Sanity like they lose STUN, but only from effects that are particularly terrifying, gruesome, or disturbing — the GM assigns a "Sanity Damage" rating (in d6) to each such phenomena. If a character drops to 0 SAN, he snaps and becomes completely insane (and an NPC under the GM's control) until he recovers his wits. Characters may regain lost SAN with REC just like BODY, at the rate of REC per Month (assuming they can get away from whatever's causing the psychic damage). Many other versions of SAN (or the like) are possible; each GM sets it up to represent the feelings of horror he most wants to simulate.

Post-Apocalyptic

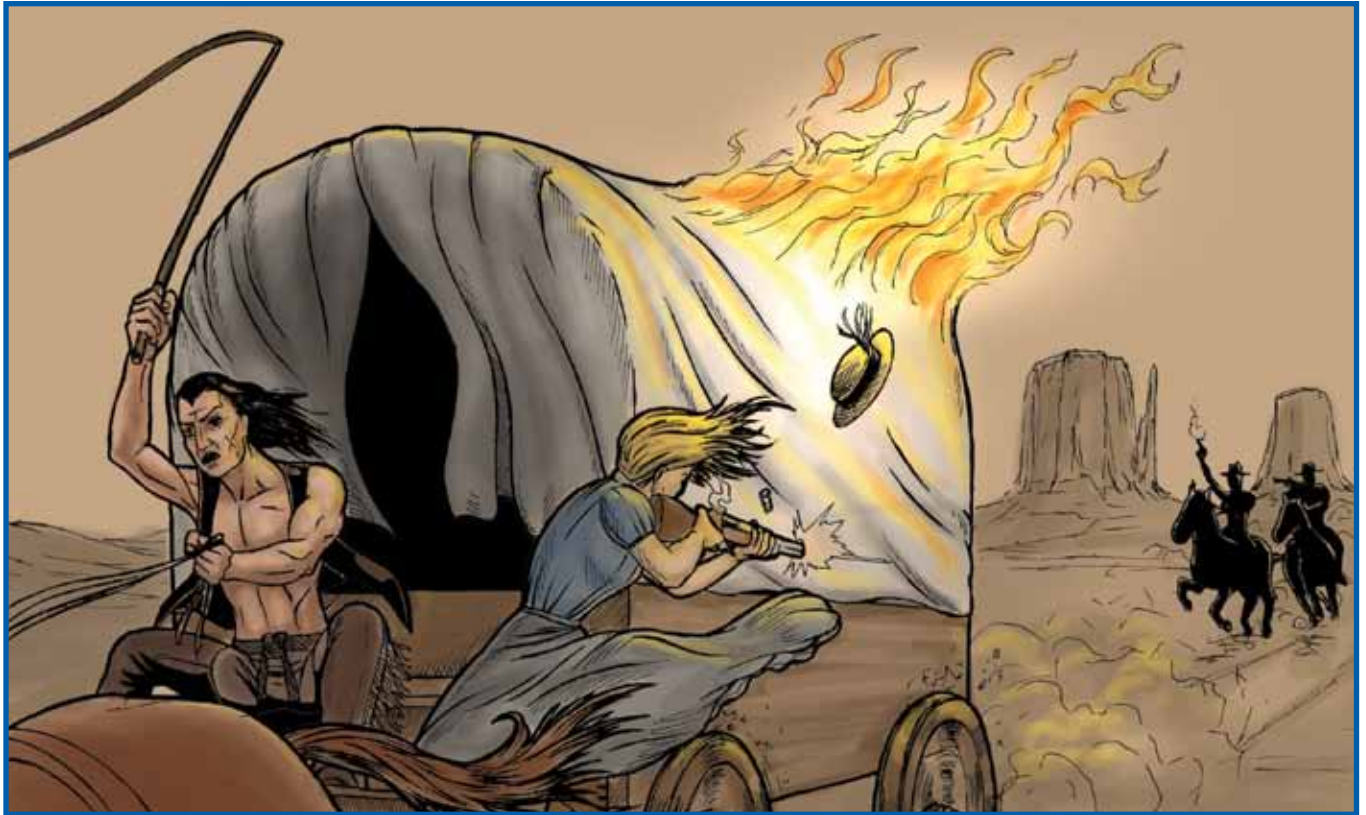
After society collapses — typically due to nuclear war, biological warfare, or some other holocaust that leaves the world in ruins — scattered tribes of people trying to eke out a living, while in other parts of the world scavengers, radiation-altered mutants, and hideous creatures are all that remains. This is the world of *Post-Apocalypse Hero*, the sort of setting depicted in Paul Williams's *Pelbar Cycle* novels, the *Thundarr the Barbarian* cartoon, and the movie *Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior*.

Post-Apocalypse games (actually a variant of Science Fiction) are usually Standard Heroic campaigns, though the GM may allow more points if he wants all (or most) of the characters to have beneficial mutations or other strange powers. To set the campaign up, the GM needs to decide on several things, including: what caused society to collapse; how advanced was society when the collapse occurred; how much time has passed since the collapse; what is society (or various societies) like now? He may need to institute special rules for mutations (for example, maybe anyone with a mutation must also take a Dependence, Susceptibility, or other specified Complication), technology (the knowledge of which may largely have been lost), and if he wants it to exist, magic.

Swashbuckling

Bold musketeers swinging from chandeliers and dueling each other with rapiers. The pirates of the Spanish Main. Court intrigue in the time of Richelieu. Such is the stuff of swashbuckling adventure!

Both *Swashbuckling Hero*, which focuses on adventures in Europe (particularly France) in the early 1600s, and *Pirate Hero*, which focuses on the golden age of piracy in the Caribbean and the Atlantic, cover this genre/time period. Both use Standard Heroic characters, with few or no "weird" elements (unless the GM wants to introduce voodoo- or alchemy-like magic just to liven things up a bit). Most characters have Fencing (or similar styles) as a Martial Art, but social skills are every bit as important as martial ones (at least in Europe). Adventures feature court intrigue, ship-to-ship combat, war in Europe, and exploration of the New World.



Victorian

The Victorian era — typically meaning, for adventure gaming purposes, the latter half of the 1800s (particularly 1880-1900) — is similar to the Pulp era in many respects. The world is opening up, but by no means fully open; there are lots of strange, unexplored places for adventurers to visit, and mysteries for them to plumb. Technology is advancing, and many wondrous devices are possible, but technology is nowhere near as prevalent or powerful as it is in the modern day. This is the world depicted in the writings of Verne, Wells, Haggard, Stevenson, and Doyle.

Victorian Hero campaigns are typically Standard Heroic campaigns. Most start in, or are based in, London, the greatest city in the world during this era — though travel is as common, and as interesting, as in Pulp times. Magic and other “weird” phenomena rarely make an appearance, though “steampunk” science sometimes does (GMs may need to come up with special rules for technology, to simulate the right “feel” and prevent characters from trying to do things like design lasers or the Internet a century early).

Western

Who can resist the allure of the Wild West, with its gun-toting cowboys, wild Indians, gold fever, vast unexplored lands, range wars, gambling, and vicious desperadoes in need of a good bullet-knockin'? In a *Western Hero* campaign, you can relive this amazing era and its adventures. *Western Hero* games usually have Standard Heroic characters (unless the GM introduces weird elements, like steampunk technology or magic, in which case he may want characters to have more points to work with).

RECOMMENDED CAMPAIGN STANDARDS

Genre	Type	Total Points	Matching Complications
Comic book superheroes (Champions)			
Golden Age Champions	Superheroic	300	60
Silver Age Champions	Superheroic	300	60
Bronze Age Champions	Superheroic	400	75
Iron Age Champions	Superheroic	400	75
Galactic Champions	Superheroic	650	100
Teen Champions	Superheroic	275	50
Cyberpunk Science Fiction (Cyber Hero)	Heroic	175-225	25-40
Fantasy (Fantasy Hero)			
Crossworlds Fantasy	Heroic	175	50
Epic Fantasy	Heroic	175-225	50
High Fantasy	Heroic	175-275	50
Low Fantasy	Heroic	100-175	30-50
Swords And Sorcery	Heroic	175	50
Urban Fantasy	Heroic	50-175	25-50
Martial Arts (Ninja Hero)			
Realistic Martial Arts	Heroic	50-175	25-50
Cinematic Martial Arts	Heroic	100-225	30-50
Wuxia Martial Arts	Superheroic	225-300	50-60
Video Game Martial Arts	Superheroic	275-400	50-75
Anime Martial Arts	Superheroic	300-400	60-75
Modern-Day Action-Adventure (Dark Champions)			
Vigilante Crimefighting	Heroic	225	50
Dark Champions: The Animated Series	Superheroic	275-300	50-60
Espionage	Heroic	175-225	50
Law Enforcement	Heroic	175	50
Military Action/Special Ops	Heroic	225	50
Weird Conspiracy	Heroic	50-175	25-50
Pulp (Pulp Hero)			
Crimebusting	Heroic	175	50
Globetrotting Exploration	Heroic	225	50
Masked Mystery Men	Heroic	225	50
Science Fiction (Star Hero)			
Hard Science Fiction	Heroic	175	50
Low Science Fiction	Heroic	175	50
Military Science Fiction	Heroic	175	50
Space Opera	Heroic	175	50
Time Travel	Heroic	175	50
Miscellaneous Genres			
Horror	Heroic	25-100	15-30
Post-Apocalyptic	Heroic	100-175	30-50
Swashbuckling	Heroic	175	50
Victorian	Heroic	175-225	50
Western	Heroic	50-175	25-50



CHAPTER NINE

GAMEMASTERING



GAMEMASTERING

EIGHT PRINCIPLES FOR INTERPRETING AND APPLYING THE *HERO SYSTEM* RULES

Like fans of any roleplaying game system, *HERO System* gamers often find themselves trying to interpret a rule they don't understand, or an interaction between two rules which this rulebook doesn't specifically discuss. Here are some guidelines for rules interpretation:

1. The rules are designed to help you have fun: If a particular rule makes the game less fun for you, that rule isn't working well for you. Change it. Similarly, ignore "letter of the rules" arguments in favor of interpretations that make the game more enjoyable.

2. Any and all rules are subject to change: The GM can change any rule to improve the game. The written rules are just guidelines and suggestions; change them to suit yourself, to make your games more exciting, dramatic, and fun.

3. Just because something isn't explicitly forbidden doesn't mean it's allowed: No game designer could think of every possible permutation, combination, interpretation, or use of the *HERO System* rules, so situations may arise in your game that the creators of these rules didn't foresee. While it's *usually* safe to assume that something which isn't forbidden is allowed, the final decision is *always* up to the GM. If he doesn't want to interpret or use the rules the way you want to, his decision governs.

4. Just because something is explicitly forbidden doesn't mean you can't do it (with the GM's permission): Conversely, even though the rules say you can't do something, the GM can relax that restriction if he feels it would be justified to do so. For example, the rules say you can't apply the *Attack Versus Alternate Defense* Advantage to the *Entangle* Power. But if a player came up with an idea for an AVAD Entangle the GM felt was a good one that didn't unbalance the game, he could allow the player to buy that power for his character.

5. Consider the special effects involved: One of the bedrock principles of the *HERO System* is that the special effects of a Power or action are crucial when determining how to build an ability and how that ability works. They influence the Powers and Power Modifiers used to create weapons, superpowers, spells, high technology, and the like, and the effects those abilities and equipment have in the game. Rather than looking just to the letter of the rules to determine how a Power works, or how two Powers interact, examine the special effects as well. In most situations you shouldn't allow special effects to provide as many benefits or restrictions as full-fledged Advantages and Limitations, but they should have some effect on the situation.

6. Don't waste time worrying about the "exact right way" to build an ability: Rather than fretting over whether you've built a particular ability, spell, power, or the like "correctly," do your best job to figure out how to build what you want with the *HERO System* rules (or, if necessary, have the GM build it for you). Then let it work the way you want it to; don't worry about whether you're "right." It's your game, so however you want to do it is "right."

7. Use your dramatic sense: Don't let the rules get in the way of creating a fun, exciting story. If the rules as written diminish the drama of the game, ignore or change them (either permanently, or on a case-by-case basis). For example, if it would be more dramatic for Professor Barnes to wake up right before the burglars escape with his new invention, let him — even if the rules say he wouldn't get to take any Recoveries yet.

8. Use your common sense: Above all else, when you interpret the *HERO System* rules, use your common sense. Nothing ruins a game faster than applying the rules "by the book" regardless of what common sense says. If your common sense tells you that a character can commit suicide by shooting himself in the head with a small pistol, then let him, even if the rules say he can't possibly do enough damage that way to kill himself with a single shot.

This chapter discusses the skills of game-mastering (GMing) roleplaying games. Of course, GMing is an art, not a science, so not every piece of advice or suggestion in this chapter may be of help to you. Read it, decide which suggestions you like, or sound like they're worth a try, or will or won't work in your game, and accept or reject them accordingly. After all, it's your campaign, so you only have to use the rules and ideas you want to use to establish the "flavor" you're seeking.

CREATING THE CAMPAIGN

Before you begin to run a gaming campaign using the *HERO System* rules, you need a campaign world/setting in which to run it. Creating a fun, exciting, and challenging campaign is one of the most fun aspects of GMing.

Campaign Ground Rules

Before you put pen to paper and start creating antagonists, organizations, locations, and NPCs, take a few minutes to think about what you *want* in this campaign. First and most importantly, determine the "ground rules" you want or need to establish to make the campaign run the way you want it to. Many of these will apply to character creation — such as Active Point limits on powers — and are discussed below. But you need to address many other questions before you begin creating your world, because the answers will influence how you go about the process of creation.

For example, do you want the Player Characters to work together as a group? Do you want them to be able to work well with the authorities (be they the King and his guards, the police, or the Galactic Patrol)? If you answer both of these questions "Yes," not only do you need to let the players know — to prevent them from designing "loner" characters on the run from the law — but you need to craft a world and a campaign in which the ground rules support what you want the PCs to be and do. If you want a bright, shiny, well-respected team of PCs who work closely with the Powers That Be, you need to provide for a justification for them to, for example, have the respect of said Powers. Just telling them, "You're a team, here's your base, and you all have to buy these "Police Powers" Perks," is a quick and dirty way around the problem, but it bypasses a lot of opportunities for creating interesting background details and encouraging roleplaying.

Another important issue is whether the PCs should all have some sort of common background. For example, maybe you want to run a game in which all of the PCs are mutants, or wizards, or members of the Galactic Patrol, or who got their powers in a common accident or event. If so, this affects your world design and the players' design process for their characters, so you need to know in advance.

Other questions you should address include:

- What level of lethal force does the campaign involve? Should the players not design characters who are capable of or willing to kill their enemies — is the use of lethal force Absolutely Forbidden? Or is lack of a Killing Attack and a willingness to use it going to brand the character as a weakling and a wimp?
- What preconceptions do you have about the world or the genre? It's extremely important to make sure the players know about these. For example, are all ninjas or ogres incredibly powerful antagonists who should be taken very seriously, or are they comic relief? Does having mental powers or knowing how to cast spells almost always mean having psychological problems as well? Is a particular type of character (such as mutants or half-orcs) especially hated or beloved? If you're basing your campaign in "the real world," or a published game setting, have any important landmarks or historical events changed?

Once you've established what the ground rules are, *write them down and distribute them to your players*. Ground rules and guidelines known only to the GM, or invoked only after a player has put considerable effort into creating a character who violates the ground rules, aren't very useful — in fact, they're often counterproductive. Letting the players know about the ground rules in advance will save work and hard feelings later.

Choosing And Creating The Setting

Once you've established the ground rules, you can move on to the creation of the campaign world or setting itself. This discussion assumes you're not going to use a published setting. There are a lot of benefits to using a pregenerated world — most of the work has been done for you, for one — but not every GM likes to use them.

As a first step, decide just what type of setting/campaign you want to run. Often the GM decides this as soon as he decides he wants to run a campaign. If you plan to run a Champions campaign, is it going to be the Golden Age? A '70s-era setting? '90s-era? A "graphic novel"? A "teen heroes" campaign? Each of these places its own demands on the PCs and the world. Will the game take place in one city, or will the PCs fight crime all over the world, or even all over the galaxy? Obviously the latter two choices require the GM to define a much larger chunk of creation than does the first.

Another important consideration is to find out what the *players* want. After all, they're going to be the other major participants in the gaming process, and they're going to contribute to the creation of the world. If none of the players want to play in your sweeping epic Fantasy campaign, then don't run one, as much as you'd like to. If they insist on a serious tone, give them one, even if you



hoped for comedy. Of course, the GM's desires are equally important — running a game you don't enjoy is pointless — but since one of the main goals is to entertain the players, give them what they want.

CAMPAIGN TONE

Once you've settled on the type of campaign/setting, you should determine what sort of tone you want the campaign to have. This includes campaign morality, realism, outlook, and seriousness.

MORALITY

Although frequently overlooked, morality is an important campaign element. It offers copious opportunities for roleplaying, character development, and story creation. It can turn what would otherwise be nothing more than a series of encounters where the PCs use flashy attacks on The Bad Guys without much appreciation for the deeper context and meaning of their actions into an intriguing examination of why they do what they do, and how they justify it.

Is the morality in your campaign going to be black and white — characters are either Evil or Good, and moral choices are always easy? Or are there shades of grey to the game, giving rise to doubt and conflict? Obviously the former choice is easier for GMs and players to deal with — sometimes players don't want to be confronted with moral choices. They're difficult, after all, and some players would rather not be forced to make those decisions.

Black and white morality works very well for many types of campaigns, such as Golden Age *Champions* campaigns or some types of epic Fantasy, where events and characters are “larger

than life.” However, black and white morality isn't very realistic, and it may seem “two-dimensional” to players — if the only choice are A or B, there often isn't much depth to the situation, or much of a challenge, either. It also deprives the players of the opportunity to design characters with a little “grey” in them.

Grey morality works better for many '90s-era or “graphic novel” *Champions* campaigns, *Cyber Hero*, *Dark Champions*, *Danger International*, and Fantasy campaigns involving lots of political machinations and Byzantine intrigue — campaigns where the PCs themselves may not be very distinguishable from their antagonists. In this sort of setting, the PCs may have trouble telling friend from foe. In the hands of a good GM and players, “greyness” creates numerous opportunities for roleplaying and storytelling. Exploring ethical and moral issues in this sort of campaign can lead to some fascinating games, and allows the players to create characters with moral dilemmas in their backgrounds and actions.

REALISM

“Realism” signifies the level of drama and “romance” your game has. This means how likely it is that characters can attempt outrageous, improbable, and downright dangerous actions and succeed, because they are dramatic and exciting — even though in a highly “realistic” game these actions would probably fail. In a “romantic” game, characters can swing from chandeliers, recover from deadly wounds, and achieve the impossible — because the campaign allows for it. The drawback is that it can be difficult to instill fear in the characters, or challenge them, since they know they can do almost anything.

Characters in games with a greater slant towards “realism” won’t have this advantage — they’ll have to be very cautious about taking risks or attempting outrageous stunts, since they’re not likely to work. Some modern comic books, which attempt to portray the “actual” effects of superpowers (*i.e.*, people being mutilated, killed and warped by superpowered attacks), show this sort of high level of “realism.” Dark Champions campaigns often thrive on it. This approach may appeal to GMs and players who like to emphasize the tactical elements of game combat, or who enjoy stories dealing with the ramifications of their characters’ actions.

OUTLOOK AND SERIOUSNESS

Outlook refers to the level of optimism inherent in the campaign. Can the characters make a difference in the world? Is there hope for victory, for a better tomorrow, for success against overwhelming odds? If so, the campaign has a positive outlook. On the other hand, the game might be set in a world that’s turned into a sewer — everything is rotten and corrupt, life stinks, and the characters aren’t really going to be able to make any lasting changes. What victories they do achieve will be Pyrrhic, meaningless, or temporary. This sort of campaign has a very negative outlook, and unless that’s what the players want, you run the risk of driving them away.

Seriousness refers to the level of comedy in the campaign. Virtually every gaming campaign involves some joking around — after all, the people involved in the game are friends, so kidding around is natural. But some campaigns actively seek to promote lightheartedness, or even goofiness. Such campaigns are highly romantic, and the characters are usually caricatures designed solely for getting a laugh. Conversely, some campaigns try to maintain a high level of seriousness. This can be difficult, because of the natural tendency for gamers to joke around, but it is possible. As with negative outlook and grey morality, not all players want to be confronted with “serious” gaming, so the GM should make sure that the players like such a tone before using it in the game.

Of course, you can vary the level of seriousness in a game sometimes. The occasional “comic relief” scenario can spice up an otherwise grim-and-gritty campaign nicely. Life isn’t all bad, you know.

CREATING DETAILS; THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PLAYER CHARACTERS

There are some facets of the campaign world that are going to be important to almost *every* player, and to you. These are the sorts of things that you need to spend some time creating. Examples usually include government and law enforcement organizations, media organizations, weapons technology, key NPCs, especially picturesque or interesting locations (just right for dramatic fight scenes!), the existence (and nature) of magic, and so on. Putting in a little work before the campaign

begins to flesh out these aspects of the game world will be rewarded threefold later on when you can bring a previously-created detail into play without having to stop in mid-game to figure out what the Chief of Police’s name is or whether the Fomalhauti have FTL drives.

One particularly crucial issue for any campaign is: *how important are the PCs?* While the PCs are clearly the focus of the *campaign*, are they the focus of the *campaign world*? This relates in part to how common characters with their level of power and ability are. For example, in a Champions campaign, if superhumans are common, it lessens the PCs’ impact; if they’re rare, their impact on the world is disproportionate to their numbers or their level of power. Also, if the PCs are powerful, they’re likely to have a greater impact on the world as a whole — if they’re just 200-point supers fighting street crime in South Chicago, the United Nations isn’t likely to pay much attention to them. If they’re 600-point heroes capable of saving the world five times before lunch, people and governments will sit up and take notice of them. However, low-power heroes with local concerns may very well end up with the key to saving the world, so watch out....

Only in campaigns where the heroes are all-important — typically games in which they’re the only superheroes (or are clearly the most powerful wizards, warriors, space explorers, or whatever) — will the rest of the campaign world hang on their every word and deed. Governments will take their advice and turn to them for help. Their every action will have consequences, and they’ll experience media and government scrutiny at every turn.

In games where the PCs are important, but not all-important, they can sometimes affect the world, and sometimes have the ear of governments and other Important Persons, but they’re not the be-all-and-end-all of the world. Crucial things happen that they’re not involved with, and there may be other groups of characters as powerful or more powerful than they are (which is important if they ever need any help — all-important heroes don’t have that luxury). The PCs may be able to affect change, but such changes are more likely to be regional or local than world-wide. This level of importance offers you the best of both worlds — the PCs have some of the importance and renown that they crave, but are unable to wreak complete havoc with your carefully designed world.

In some games, the PCs are completely unimportant. They may be low-powered, or they may be members of an enormous community of like individuals, or they may be outlaws who cannot affect the world. In short, the PCs’ actions are not likely to have much lasting effect on the game world. Most players don’t like this particular situation, so few game campaigns use it. However, it can be a worthwhile approach for GMs and players who are more interested in character development, interaction, and storytelling than accomplishing world-altering deeds.

THE PLAYER CHARACTERS

Once your world is ready to go, it's time to let the players start designing their characters... and time for you to evaluate what they create to make sure it's suitable for your game.

Participating In The Character Creation Process

For the most part, you can leave character creation to the players. However, leaving it *entirely* up to the players often invites disaster. Unless the players are all highly mature, skilled, knowledgeable, and creative gamers, it's important for you to involve yourself in the character creation process to ensure that the players create characters that contribute to the fun of the campaign.

CHARACTER SHEET AS CONTRACT

Before you start reviewing each PC's character sheet, take a moment to think about what that sheet represents. In essence it's a sort of "contract" setting forth the loose terms of a "deal" between you and the player.

First, the character sheet is a form of communication between the player and the GM. Your player is saying to you, "This is the sort of character I want to play, and it's important to me that he has these abilities which he gets to use in the game." By approving the character and his abilities, you're agreeing to that. You're replying, "I want you to play this character, and I will give you the opportunity to use the abilities you've bought for him." You've got to be prepared to live up to that arrangement.

Second, the player's communicating with you not just about his character's abilities (the cool, fun, impressive stuff he gets to do a lot), but about his Limitations and Complications (the obstacles and hindrances he has to overcome). By taking a Limitation for a power, or a Complication for a character, the player's saying, "This obstacle is an important part of my character, and I want it to come into play." When you allow that character into the game, you're promising to include those Limitations and Complications in the game. If you don't, the character gets some Character Points "for free," but what's worse is the player doesn't entirely get to play the character he wants to play. Part of being a hero is *overcoming* obstacles, soldiering on in the face of tremendous difficulties. If being a hero were easy, everyone would do it. A character's Limitations and Complications are as much a part of him, and are as important to who he is and what he does, as his Characteristics, Skills, and abilities.

If anything on the character sheet *isn't* as important to you as it is to the player, you should inform the player and give him the opportunity to change his character (or you may simply have to require him to change it). For example, a player in a Fantasy Hero campaign might create a back-

story for his knight that involves a bitter hatred of trolls. It's a great backstory, and if you could you'd definitely incorporate it into the campaign. Unfortunately you've already done a lot of work creating the nature of the campaign setting and planning the stories you want to tell... and you don't really see much role for trolls in all of that. But trolls are important to the player; he came right out and told you so by taking Hunted: Trolls (Frequently) and explaining his character's background to you.

In this situation you have three choices. The best choice is this: if you can change the campaign with minimal effort to incorporate trolls, do it. Remember, trolls are important to one of your players, so include them if you can. (This is why it's often best not to do too much work on a campaign until you find out what the players want to do in it.) If that's not possible, ask the player if he'd be willing to change his character's background slightly so that the character hates something you *do* plan to have in the campaign (such as orcs, or the people who live in a nearby enemy kingdom). If that doesn't work either, the only recourse may be to require the player to change his character — after all, if there are no trolls, not only is his Hunted not really a Complication at all, but the player himself won't have as much fun because he won't be able to explore his vision for his character.

Third, if you allow a character to pay for some ability, in effect you're promising him that the ability (a) will be useful, and (b) will be used. A player has a finite number of Character Points to spend on his character, so he spends each one with care, buying things he thinks will be important, fun, and useful. If he spends points on something, he should get fair value for those points — which means you need to give him the opportunity to use what he paid for. This is particularly true if you require a character to pay for something, such as through a Template.

This is another way of saying something that was discussed early in 6E1: if a character isn't going to get to use some ability, don't make him pay Character Points for it. There's no reason to pay for something the character's not going to use. If he really wants to be an authority on African languages, an expert at breaking codes, or an ace pilot, but you don't expect the game to ever involve Swahili, codes, or flying, let him have a few Languages, Cryptography, or Combat Piloting for 0 Character Points. Those abilities won't affect the game in any way, so the character shouldn't have to pay for them.

LIMITING AND DISTINGUISHING THE PLAYER CHARACTERS

First and foremost, you as GM need to decide what limits, if any, you want to place on character design. At the most basic level, you must determine how many points the players have to build their characters on, how many Complications they can take, and so forth. But there's more to it than that.

RESTRICTIONS ON PLAYER CHARACTERS

Sometimes you'll want to place more restrictions on the PCs than just the number of points they're built on. Without restrictions, many players will pump most of their points into godawful powerful attacks and defenses, rather than designing well-rounded and intriguing characters with interesting abilities.

Many GMs limit the number of Active Points a character can have in any one attack or power. Sixty points is a common limit, though some GMs use 40 points, 75 points, or even 100 points. It depends in large part on the type of campaign you're running and the power level you want the characters to have. However, it should also depend on the level of creativity you want the characters to display. In the *HERO System*, coming up with clever and creative powers often requires the application of Advantages that drive the cost of a power far beyond 60 points, even though its effectiveness is not correspondingly as high (on the average). If you establish a points cap, display a little leeway on it if a player has a good idea that won't unbalance the campaign. (See *Point And Effectiveness Ceilings*, below, for more information on this subject.)

Other things you might want to limit include: amount of defense; amount of Resistant Defense; sensory powers; Skill Levels (particularly Overall Levels or specialized Levels, such as Range Skill Levels or Levels with especially effective maneuvers); Movement Powers; Skill Rolls; Combat Values; Damage Classes; DEX; INT; and SPD. The table on 6E1 35 provides suggested guidelines for many of these.

However, there are perils to imposing limits on the characters. Suppose you decree that no one can have more than 60 Active Points in attacks. Suddenly, all the characters become boringly alike in terms of their attacks — everyone is rolling 12d6. Yawn. Even worse, when one of the players wants to create a character who has a special attack — for example, a wizard with a limited-use spell that's much more effective than his standard enchantments — he can't do it, because there's a cap on damage.

You should also make sure that each character has his own "shtick" and that no character steps on another character's toes too much. If there's already one flame-based energy projector in the game, don't allow another player to create a flame-based character, unless both players agree that it's all right. If one character is the stealth expert or computer wizard, don't allow another character to equal his skills in his chosen area of expertise. Every player likes to feel that his character's special in some way.

BUILDING BALANCED CHARACTERS

The concept of "balanced" characters was mentioned above. One of the most important reasons for you to be involved in the player character creation process is to ensure that all of the characters are "balanced" — in other words, to make sure that (a) no character is more effective, on the average, than any other character, and (b)

that no character possesses a power or powers that lets him wreak havoc on the game. Ultimately the *HERO System* rules can only do so much to ensure balance; much of the burden rests on your shoulders as GM.

Theoretically, in a properly constructed points-based gaming system, any X points spent on one power or ability should be equally as effective as X points spent on any other power or ability, in the long run. Obviously in certain situations, particular characters or abilities are especially useful or powerful, but on the average, all abilities of equal point cost should have equal effectiveness. Unfortunately, practical experience shows that this is not always the case. Certain abilities — high STR, high SPD, high defenses, or Mental Powers, for example — prove disproportionately effective in many campaigns. If you've found this to be the case, you need to limit those powers in some way to make sure they don't affect the balance of the campaign.

Some GMs take the heavy-handed tactic of simply forbidding the PCs to buy certain powers. Resist the temptation to do this; it restricts player creativity, and the scope of creativity offered to players and GMs is the *HERO System's* greatest asset. Similarly, don't restrict certain powers to "villains and NPCs only"; that's extremely unfair to the players. Instead, limit Active Points by character type or power, as discussed above, or impose restrictions on the use of powers that are subject to abuse. For example, if high SPDs are giving you grief, require characters with high SPDs to have an END cost on all their powers. Make it clear to the players in advance which powers you consider potentially abusive, and how you've solved the problem — and if your solution doesn't work, you reserve the right to require them to make retroactive changes to their characters.

Another aspect of character balance concerns where characters spend their points. If a character spends all of his points on attacks, defenses, and similar combat abilities, not only will he be unbalancingly powerful in combat situations, he'll become bored when there isn't a fight going on, because he won't be able to do anything. Make sure characters aren't "one-dimensional" — that they can do things in many different situations. Few campaigns involve nothing but combat, or nothing but sneaking around, or nothing but NPC interaction and romantic intrigue. A good campaign involves elements of *all* of these things, and more, and a well-developed character can fight on all battlefields.

On a related point, don't overlook the importance of Skills. Skills help round out a character — make him a real person with a job, hobbies, and interests — instead of just a cardboard combat machine. In some situations, like sneaking into an enemy's castle, Skills are as useful as, or more useful than, most Powers... and they're a lot more fun to roleplay besides. Knowledge is power, and in the *HERO System*, Skills show what a character knows. As a good rule of thumb, players should spend at least 10% of a character's points on Skills.

MAINTAINING THE MYSTERY

One of the drawbacks to roleplaying games is that each player knows exactly what his character is capable of: how strong he is, how much damage he can do, his odds of performing a feat of agility, and so forth. The *HERO System*, which tries to quantify nearly everything about a character, suffers from this problem in particular. But in fiction and movies, characters *don't* know exactly what they can do. They have a pretty good guess most of the time, but they never know for certain that "I've got a 15-chance to succeed!"

If you want, you can try to inject this element of uncertainty into your games. You can't be absolute about it — players are always going to have to know what their characters' Characteristics, Skills, and abilities are, because they created their characters — but you can "maintain the mystery" a little.

(Continued on next page)



FLESHING OUT THE CHARACTERS

Once all the players have their characters' numbers down on paper, it's time to look behind the numbers. Each player should provide you with a background for his character, information on his motivations and psychology, descriptions of how his abilities or powers work (if necessary), and a description of the character (or better yet, a picture of him, if there's an artist in your group). If a player can't come up with an interesting "background story" about his character that intrigues you, you're losing scenario fodder. The PCs should be one of your most fertile sources of story ideas, but every GM has difficulty telling stories about characters he doesn't like. A character background that doesn't give you some "hooks" to tie the character into the game and build stories around is a character background that's worthless in game terms (however interesting a story it might be).

CHARACTER MOTIVATION AND CAMPAIGN COMPATIBILITY

One of the worst things you can confront as GM is a character who has no motivation to be a hero. Characters who aren't willing to act heroically or who only use their abilities in mercenary ways spoil your game if it's about Being A Hero and Fighting Evil. Unless the tone of the game suits such characters, you'll just become frustrated and aggravated trying to get them to participate and be part of the campaign.

Make sure all the players know what you have in mind regarding heroic motivations — are they

necessary or not? They can range from *noblesse oblige*, to a simplistic Desire To Do Good, to being fated by the gods to save the world, to an effort to take revenge on the underworld because criminals inflicted some tragedy on the character, to dozens of others. As long as it gives you a hook to draw the character into the story on a regular basis, it works.

Similarly, make sure characters are compatible with the other goals and themes of the campaign. If the ultimate goal of the campaign is to overthrow the evil Star Empire, and one of the characters has some innate interest in seeing the Empire upheld (perhaps he's the child of a powerful noble and likes the wealth and privileges), then that character probably isn't going to fit into the campaign. There are exceptions — perhaps the player wants to develop a story around the character in which he learns there's more to life than wealth and privilege — but examine any character whose motivations conflict with the themes of the campaign very carefully.

Controlling Character Power And Growth

It's difficult to try to make sure that each PC is balanced — powerful enough for the player to have fun and emulate the source material (comics, novels, and movies) which inspires him, yet not so powerful that he makes the game less fun for the other players. This problem starts as soon as players begin designing characters. Providing guidelines for character creation, as discussed above, and making sure the players follow them strictly, is usually a good step toward having a balanced campaign. An experienced GM will have an instinctive "feel" for what is balanced and what is unbalancingly powerful; a novice GM has to develop this capacity through experience.

It's more difficult to maintain character balance over time, as the characters gain Experience Points and begin to grow in power. If you run your game on any kind of a regular basis, it won't be long before the players are chafing at the bit to increase their characters' power (which usually means the number of dice of damage they roll and how much defense they have). They'll start pestering you to increase the limits you placed on the campaign, to allow them to buy powers you disallowed during the character creation process, and to buy powers and abilities that don't really fit their character.

Resist the temptation to give in to the players' demands. True, you want them to have fun — but how long will the game remain fun if it turns into an "arms race," with each PC scrambling to earn the Experience Points to buy +2d6 for his Blast because Captain Courage just did the same thing? The emphasis of such a game often moves quickly away from roleplaying and storytelling into materialistic attempts to earn copious Experience Points. (Of course, if you like this, let it happen — there's not a thing in the world wrong with it, and you should do what you want in your own game.)

But sooner or later you'll have to allow some growth. If you never increase the campaign limits on CVs, DCs, SPD, defenses, and the like, after a year or two of campaigning all the characters will meet the limits in all categories and know every Skill in the book.

The best way to control character growth is to let it proceed slowly while you monitor it carefully. When you feel the time is right, start increasing the campaign limits — but with little nudges, not wholesale raises. Make sure all players get your approval for new abilities or Skills. Think very carefully about the impact the purchase will have on the campaign. An extra point of SPD doesn't sound like much, for example — but as any experienced *HERO System* gamer will tell you, one little itty-bitty point of SPD can make all the difference in the world in many games.

You, and your players, need to be ready to make retroactive changes in characters if necessary. Sometimes an ability doesn't seem unbalancing or overly effective at first blush, but the rigors of play reveal that it's not something you want in your game. If so, tell the player (in a nonconfrontational way) that the ability simply isn't working out and that he'll have to change it. Stress the need to keep the game as a whole fun for everyone — good, mature gamers will accept this explanation (or at least accede to your request gracefully). For the sake of fairness, make sure the players know in advance that you reserve the right to do this.

PLAYER CHARACTERS VERSUS THE REST OF THE WORLD

One useful way for you to evaluate how effective the PCs are is to figure out how they compare, in terms of power and competence, to the rest of the world — not just to other characters like themselves, but to the general population.

HERO VERSUS HERO

How powerful are the PCs in relation to similar characters?

If they tend to be less powerful, problems may result. The PCs could be beaten time after time, only to be rescued by established NPCs. This is extremely bad for the morale of players and characters alike, so you should avoid it whenever possible. On the other hand, if a beginning group of PCs is recognized as such, and more established heroes offer advice and training (but only if is asked) and accept the PCs as peers-in-the-making without demonstrating their inferiority at every turn, you can minimize or eliminate problems of this sort.

If the PCs tend to be about as powerful as other heroes, they more readily gain the acceptance of the public as heroes, and the respect of other heroes as colleagues. This approach requires the least attention and work from you as GM.

If the PCs tend to be more powerful than other heroes, they'll have the opportunity to deal with the most dangerous adventures and terrifying

threats. They'll be the ones the public turns to when aliens invade, when Mechanon threatens to destroy the world, when Dr. Petrie plans to use his Aethero-Corruscator Ray to obliterate New York City, or the Dark Overlord is about to plunge all the land into tyranny. And the fact that the PCs are the most powerful can itself be the inspiration for one or more adventures. Why are they most powerful? Are there no other heroes, or has the "source" of heroes been cut off somehow?

Over time, a Player Character team's comparative power can change. As years of play-time pass, a group of PCs that starts out comparatively underpowered can become the equal of other heroes out there, and perhaps become their colleagues, or take their places when they decide to retire.

HEROES VERSUS NORMALS

As noted above, the more powerful heroes are, the less notice they have to take (and thus tend to take) of normal NPCs. For example, in a Champion campaign with low-powered super-heroes, a thug with a gun or a group of agents with blasters represents a credible threat (even if it's one a PC expects to handle pretty easily). The more power each PC has, the less likely it is that you can threaten him with such mundane opponents. Given enough points, a PC has nothing to fear but other heroes, super-technology, and the like — which can have real consequences for their approach to the world. So, as you plan your campaign and decide how many Character Points players get to build characters with, you need to decide how you want them to relate to "normals."

HEROES VERSUS THE ENVIRONMENT

The more powerful PCs are, the more likely it is that accidents with their powers (most commonly, missed attacks in urban environments) will cause serious, even tragic damage to their surroundings. (For that matter, it's also more likely they can deliberately break their environment.) A Blast 8d6 hitting a brick building punches through and hurts the average man about as badly as a normal person's blow from a baseball bat. The same thing happening with a Blast 16d6 also punches through the average man, turning him into a fine red mist and his family into outraged survivors.

So, it's best to remind characters occasionally that they are not only adventuring in a world that's all too often delicate by their standards, but they need to be responsible for their actions. If they do not rescue those they've imperiled, help those they've injured, and accept responsibility (ethical, if not financial) for harm they've done, they'll soon lose any public acceptance they've gained. The public will call for laws to curtail their activities, and the nation's leaders will pass those laws. Heroes who scoff at these reactions will be surprised when the government assembles its own group of powerful people to deal with them — or when it turns teams of investigators loose to ferret out the PCs' Secret Identities.

The best way to do this is to keep damage rolls secret from the players. Instead of them realizing that they just did 57 STUN and 14 BODY to the dragon, you describe what happens: "The dragon roars in pain as your sword scores a deep gash down his flank." The players can *guess*, from your description, how badly they hurt the enemy, but they won't know for certain.

To keep damage rolls secret, you have to do one of two things. One, you can roll damage for the players. Many players object strenuously to this, though. Two, have each player make 30 or 40 Attack Rolls and damage rolls with his primary attacks in advance, and write them down. Then take the list of rolls away from them. During the game, cross the rolls off one at a time in some pre-defined order and apply the results.

The same applies to Skill Rolls, rolls to use Deflection, and the like. By keeping the exact, quantified results concealed from the players, you can assert more control over the narrative elements of the scenario, and thus improve the roleplaying/storytelling experience for everyone.

THE ARMS RACE

Weapons and fighting skills are a prominent part of many *HERO System* games; others, such as Champions campaigns, involve innate powers that take the place of weapons. In either case, it's not uncommon for an "arms race" to develop in the campaign sooner or later. The players start trying to get more and bigger weapons (or powers) for their characters, and they cry foul when the GM doesn't reward them with "treasure" in the form of salvaged assault weapons, grenades, blaster pistols, or whatever else fits the campaign. Some of them even spend a lot of Character Points on Skills related to building, finding, or repairing weapons just to ensure they've got as much access as possible to the maximum firepower.

There isn't necessarily anything wrong with this — after all, finding "treasure" is a prominent aspect of many genres, and more than one superhero has experienced a "radiation accident" and developed new powers during the course of his crimefighting career. But the arms race becomes a problem if the PCs acquire so much military hardware (or so many powers) that they have little difficulty defeating their opposition. All good stories involve a challenge of some kind that the protagonists have to overcome. If your PCs can cut through legions of mutant creatures, orcs, or supervillains without breaking a sweat because they've got a minor arsenal's worth of weaponry or enough magic



to blow up the moon, there's no challenge for them, and therefore everyone has less fun. Dealing with this conflict — wanting to give the characters more "toys," but not so many that they wreck the game — is one of the hardest "juggling acts" for a GM to pull off.

Here are some suggestions to help you reduce or eliminate this problem. Most relate to actual weapons but you can find ways to apply them to innate powers as well.

- *Give the characters "toys" with limited uses:* Giving the characters an unlimited supply of grenades can easily unbalance a campaign. Giving them half a dozen grenades that they have to save for only the most crucial situations is fun. Fortunately, it's often easy to restrict characters' access to heavy weapons.
- *Give them "toys," but don't let them use them for very long:* Just because the heroes find weapons doesn't mean they get to use them forever. They may have a limited supply of ammunition (a common occurrence in the some genres), or the weapon may be on the verge of breaking down after just a few shots. And of course an enemy can always steal the PCs' gear.
- *Substitute equipment damage for character damage:* When a character takes major damage from an enemy's attack, have that attack damage or destroy a weapon or piece of equipment rather than the character. You might even give the player a choice between character damage and equipment damage — a player who doesn't want to give up his character's gear can always opt to have his character take the actual damage. Similarly, you can have NPC attackers target the PCs' weapons.

And don't forget — the bad guys can have powerful "toys," too. Anything the PCs use against their enemies, their enemies can use against them (though this also gives the PCs an opportunity to get those weapons by defeating their foes). Pointing this out to the PCs may cause them to rein themselves in voluntarily.

Incorporating Complications Into The Story

Complications are *storytelling tools* — nothing more, and nothing less, than handles built into a character to help you work him into the story you want to tell. Stories revolve around conflict, whether it's the naked conflict of enemy duking it out with enemy, or the more subtle conflicts of Man versus Conscience, Love versus Duty, or Conformity versus Independence. Complications are built-in conflicts for a GM to use to craft his story. The conflicts in some (Hunted, Psychological Complications) are obvious; in others (DNPCs, Physical Complications) they're less so, but just think about them for a while and you'll see them there.

One of the skills you'll learn as a GM is how to integrate Complications into the story in elegant ways. Anyone can integrate them crudely — “Arkelos is Hunted by the Circle of Dark Mages, right, Bob?” “Right.” “Okay, then, the Circle's just summoned a demon and threatens to unleash it on the city of Arkenford unless you come fight him.” “Ulp.” See? That's not hard at all. But it's not a very good story, either. Rather than having the Dark Mages make a blatant, outright attack on Arkelos, the GM should strive to use Arkelos's Hunted to create an intriguing story that entertains everyone — and that gives him a chance to showcase the Circle's fiendish evil. For example, the GM can create several scenarios in which the Mages use their power and influence to bedevil Arkelos from behind the scenes. Magically controlled servants sent to test his power, mercenary groups aided by the Circle to strike at and weaken Arkelos and his friends, a series of crimes through which the Mages acquire the items they need to enchant a weapon to exploit Arkelos's Vulnerability — all of these offer more story potential than a simple attack. It's only after going through a long series of indirect mini-struggles against the Circle that Arkelos and his teammates finally get a crack at the evil cabal itself. Now *that's* a story. It's not Shakespeare, but it's much better gaming entertainment than a one-shot slugfest.

You can treat other Complications similarly. For example, rather than using Psychological Complications as a means for gauging the effectiveness of Mind Control or determining a character's reactions in a limited set of circumstances, craft a story arc whose themes and moods revolve around that aspect of the character's psyche — what will it take to make him seriously consider violating his Code Versus Killing? How much does he *really* Love the Princess? Is he really Amoral, or is it just a bitter facade hiding someone whose life experiences have made him afraid to trust and care anymore?

HOW MANY COMPLICATIONS?

Allowing a character to buy a particular Complication means you're agreeing to use that Complication in the game. That in turn means you have to remember which Complications all the characters have, decide how they factor into the campaign (both in general, and on a story arc-by-story arc or even game-by-game basis), and so forth. The more characters you have, the more Complications you have to worry about.

Therefore, you should consider altering the Matching Complication amount for the campaign based on the number of players, how much campaign planning work you want to do, and the like. The more players you have, often the smaller the Matching Complication amount should be. It's easy to adjust the amount up or down to suit yourself; the figures listed in the Character Types Guidelines Table aren't written in stone.

Some GMs like to have lots of Complications for each character (since every Complication is a “plot hook” and potential source of adventure). Others prefer a smaller amount so they can focus on each one much more and wring every last drop of story potential out of it. Some GMs even go so far as to reduce the Matching Complication amount to zero — they can trust their players to write down any Complications that are important for their characters even if they're not required to do so.

RUNNING THE CAMPAIGN

Okay, so you've got your world all set up, and the player have created acceptable (and even intriguing) characters. What next?

Episodic Versus Serial Campaigns

First, consider a basic question — will your campaign be Episodic, Serial, or something in between? *Episodic* campaigns have no continuity from story to story. The characters are the same, the settings are sometimes the same, but what happens in Game #1 has little or no effect on Game #2. *Serial* campaigns, by contrast, have very tight continuity and deeply interwoven plots. The events of one game hold great importance for the events of the next, since the games relate to one another and advance a greater story in tiny steps. If a player misses a game, or heaven forbid two, he'll have difficulty picking back up again because he missed important chunks of the story. At the very least, he'll need a lengthy explanation from you and his fellow players about what went on.

Most gaming campaigns fall somewhere in between these two extremes. They have some continuity, but not so much that missing a couple of games puts a player hopelessly out of the loop. Some campaigns mix periods of Serial gaming — often referred to as “story arcs” — with more Episodic games, which serve as a “breather” from the more in-depth Serial games.

Obviously, a Serial campaign requires a lot more forethought on your part, which is why you need to decide what kind of game you're going to run before starting the campaign. A Serial campaign works best if you do a lot of planning in advance. If you know what's coming up two scenarios down the line, you can begin planting clues and introducing the first tentative stirrings of the upcoming story now, instead of springing it full-blown on the players in a couple of weeks. Of course, if you plan games in advance this way, you need to leave yourself a little leeway to pursue the new stories the PCs create during their adventures, and to counteract any PC activity that deviates too far from the planned storyline (a little deviation usually helps the campaign, too much ruins it). Never expect the players to follow your storylines exactly; they'll surprise you at every turn if you do.

Storytelling

Roleplaying games are at least partly about *interactive storytelling*: the GM and the players work together to create their own story, rather than reading or watching one created by someone else. Therefore a good GM learns about the literary devices that make stories work, and uses them.

THEME

The most important aspect to many stories is *theme*. Roughly speaking, theme refers to the special or distinctive concern of the campaign, or, to put it another way, the underlying subject of the campaign. Unlike plot — the main story being told in a particular scenario, series of scenarios, or campaign — theme is not usually obvious or straightforward; it stays in the background, occasionally coming to the foreground for brief discussion or attention by the players and their characters. “Stop the Circle of Dark Mages from taking over the world” is a plot; “what are the characters willing to sacrifice to stop the Circle?” is a theme. In a sense, you could think of theme as the “big questions” behind the various plots the characters become involved in.

All good campaigns have a theme or themes, though these may change over time. A campaign may start with a particular theme, only to have that theme mutate as the characters grow and some of the “big questions” are answered (if this is possible) or thoroughly explored. Some themes commonly seen in gaming campaigns include:

Heroism: what does it mean to be a “hero”? What does it take to become one? Why is one character considered a hero, and another not?

Sacrifice: what are the characters willing to give up or forego to achieve the goals of the campaign, and the goals they’ve set for themselves? If it’s a choice between “doing the right thing” and giving up something the character really treasures, which will he choose?

Justice, Law, and “The System”: what is the meaning of justice, and how does it differ from the law? Is it right for the characters to “take the law into their own hands,” or to decide what justice should be meted out to a villain? Is it worthwhile to work within “the System”? Does might make right?

Preserving the status quo: In many Fantasy games, as well as other types of campaigns, one underlying premise is that the current state of affairs is good and worth preserving. The antagonists — the Circle of Dark Mages, the Shadow Lord, or the like — wants to change the status quo, typically by placing themselves in positions of power, and the characters have to stop them.

MOOD AND ATMOSPHERE

Mood and atmosphere represent what the characters (and players) feel and think about the events of the scenario. If the players can “see” and “feel” what their characters see and feel, you’re doing a good job of creating a mood and drawing the players into it. Creating mood and atmosphere is often difficult — after all, you’re in a well-lit room, surrounded by your friends, with food and drink at hand. You’re comfortable. Jerking the players’ minds out of their surroundings so that they can feel the mood and place themselves within the story is tough. Therefore, a good GM often uses props and other “tricks” to help create mood. Some examples include:

Handouts describing the world around the characters. This helps foster a sense of verisimilitude and makes the world come to life for the players. Handouts can include everything from “campaign newspapers” detailing what’s going on in the fictional world, to scenario-specific clues (e.g., fabricated newspaper articles or maps containing information helpful to the PCs), to background information about subjects of special interest to the players.

Music. Good music does more to create a mood than just about anything else. Shop around for music that conveys certain feelings to you, then play it softly in the background during the game (instrumental soundtracks are often the best sources for this sort of music).

Lighting. Vary the lighting as appropriate to the scenario. If the characters are in a dim room, shut off all the lights but one or two. If the PCs are invading a wizard’s sanctum or chasing down some mystic horror, light the room with candles.

Acting. Use accents, changes of tone, changes of posture, and other “hooks” to help yourself get in character, and thus to portray that character well to your players.

Narration. Describe scenes in detail, covering all five senses. Use analogies to bring home the impact of what the characters are seeing. Don’t assume the players visualize what you’re visualizing; make sure you’re all on the same page by telling them exactly where they are, what it’s like, and what they can perceive.

It almost goes without saying that a well-detailed world does a lot to create mood and atmosphere, particularly if the world is unusual or strange (like many Fantasy worlds or alternate dimensions). The more information the players have about the world, the more unique little details they know about it, the better they can “sense” it and get in synch with its ambience.

Don’t forget that players and their characters have five senses (at least!). Rather than limiting yourself to describing what they see, mention what they can hear, smell, feel, and possibly even taste. Sometimes a smell or slight noise can go much further towards conveying mood than a visual can.

NARRATION AND DESCRIPTIVE GEMASTERING

Not all aspects of the game have to involve dice-rolling — not even combat, necessarily. Instead, you can simply narrate or describe what happens. This has several advantages: it speeds up play, it usually helps emphasize mood and roleplaying, and it gives you greater control over the events of the game. However, it also has some drawbacks: it deprives the participants of the objectivity of the rules, it robs the players/PCs of the feeling of accomplishment they get by doing something “on their own” with dice, and it gives you greater control over the events of the game.

The key to using narration is to use it at the proper moments with the proper players. Narration almost always works well when describing what the characters perceive (such as when they’re surveilling a possible villain base or tossing an NPC’s room for clues), but less well in combat situations. Most players aren’t willing to participate in narrated combat for fear of you taking advantage of the situation. However, if you can entice one or two to try it, and you do it fairly, they’ll learn how much fun it can be — and they’ll tell the others.

Use And Abuse Of The Rules

No one should try to GM any game without having a thorough understanding of the rules. Trying to play the game without knowing the rules is like trying to fly a plane without being able to read the instruments. As the creator of the world and arbiter of all that goes on within it, you must be well-versed in the rules governing play in that world, or the whole experience will frustrate everyone. No one will enjoy your game if you spend half the time flipping through the rulebook looking for a particular rule. Furthermore, a GM who doesn’t know the rules well is leaving himself open to manipulation by players who do.

However, there’s an extremely important *caveat* to this — **DON’T LET THE RULES GET IN THE WAY OF HAVING FUN**. If a particular rule spoils your fun, ignore it, discard it or change it. One of the greatest things about roleplaying games is that they allow you and your players to change the game to make it better for you — take advantage of it!

Don’t let “rules lawyers” among your players ruin everyone else’s fun. There have to be *some* rules, to make things fair and consistent for everyone; in most situations you should follow the rules. But if Player A consistently comes up with clever maneuvers or fun ideas that don’t strictly follow the rules, and Player B constantly points out that rules are being violated and tries to stop what Player A’s doing, ignore Player B and let Player A charge ahead. Player B isn’t trying to do anything other than use his knowledge of

the rules to exert power and authority over the other players and you — and the only person who enjoys that is Player B. If he’s not willing to “go with the flow” and let you loosen the rules in the name of drama and storytelling, then he’s more of a hindrance to the game than a help.

Similarly, don’t get hung up trying to figure out the “exact right way” to build something using the *HERO System* rules, or trying to determine the precise rules effect of a particular power construction. The *HERO System* is detailed and flexible, and there are often many different ways to create a particular power, item, or effect — and in many cases two or more of them are equally valid. Once you have a reasonable construction that you think does what you want it to do, let the ability or item work that way — don’t worry about whether it would or would not work that way according to a strict interpretation of the rules. *The rules are there to help you, not hinder you.*

On a related note, don’t argue with players about the rules in mid-game. That only disrupts the story and slows the game down. Use your control and authority as GM to declare what the rule will be for now, and tell the players that if they want to discuss it or offer other options, to talk to you about it after the game.

Playing To The Player Characters

As a GM, you’ll find it all too easy to get caught up in *your* story, the great tale you’ve got planned out, and to make sure you tell that story — no matter how many improbable plot twists you have to throw in or player actions you have to ignore to make sure your story takes place. But *the Player Characters are the focus of your story*, and therefore they and their players are the most important elements in your story. You should slant the story to suit them, not the other way around. Learning how to do this, and do it well, is one of the hardest things about good GMing.

The first and most important thing to do is to plan stories that your players and PCs *want* to participate in without having to drag them along by rings through their noses. There are plenty of ways to do this. First, work the PCs’ Complications into the story, as discussed above — if it’s someone’s archenemy, girlfriend, or Vulnerability that’s involved, the PCs have an incentive to get in on the action. Second, make sure each PC has his moment in the sun — a scenario featuring *him* as the main character. One of the standard ways of doing this is to bring something from that character’s past back to haunt him — an old enemy he thought was dead, a long-lost love, anything like that. If the player has developed a “background story” for his character, then incorporate part of it into a scenario, allowing the PC to learn more about himself.

Second, learn to adapt your stories to the players' cool and interesting ideas. Many a GM rejects ideas that the players come up with in the middle of a story, simply because the players' idea is different from what he has in mind. It doesn't matter if the players' solution to the mystery or combat situation is as good as, or better than, his own; he's determined to follow through with *his* story, and damn the consequences. This is wrong. Remember, your story focuses on the players and their characters. If they come up with an idea that's as good as (or better than) what you had planned or thought they would do, and you can adapt the story to conform to their ideas without ruining other parts of it or making major changes in the campaign world, do it. The players will gain a great sense of accomplishment and heap praise upon you for your excellent GMing — and you didn't have to do a thing but listen to them and react accordingly.

Similarly, when a player asks, "Is there a so-and-so nearby?" he usually has some neat idea in mind for using it, something you'll likely enjoy. Unless it's just impossible for that object to be in that area, tell him yes. He'll feel like he's contributing to the story and the world, and you get to have fun seeing just what he has in mind.

However, don't think you *always* have to change to suit the players — if it would be too much trouble, or would cause major changes in the world or the NPCs, don't do it. Sometimes the players' ideas are based on misconceptions about the world and its characters, or they're acting on less than all of the relevant information, or they just plain make mistakes. In those situations, stick to your guns and follow through with the story as planned.

Third, include opportunities for both roleplaying and combat in your games. Few players or PCs want exclusively one or the other in their games. Think about your favorite stories, the ones you really like — how many of them are just combat, or just roleplaying? Probably none; a good story or movie mixes in both elements. Your games should, too.

One good way to foster roleplaying is to use *bluebooking*. Bluebooking is nothing more than writing out roleplaying and conversations between characters, rather than acting them out (usually this takes place between game sessions). Sometimes players feel uncomfortable acting out some scenes (such as love scenes), or want to keep some scenes private. This presents a perfect opportunity to use bluebooking. Bluebooking also has the advantage of permanence; you keep the written records of what went on, and can use them to create future scenarios.

SAYING "YES"

A lot of GMing advice, not just in this chapter but in many other articles and books on the subject, is about controlling the game in some way — in short, about saying "No." But it's just as important for you to remember to say "Yes" if you can. When a player comes up with a character he'd really like to play, let him unless you've got a compelling reason not to. When he has an idea for an exciting in-game action, let him try it — and if appropriate, give him a small bonus to help him succeed. When a player thinks he's solved a mystery, if his solution is better than the one you had in mind, say "Yes, you're right," and keep going as if that's what you planned all along. You'll be rewarded with highly satisfied players and a well-earned reputation as a "great GM."

The Limits Of Genre Simulation

Every GM is inspired by certain genres. A Champions GM draws inspiration from classic elements of comic books; a Fantasy GM may look to *The Lord Of The Rings* or other Fantasy novels to inspire him; a Science Fiction campaign GM may want to emulate *Star Trek*, *Babylon 5*, or the *Star Wars* movies. But at the same time, remember that important differences exist between the source material and your game that will keep you from simulating the genre perfectly.

The biggest difference between the source material and gaming is that in the source material, the writer controls *all* of the characters. They zig when they're supposed to zig, and zag when that's what he wants. But in gaming, the writer — you, the GM — only controls *some* of the characters. The most important characters, the PCs, are beyond your direct control. They aren't necessarily going to react the way they would if you were in charge. Therefore, planning scenarios that require the PCs to take certain actions at certain times can lead to disaster, since the players may not do what the GM wants them to.

The need for game balance also limits your ability to simulate some genres or character types. For example, you can't use some comic book characters in your Champions game, particularly as PCs, because they're too powerful or there's some other aspect to them which doesn't fit in a game. For example, it would be extremely unbalancing to allow a PC to be invulnerable or unhittable, even though some comic book characters have those powers.

In short, don't use "genre simulation" as your yardstick in measuring the quality of your scenarios. The differences between the source material and roleplaying games make that an apples and oranges comparison.

DEADLY DON'TS: HOW TO RUIN YOUR CAMPAIGN WITH THINGS PLAYERS HATE

Most of this chapter is devoted to “Dos.” This section discusses half a dozen “Don’ts” — things you should try to avoid as a GM.

The main way to figure out what the “Don’ts” are for your group is simple — get to know your players. At a basic level, find out how much gaming experience they have, how much experience they have with the *HERO System* rules, what they generally like and dislike in a game, and their level of maturity. The latter is particularly important; don’t run complex dramas requiring rational, mature responses and interaction from a group that mainly wants to beat up bad guys and considers “Beavis and Butthead” high culture.

With this in mind, here’s a short list of “Don’ts” for *HERO System* games:

1. Don’t take the PCs prisoner any more than necessary:

It’s almost impossible to express just how much players *hate* to have their characters taken prisoner. They absolutely can’t stand it. You’ll find this attitude even in mature players who ought to be more willing to go along with the story — players sufficiently familiar with the genre to know that getting taken prisoner happens frequently to heroes in the source material and is one of the primary ways to find out what the master villain is planning. Being taken prisoner represents losing, even if it’s only temporary, and players hate that. So, don’t take them prisoner any more than you have to. Sometimes it’s necessary, and sometimes you can’t help it, but don’t plan to do it very often.

2. Don’t let the PCs play “second fiddle” to NPCs:

Second only to having their characters taken prisoner, players hate having their characters play “second fiddle” to NPCs — or, even worse, having NPCs rescue them when they’re in trouble. The PCs are the focus of the story and the campaign; they shouldn’t be directly overshadowed by NPCs. This is not to say that the PCs have to be the most powerful characters in the world. You can have NPCs more powerful than the PCs in the game, even *much* more powerful. Such NPCs can act as sources of information for the PCs, or as inspiration to show them what they’re capable of becoming. Just don’t rub the PCs’ noses in their inferiority or have the NPCs outdo them at every turn. Keep the use of NPCs who are more powerful than the PCs to a minimum.

3. Don’t mutilate their DNPCs: Being a hero’s DNPC is dangerous — DNPCs get attacked, injured, kidnapped, mind-controlled by aliens, used as a spell component by evil magicians, and otherwise abused. But DNPCs are usually something of a constant in a hero’s life, and players like it this way. So, don’t severely injure DNPCs or make major changes to

them without the player’s approval. A DNPC who spends most of the game in the hospital isn’t any good to the player or to you.

4. Don’t treat the dice as God: Sometimes dice are a necessary element of gaming — but they’re not the be-all-and-end-all of it. Don’t fall into the trap of thinking that what the dice say, must be so. If the result dictated by the dice isn’t dramatic, or would substantially interfere with your story, ignore it.

5. Don’t be unfair, biased, obsessed with perfection, or show favoritism:

This should go without saying, but unfortunately it doesn’t. Too many GMs are all too liable to be biased towards, or show favoritism to, certain PCs. Maybe he likes a particular PC better, or maybe it’s his girlfriend’s PC, or maybe that PC just gives him more ideas for stories. Regardless, keep your approach to all of the PCs even and fair. Bend over backwards to make sure you treat all the PCs the same.

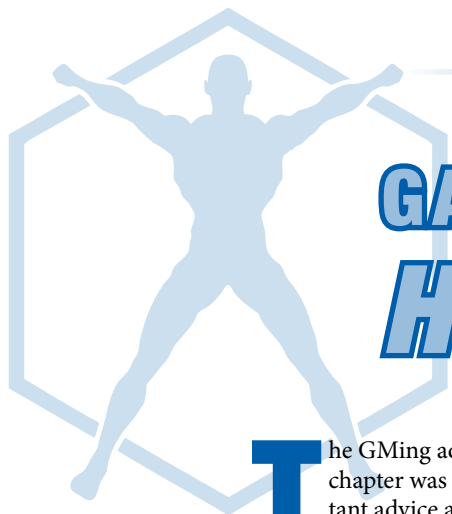
On a related note, when you’re GMing, don’t think that you have to be perfect or that you can’t admit that you were wrong. If the players catch you in a mistake, admit you made it and do what you can to correct it. Blatant ass-covering just makes the players think that no matter what they do, you’re going to keep them from accomplishing things.

6. Don’t make decisions that motivate the players in negative ways:

The decisions you make as you run the game send a message to the players, and they’ll respond accordingly. If you say you want them to do something, or to play certain types of characters, you have to be sure not to penalize them for it. For example, suppose you say you want all PCs to be noble-hearted, heroic, and ethical. But if you constantly take advantage of the characters’ moral codes, and put them in situations where there’s no way to act and feel “heroic,” what you’re actually telling them is *not* to play noble-hearted, heroic characters. You’re encouraging them to play just the opposite type of character so they don’t get jerked around constantly and aren’t forced to suffer through things they don’t consider fun. If you want “heroic” characters, put them in situations where they can be “heroic”... and then let them.

7. Don’t prevent the players from doing what they want to do:

A good GM always requests feedback from his players, so that he can find out what they like and dislike about his game, what they want to do in the game, and what sort of scenarios they enjoy. Then he takes those requests and nuggets of constructive criticism into account when designing stories and scenarios. A bad GM does what he wants regardless of what the players like.



GAMEMASTERING THE HERO SYSTEM

The GMing advice in the first part of this chapter was largely “neutral” — important advice about how to GM that could apply to nearly any roleplaying game. This section discusses issues and practices that relate specifically to GMing the *HERO System*.

THE 3D6 BELL CURVE

The *HERO System* uses 3d6 for Skill and Attack Rolls. This creates a “bell curve” of probabilities that determines whether characters succeed at the difficult tasks they encounter during their adventures. (The term “bell curve” comes from how the range of probabilities looks on a graph.)

The bell curve introduces an element of predictability and reliability into the game, since numbers near the low and high end of the range are much less likely to occur than numbers in the middle. (By comparison, a single-die system, such as rolling one twenty-sided die, has an equal probability of any given number occurring.) The accompanying Odds On 3d6 table shows the percentage chance to roll a given number or less on 3d6, and the chance to roll any given number exactly.

However, the bell curve has implications for game play and gamemastering. First, it affects the effectiveness of modifiers to Skill Rolls, CV/Attack Rolls, and the like. Even a small modifier can significantly change a character’s percentage chance to succeed, particularly if the base roll is at or near the midpoint of the curve (*i.e.*, 11-). On the other hand, if a character has a very high or low roll, even a large modifier may not affect his chance to succeed or fail very much.

ODDS ON 3D6

Roll	Chance To Roll Number Or Less On 3d6	Chance To Roll Number Exactly On 3d6
3	0.46%	0.5%
4	1.85%	1.4%
5	4.63%	2.8%
6	9.26%	4.6%
7	16.20%	6.9%
8	25.93%	9.7%
9	37.50%	11.6%
10	50.00%	12.5%
11	62.50%	12.5%
12	74.07%	11.6%
13	83.80%	9.7%
14	90.74%	6.9%
15	95.37%	4.6%
16	98.15%	2.8%
17	99.54%	1.4%
18	100.00%	0.5%

Don’t forget that in the *HERO System*, a roll of 3 always succeeds, and a roll of 18 always fails, unless the GM rules otherwise or a specific rule indicates a different result.

MODIFIER EFFECTS

Roll	-4	-3	-2	-1	+0	+1	+2	+3	+4
3	0.46%	0.46%	0.46%	0.46%	0.46%	1.85%	4.63%	9.26%	16.20%
4	0.46%	0.46%	0.46%	0.46%	1.85%	4.63%	9.26%	16.20%	25.93%
5	0.46%	0.46%	0.46%	1.85%	4.63%	9.26%	16.20%	25.93%	37.50%
6	0.46%	0.46%	1.85%	4.63%	9.26%	16.20%	25.93%	37.50%	50.00%
7	0.46%	1.85%	4.63%	9.26%	16.20%	25.93%	37.50%	50.00%	62.50%
8	1.85%	4.63%	9.26%	16.20%	25.93%	37.50%	50.00%	62.50%	74.07%
9	4.63%	9.26%	16.20%	25.93%	37.50%	50.00%	62.50%	74.07%	83.80%
10	9.26%	16.20%	25.93%	37.50%	50.00%	62.50%	74.07%	83.80%	90.74%
11	16.20%	25.93%	37.50%	50.00%	62.50%	74.07%	83.80%	90.74%	95.37%
12	25.93%	37.50%	50.00%	62.50%	74.07%	83.80%	90.74%	95.37%	98.15%
13	37.50%	50.00%	62.50%	74.07%	83.80%	90.74%	95.37%	98.15%	99.54%
14	50.00%	62.50%	74.07%	83.80%	90.74%	95.37%	98.15%	99.54%	100.00%
15	62.50%	74.07%	83.80%	90.74%	95.37%	98.15%	99.54%	100.00%	100.00%
16	74.07%	83.80%	90.74%	95.37%	98.15%	99.54%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
17	83.80%	90.74%	95.37%	98.15%	99.54%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
18	90.74%	95.37%	98.15%	99.54%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

The “+0” column indicates the chance to succeed with an unmodified roll. Remember that in the *HERO System*, a roll of 3 always succeeds, and a roll of 18 always fails, unless the GM rules otherwise, or a specific rule indicates a different result.



The accompanying Modifier Effects table shows how a modifier influences a character's chance to succeed with a roll. The “+0” column is the chance to succeed with an unmodified roll (the same as the first column in the Odds On 3d6 table). The entries in the other columns show the effect of bonuses and penalties. For example, if a character has an unmodified 14- roll, he has a

90.74% chance to succeed. A +2 bonus increases his chance of success to 98.15% (a mere 7.41% improvement). But if he started with an 11- roll (62.5% chance of success), a +2 bonus increases his odds to 83.80% (21.3% increase). That makes the +2 bonus nearly three times as effective, percentage-wise, when applied to the 11- roll as to the 14- roll.

Second, the bell curve means that differences in things that characters compare when “competing” — such as OCV versus DCV when one character tries to hit another, or Skill Rolls in a Skill Versus Skill Contest — have significant effects. As shown in the accompanying Effect Of Combat Value Differences table, a 2-point CV advantage for the attacker gives him an 84% chance to hit; 3 points 91%, 4 points 95% — in short, he’s not likely to miss. On the other hand, a 2-point CV advantage for the target reduces the attacker’s odds from 63% to 38%. Thus, even a single +/-1 CV modifier can have a significant effect on combat.

None of this is to say that you shouldn’t grant bonuses to (or impose penalties on) CV and Skill Rolls. You absolutely should, if they’re appropriate; that’s part of what makes the game exciting and fun. But before you assign a modifier, you should be aware of how it affects game play, so you can assign the *right* modifier.

EFFECT OF COMBAT VALUE DIFFERENCES

Attacker's OCV - Target's DCV is	Chance To Hit
6	99%
5	98%
4	95%
3	91%
2	84%
1	74%
0	63%
-1	50%
-2	38%
-3	26%
-4	16%
-5	9%
-6	5%

COMBAT BALANCE AND EFFECTIVENESS

Aside from the Total Points each character receives (which is at best a loose measure of character comparison), the *HERO System* doesn't have any specific method for making sure all characters are equally effective in game play, or to help you determine how they compare to their opposition. Artificial restrictions on how many Character Points a character can spend on an ability, or establishing prerequisites for buying certain abilities, tend to inhibit creativity and flexibility in character creation. That's contrary to *HERO's* spirit and intent.

Nevertheless, in some campaigns the GM finds it helpful to establish guidelines that govern the character creation process, to ensure that each character is a suitable "fit" for the campaign world

THE RULE OF X

Some GMs like to combine Point and Effectiveness Ceilings into a single formula called *the Rule of X*. Basically what the Rule of X says is that the character's various abilities — attacks, defenses, SPD, and so on — cannot, when added together, total more than X. Each GM defines "X" based on how powerful he wants characters to be in his game. A typical Standard Superheroic *Champions* campaign probably sets X at around 30-40.

Each GM has to decide what game elements he wants to factor into the Rule of X calculation. Some possibilities for an offensive Rule of X include:

- the number of DCs in the character's most powerful attack (or the Active Points in the attack divided by 5)
- the character's highest possible OCV with his most powerful attack (assuming he uses all Combat Skill Levels for OCV; the GM may or may not also want to include bonuses from commonly-used Combat or Martial Maneuvers)
- the character's SPD
- the Active Points divided by 5 in primarily offensive powers like Aid

Most GMs establish a separate Rule of X for defense. Its factors often include:

- the total points in the character's most powerful defense (or the Active Points in that defense, divided by 5)
- the character's highest possible DCV (assuming he uses all applicable Combat Skill Levels for DCV; the GM may or may not also want to include bonuses from commonly-used Combat or Martial Maneuvers)
- the character's SPD
- the Active Points divided by 5 in primarily defensive powers like Invisibility or Desolidification

By implementing a Rule of X, you can eliminate hard-and-fast Point and Effectiveness Ceilings in favor of more flexible guidelines. A Rule of X allows a character to have a much more powerful attack than his comrades — but at the expense of being slower or less accurate. Similarly, a character can have a high DCV, but not high defenses as well.

or follows the setting-specific rules established for the game. This section discusses some of the most common methods, including both their advantages and their drawbacks. These are *not* official *HERO System* rules in any way; there are no specific instructions for them, or requirements that you institute them. They're simply campaign management tools some GMs consider useful.

Point And Effectiveness Ceilings

Two of the most common tools used by GMs to manage characters in their campaigns are *Point Ceilings* and *Effectiveness Ceilings*. The first governs the amount of points characters can have in a power ability; the second controls the amount of Damage Classes or other measurement of effect regardless of points. In theory, either or both keep players from designing characters who are so one-dimensional they endanger themselves, or who create potential problems with the balance of play in the campaign.

POINT CEILINGS

Point Ceilings (also called "Point Caps") are restrictions the GM puts on the number of points a character can have in an individual power. Most Point Ceilings restrict the number of Active Points in any given power, but the GM can also (or alternately) place a cap on the Base Points (*i.e.*, points without Advantages or Limitations), or even the Real Points (the total cost of the power after all Advantages and Limitations are applied). For example, a *Champions* GM might establish a limit of 60 Active Points in any power, or 60 Base Points, or 50 Base Points and 75 Active Points, or 40 Real Points.

In many cases, GMs set Point Ceilings by comparing characters to "real world" phenomena and planning accordingly. For example, suppose that the average wall in the campaign world has 6 BODY, 6 PD, and 10 ED. If the GM wants characters to be able to smash through this wall with a single attack, they need to be able to do an average of 12 BODY damage (or 16 for energy attacks), so the GM might establish an Active Point limit of 60 points (an average of 12 DCs) or 70 points (an average of 14 DCs).

Obviously, Point Ceilings are a very artificial restriction. No specific rule in the *HERO System* prevents a character from taking his Total Points and plowing them all into, say, Strength. A player who did this would end up with a character who has a phenomenal STR — 150-400 or more, depending on the nature of the campaign. But that character also has CON 10, SPD 2, ED 2, and DCV 3. A well-trained ordinary human martial artist with a knife has a better-than-even chance of killing this super-strong monster without taking a blow in return. The ordinary human martial artist has a better DEX, and so goes first in every Phase; a better SPD, and so attacks more often; a better OCV and DCV, and so hits more often

and gets hit less often. Naturally, the STR 150+ superhuman can pick up a car as a club or knock a skyscraper over onto his foe, but not if the martial artist has slashed and Stunned him on the very first Segment of combat.

EFFECTIVENESS CEILINGS

Some GMs impose *Effectiveness Ceilings* — restrictions on the strength of powers (typically attacks, based on the Damage Classes in the attack). A campaign might, for example, restrict all attacks to no more than 12 DCs, regardless of the Active Points, Base Points, or other point calculations involved. Effectiveness Ceilings can also govern SPD, a character's CV with any given attack, Skill Rolls, the strength of Defense Powers, or many other game elements. A GM can use an Effectiveness Ceiling in addition to, or instead of, a Point Ceiling, mixing and matching them until he finds the right combination for his campaign.

PERILS AND PITFALLS

Point and Effectiveness Ceilings serve a useful function in many *HERO System* campaigns. They allow the GM to have a certain confidence in the effectiveness of the PCs, letting him design the NPCs (especially the villains) with equal confidence about the ease or difficulty the PCs will have affecting them. This helps the GM keep things balanced in his campaign, and ensures he can challenge the PCs without making their enemies undefeatable.

But Point and Effectiveness Ceilings suffer from a number of problems. First, they tend to cause a certain sameness in the campaign. If the GM imposes a 75 Active Point limit for powers in general, and a 12 DC limit on damage, just about every character in the campaign will have a 12 DC attack. Thus, no PC feels very special; it doesn't matter much that one character does 12d6 with his punch, one with his flame blast, and one with his wind-storm.

Second, Point Ceilings can cause problems because Active Points aren't always a very good way of evaluating the effectiveness or rarity of powers. A good tear gas grenade — something available to just about any law enforcement officer — can easily cost more than 75 Active Points, even though it's pretty common. An Attack Power with just a few DCs but a lot of Advantages tacked on to create an intriguing effect may exceed the campaign's Point Ceiling, yet not be very combat-effective, whereas a straightforward RKA 4d6 is well within the campaign's limits and much more useful on the average. (On the other hand, sometimes "Advantage stacking," discussed on 6E1 313, leads to extremely effective powers for a relatively cheap cost.)

So, GMs interested in using point or Effectiveness Ceilings may want to consider ways to eliminate or diminish these problems. Here are some suggestions:

ONLY COUNT CERTAIN ADVANTAGES

In the *HERO System*, all Advantages increase the Active Point cost of an ability. However, as discussed on 6E2 98, only some Advantages directly affect how a target takes damage. Many Advantages, while unquestionably useful in some situations, don't really increase the "raw power" of an attack the way the likes of Area Of Effect, AVAD, Armor Piercing, Double Knockback, or Penetrating do. For example, the *Indirect* Advantage is sometimes extremely helpful, in that it allows a character to bypass obstacles that block other attacks. But it doesn't increase the damage the attack can do in any way. Similarly, Reduced Endurance is very helpful to a character in general, but it doesn't make his attack more effective against an opponent. And yet, both Indirect and Reduced Endurance increase the Active Point cost of an attack. In a game with a hard-and-fast Active Point limit, this may make them a poor choice. In other words, the Active Point limit discourages players from building their attacks creatively, because a simple, un-Advantaged attack will be more effective more of the time.

The solution here is for the GM to only count damage-affecting Advantages (like the ones listed on 6E2 98) when determining the Active Points in attacks for Point Ceiling purposes. Advantages that don't affect damage either aren't counted at all, or are counted at a lesser value.

EXCEPTIONS FOR CHARACTER SHTICKS

Another approach to keeping reasonable limits on character powers is to impose a Ceiling of some sort but allow each character to exceed one Ceiling by a certain amount. This usually reflects a character's "shtick," or special/primary form of attack — a brick chooses STR as his one big power, an energy projector chooses Blast, and so on. Additionally, the GM may rule that each Power or ability can only have one character choose it to exceed the Ceiling.

For example, let's say the GM imposes a 60 Active Point limit on powers. Therefore a character might have a Blast 8d6, Penetrating, or STR 60, but could not exceed those values. However, the GM also allows each character to have one power with a 75 Active Point Ceiling. Each power in the game can only have one exception like this; if one character has 75 points in Flight, no one else can have a 75-point Flight power. The players must agree among themselves which character gets an exception for which power.

Thus, one character might have STR 75; no one else can have more than a 60. Another character might have a Blast 15d6 (with no Advantages); no one else can have more than a 12d6. Someone else might have an HKA 5d6; no other PC can exceed a 4d6. And so on. This means that the campaign itself effectively has an Active Point limit of 75, but each character has the opportunity to be recognized as the most powerful user of any specific ability.

DESIGNING FOR POWER

Even with Point Ceilings, Rules of X, or other limits, it's possible for creative players to figure out how to get some character effectiveness that exceeds the GM's restrictions. Sometimes this is done by stacking power effectiveness in inobvious ways.

Example: *A martial artist has a Strength of 20, a +4d6 Martial Maneuver, and +4 Extra Damage Classes. This gives him 12d6 damage, and the campaign's damage limit is 12 DCs. So far, so good.*

But elsewhere on his sheet he's bought +10 REC, Only For Recovering END Spent To Push (-2), for a total of 3 points. This is fairly innocuous, especially when it's away from the context of his combat damage. It just means he bounces back very fast from Pushing. But within the context of his combat damage, it means he can Push a lot, getting +2d6 to his attacks on a frequent basis, and for fewer points than buying +10 to his Strength or +2 Extra DCs.

Players can also do this simply by taking normal advantage of the rules. If a character has STR 40, he might be well within a campaign's Active Point limit of 60 points. But if he also has Flight 60m and ten Combat Skill Levels with Move Through, he can do 18d6 with that Maneuver (and hit pretty reliably with it), which is doubtless a violation of the spirit of his campaign's limits.

As GM, you don't necessarily want to ruthlessly crush this sort of "end run" around the campaign guidelines. To do so is to punish creativity on the players' parts, and in some cases to prevent PCs from having the opportunity for dramatic self-sacrifice. In the Move Through example above, it's the presence of the Combat Skill Levels that tips you off that the player plans for this to be part of the character's usual tactic. If you make the player remove the CSLs, the character still has the option to perform his mighty attack, but there are greater risks associated with it — he's much more likely to miss, so it becomes a last-ditch attack rather than a first-choice attack.

Similarly, once you get a feel for your how your players approach and play the *HERO System*, you can better judge whether they're trying to sneak around your Point and Effectiveness Ceilings. A responsible, mature roleplayer who understands the genre might build a character with STR 40, Flight 60m, and +10 with Move Through, but knowing how the genre works only use the full power of that attack as a last-ditch tactic — so, you can let him keep that ability without fearing he'll unbalance the game. On the other hand, a player who approaches the game as if it were a wargame, seeking to get maximum combat effect out of every power he buys and every Action he takes, is someone you need to keep a closer eye on and whose powers you need to evaluate more carefully — his conduct is much more likely to harm your campaign and ruin everyone's fun.

EXCEPTIONS FOR LIMITED-USE POWERS

Similarly, the GM might allow exceptions to Point and Effectiveness Ceilings if the exceptions are built as add-on powers usable once per day (or only subject to some equivalent restriction). This means a character, on those occasions when he really, desperately needs to call on additional power, can do so — once.

Example: *Capacitor is a flying energy projector. He has an Electromagnetic Pulse Blast, a Blast 12d6. It pushes right up against the campaign's 60 Active Point power limit. But the GM allows any character to have a +20 Active Point addition to one power, as long as it's only usable once per day or has an equivalent restriction. So, Capacitor buys the following ability:*

EMP Blast Boost: *Blast +4d6 (20 Active Points); 1 Charge (-2), Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x10 END; -4). Total cost: 3 points.*

With this power, it's as if Capacitor can Push for an additional +20 Active Points (the END cost is the same as for Pushing), and, once per day, he can project a 16d6 Electromagnetic Pulse Blast (18d6 if he actually Pushes on top of using his one-shot power-boost).

EXCEPTIONS FOR VILLAINS

Even if the GM chooses to follow the campaign Point and Effectiveness Ceilings when building NPCs and villains (and he should, usually), he doesn't *have* to. Character Point restrictions, generally speaking, are for PCs. The GM should design his NPCs however he needs to, to make them effective and powerful. Remember, villains and NPCs are often much less three-dimensional than PCs, and they're not "on camera" for every scene and event of the campaign. Thus, they can afford to build and use powers that would be too restrictive or unbalancing for a PC to have. For example, many master villains — the major enemies featured in the campaign — have powers far in excess of the campaign's usual Point and Effectiveness Ceilings. That's exactly how it should be; few master villains inspire awe and fear if they're no more powerful or capable than the PCs.

FIXED-COST POWERS

Powers with fixed costs (such as Desolidification, Enhanced Senses, or Life Support) pose an added challenge in games where characters are built on lots of Character Points. The more points a character has to work with, the smaller a percentage of them he has to spend on these abilities. That makes them a more and more attractive purchase, since they remain just as useful to the character. If you find that this causes character balance problems (for example, many common NNDs don't work anymore because every PC has full Life Support), then you might consider

“indexing” the fixed cost to the characters’ Total Points. Assume the cost listed in 6E1 is for a certain value of Total Points, then vary it up or down by the same percentage as the Total Points in your campaign. For example, suppose Standard Superheroic (400 Total Points) is the “default” where Desolidification costs 40 Character Points. If the PCs in your campaign are built on 600 Total Points (50% more), then Desolidification costs 60 Character Points (50% more); if the PCs are built on 175 Character Points (44% of 400), then Desolidification costs 18 Character Points (44% of 40). This can lead to other game balance problems, so tread carefully.

ADJUSTING CEILINGS OVER TIME

In campaigns that last for a long time, Point and Effectiveness Ceilings can cause another problem: they frustrate players who want their characters to grow, evolve, and become more powerful, but who are cut off by the points caps. You can deal with this problem by adjusting your campaigns Ceilings periodically as the characters earn Experience Points.

For example, you might decide that, for every 50 Experience Points the characters earn, the Point Ceiling of the campaign increases 10 points. Or perhaps each character gets to buy one more power above the Ceiling.

You should decide whether the raised Ceiling applies to all characters, regardless of their current Experience Point totals, or only to those who have achieved the required point level. Generally the second option is best.

Combat And Non-Combat Abilities

As you consider character balance, Point Ceilings, and similar topics, remember that most *HERO System* rules for Powers and other game elements were designed for combat and other “crisis” situations. Combat is the aspect of game play that’s most dependent on fairness in the rules and equal effectiveness among the characters, so the rules are designed with that in mind.

However, not all abilities a character has are intended for combat use. A power intended for use out of combat (usually because its Limitations make it impractical to use in a battle) may affect game balance much less than an attack, so you might not have to worry as much about whether it strictly complies with a Point Ceiling or other guideline you use to maintain character balance.

Similarly, not all *HERO System* game elements are entirely combat-oriented. Some, such as MegaScale, Long-Lasting, Time Limit, and Fuel Charges, are included in the rules in large part so that characters can easily create non-combat abilities that would be too expensive or difficult otherwise. For example, it’s possible to buy enough meters of Flight and *Increased Noncombat Movement Adders* to fly at a speed of thousands of miles per hour... but it costs a *lot* of Character Points and

isn’t easy to figure out when you’re building the power. But the *MegaScale Advantage* makes this easy and inexpensive, as it should be for a power that isn’t really used in combat.

Unfortunately, making it easy for creative players to develop fun, flavorful abilities for their characters using these game elements also makes it possible for irresponsible players to create abusive, unbalancing powers. Using MegaScale to easily create large-scale movement powers is one thing; using it to cheaply create an attack that can kill nearly everyone on Earth in a few seconds is another. Keep this in mind as you set guidelines and evaluate characters’ abilities.

THE HERO SYSTEM’S DEFINITIONAL POINTS

As you establish guidelines for your campaign and compare one *HERO System* character to another, there are some “definitional points” that tend to impact a character’s effectiveness in the game (positively or negatively). It often helps to pay particular attention to them, both to consider if they make a character too powerful and to make sure a character hasn’t crippled himself by over-looking them. They include:

SPEED

Many GMs consider SPD the most important definitional point in the game. By dictating how often a character can act, SPD strongly influences his effectiveness. Even a seemingly weak character can have a significant, perhaps unbalancing, effect on the game if gets a lot more Actions than the other characters. For example, a SPD 5 character gets 5/3 as many Actions as a SPD 3 character, and if their attacks are equally powerful or effective the SPD 3 character will be totally overshadowed. On the other hand, a player may not have as much fun with the game if his character has a much lower SPD than the other characters, since he’ll spend a lot more time sitting around waiting for his Actions.

From a GMing perspective, remember that the higher a character’s SPD, the more often he has a Phase... which means the longer combat takes. A large group of players, each with a high-SPD character, can lead to combats that take hours to resolve. It may behoove you to limit how high SPD can be in that situation, or to be strict about requiring players to be prepared with a character’s Action as soon as his Phase occurs.

DEFENSES VERSUS DAMAGE CLASSES

Another major indicator of character-versus-character effectiveness is the comparison between Damage Classes and defenses. A single DC of Normal Damage does a range of 1 to 6 STUN, with an average of 3.5. Therefore, a character with 3-4 points of defense per Damage Class takes little or no damage from most attacks, and one with 5-6 points of defense per DC can be nigh-invulnerable. On the other hand, having only 1-2 points

of defense per DC may leave a character too vulnerable to many attacks. For many campaigns an average of 2-3 points of defense per DC leads to a good balance that keeps characters from getting Stunned or Knocked Out constantly but still gives the attacker a chance to affect them.

On the other side of the coin, a character needs to have attacks that are powerful enough to affect his foes, but not so powerful that he's an unstoppable combat monster. If the DCs in his attacks aren't enough, on average, to do some damage to the target, his player's going to become frustrated and upset. As GM, you have to decide how effective you want attacks to be — should a single attack be enough, on average, to remove 25% of a target's STUN? 35%? 10%? There's no one right answer that applies to all campaigns, but you should decide for *your* campaign and make sure characters' attacks are powerful enough to be effective.

Of course, many other factors affect these decisions, such as Armor Piercing attacks or the use of Damage Reduction. The more familiar you become with the *HERO System*, the easier it will be to take everything into account. But even if you're just starting with *HERO* you can quickly come to some basic conclusions about these issues and plan accordingly.



ADDING DAMAGE

On a related note, don't forget about the Adding Damage rules (6E2 98) when you evaluate characters. Those rules allow for a lot of flexibility and fun in combat, as well as a wide range of character creation options. But if you don't consider them when planning your campaign, they can cause problems. For example, a character who has attacks that are roughly as powerful as the other characters, but who's also built to enhance them frequently with, say, Move Through or Martial Arts or Combat Skill Levels, is going to do more damage than the other PCs. There's nothing wrong with a PC built to make use of the Adding Damage rules... but make sure the player's compensated for that in other aspects of his character's design.



POWER FRAMEWORKS

In many genres, particularly the Superheroic ones, Power Frameworks are almost universal among characters. There's nothing wrong with this, since Frameworks are a fun way to create flexible characters with a lot of abilities — they're one of the *HERO System's* best features. But pay close attention to them when you evaluate characters, because they can really enhance a character's effectiveness. For example, a Multipower with a lot of attack slots can provide a character with so many tactical options that he has “just the right attack for any opponent.” That sounds great from his perspective, but it might not be the best thing for the campaign overall. Frameworks with lots of non-combat abilities can also create difficulties (see *Non-Combat Multipowers* on 6E1 403). So make sure a Framework's suitable for your campaign before you allow it into play.

ADJUSTMENT POWERS

The Adjustment Powers are simultaneously one of the best and most frustrating features of the *HERO System*. On the one hand, they offer a lot of power and flexibility when you're designing powers and abilities for your character; they're effective and fun. On the other hand, using them means keeping track of fade rates, Expanded Effect, and other aspects that can bog down play if you don't watch out. Be careful not to over-use them, or let too many characters have them, until you're ready for the extra “bookkeeping.”

STOP SIGNS AND CAUTION SIGNS

The two “warning signs” — the  and  you see sprinkled here and there throughout the rules — are used for a reason. The game elements and rules they draw your attention to are often important, and can be a lot of fun if used correctly, but the potential for game-ruining abuse or outcomes exists. Tread cautiously, especially when you're first learning the *HERO System* rules.

HEROIC ACTION POINTS



One of the tricky things to simulate in any roleplaying game is the incredible coincidences that so often aid (or bedevil) adventurers, and the amazing luck they often seem to have. These things come easily in a written story, when the author controls both the flow of the action and the conduct of the hero — but not so easily in a gaming session, when the main author (the GM) has no direct control over the protagonists (the PCs) or the randomizing factor of the dice.

To compensate for this difficulty, many GMs find that it helps to give greater control over the events of the game to the players. Providing them with the means to simulate “coincidence” and “luck” by altering die rolls gives the game more of the feel of an adventure story or movie. In the *HERO System*, the rule for this sort of “artistic license” or “dramatic editing” is called *Heroic Action Points*, since it involves the allocation of points with which players can alter the roll of the dice.

Heroic Action Points are *optional*. The GM must decide whether he wants to use Heroic Action Points in his campaign, and if so, how they work. The guidelines below offer some information and advice to help him make this decision.

When you use these rules, don't forget that they're *meta*-rules that allow the players to alter the course of the game. In the game world, the characters themselves aren't aware that anything unusual has happened — it's not as if Heroic Action Points give them the power to alter reality at will. Heroic Action Points are just a convenient rule that helps GMs and players simulate the “feel” of genre fiction, not some strange superpower characters possess.

HEROIC ACTION POINTS BASICS

Here's how Heroic Action Points (HAPs) work in most campaigns:

Acquiring Heroic Action Points

At the start of each game session, each character rolls 2d6 and notes the total. These are his HAPs for that game session. Any not used in that game session are lost; he doesn't get to save them for the next game session.

When a character spends Heroic Action Points, they're gone — they don't come back for use later in the game session. For example, if a character has 12 Heroic Action Points, and spends 3 HAPs in the first scene of the adventure to save himself from harm, he only has 9 HAPs left for the rest of that game session. He's got to wait until the next game session to roll his Heroic Action Points again (and as noted above, that new roll doesn't add to what he's got left; it replaces that amount).

All PCs have Heroic Action Points. Typically the GM also gives HAPs to important or powerful NPCs: master villains, the master villain's chief lieutenant(s), characters' archenemies, and so forth. Routine or standard adversaries (the average gangster, cultist, soldier, and so on) usually do not get HAPs, nor do most DNPCs or ordinary people.

Using Heroic Action Points

Characters can use Heroic Action Points for several things. The most common is altering dice rolls.

ALTERING DICE ROLLS

A character's HAPs represent the number of points the player may add to or subtract from rolls throughout that game to get better results. For example, if a character fails his Attack Roll by 2, he can spend 2 HAPs to turn that miss into a hit.

WHAT ROLLS?

Heroic Action Points can alter *any* dice roll, unless the GM rules otherwise. This includes (but isn't limited to) Skill Rolls, Attack Rolls, PER Rolls, Characteristic Rolls, Required Skill Rolls, and damage rolls. (However, if the standard Luck rules are in effect, the GM should forbid characters to improve Luck rolls by spending Heroic Action Points.)

WHAT'S THE EFFECT?

Here's a suggested list of ways characters can alter dice rolls with Heroic Action Points. You can, of course, alter this list, add to it, or remove options as you prefer.

- For Skill Rolls, Attack Rolls, Characteristic Rolls, PER Rolls, and the like, every Heroic Action Point spent reduces the roll by 1. For example, if a character rolls a 13, spending 4 HAPs reduces that roll to a 9.
- For Normal Damage rolls, each 1 Heroic Action Point spent increases the STUN damage of the total roll by 1. For example, if a character rolls 23 STUN and 6 BODY, and spends 3 HAPs to increase STUN damage, he does 26 STUN, 6 BODY damage.
- For Normal Damage rolls, or Powers that involve "counting the Normal Damage BODY" (such as Flash), every 1 HAP increases the BODY damage of the total roll by 1. For example, if a character rolls 23 STUN and 6 BODY, and spends 3 HAPs to increase the BODY, he does 23 STUN, 9 BODY damage.
- For Killing Damage rolls, each 1 Heroic Action Point spent increases the STUN damage of the total roll by 1. (This increase applies to the STUN damage itself; characters cannot spend Heroic Action Points to increase the STUN Multiplier.) For example, if a character rolls 8 BODY and 32 STUN, and spends 4 HAPs to increase STUN damage, he does 8 BODY, 36 STUN damage.
- For Killing Damage rolls, each 1 Heroic Action Point spent increases the BODY damage of the total roll by 1; this increase applies after the STUN Multiplier is rolled (or the effects of the Hit Location Table are applied), and thus does not increase the amount of STUN damage the attack does. For example, suppose a character rolls 7 BODY and 21 STUN, and spends 3 HAPs to increase BODY damage, he does 10 BODY, 21 STUN damage.
- For unusual attacks like Drains, NNDs, and Transforms, every 1 HAP spent increases the damage or effect of the total roll by 1.
- The effect of altering any other roll is determined by the GM.

If desired, the GM can change the Heroic Action Point cost of altering any roll. For example, some charge 2 HAPs per +/-1 to a roll instead of the 1 HAP mentioned above, or establish a sliding scale (1 HAP to reduce a roll by 1, 3 HAPs to reduce it by 2, 6 HAPs to reduce it by 3, and so forth). Some may alter the cost based on how important the situation is, or how close the scene is to the climactic conclusion of the game. Some alter the cost based on what's being altered: for example, Skill Rolls cost 1 HAP per -1, but maybe increasing Normal Damage BODY costs 3 HAPs per +1; or maybe increasing any aspect of Killing Damage costs triple the cost listed above.

Typically the only limit on how many Heroic Action Points a character can spend to alter a roll is the number of HAPs the character has available to spend — if he has 15, he could spend them all on a single roll to reduce an 18 to a 3 if he felt like it. However, many GMs like to establish a limit such as 3, 4, or 6 to prevent HAPs from altering the game too radically.

In most cases a character can spend Heroic Action Points on as many different aspects of a roll as he wants. For example, if a character rolls 27 STUN, 6 BODY, he can spend 3 HAPs on STUN and 2 HAPs on BODY for a total of 30 STUN, 8 BODY. The GM can restrict this if desired.

HEROIC ACTION POINTS AND PRESENCE ATTACKS

One of the least heroic, most unenjoyable things that can happen in a *HERO System* game is for a character to roll badly when making a Presence Attack. Heroes are supposed to be impressive, after all, and it really saps some of the flavor from the game when a player makes a great soliloquy but then gets a low roll on the Presence Attack dice.

To prevent this, the GM can allow characters to spend Heroic Action Points to improve the results of Presence Attacks. The easiest way to do this is to have every HAP spent increase the Presence Attack roll by 1 point, but that may not be enough to accomplish anything meaningful. If the GM prefers, he can establish a multiple (every HAP equals +2, or +3, or more to the Presence Attack) so that characters who are willing to spend a few HAPs become *really* impressive.

IMPROVING DCV

At the GM's option, a character can spend Heroic Action Points to improve his DCV (this is particularly appropriate for campaigns where characters can't spend HAPs to affect other characters' rolls; see below). Each 1 HAP spent increases the character's DCV by 1 versus a *single* attack during the Segment in which the HAP was spent. (If the character is Dodging or Aborting to a Maneuver that increases his DCV, the GM might allow the increase in DCV to apply to all attacks for the duration of the Maneuver's effect.)

OTHER POSSIBLE USES

The GM can allow characters to spend Heroic Action Points on anything he wishes, but of course must set a point cost for uses that don't involve altering dice rolls. Some possibilities include:

- *Pushing*: instead of (or in addition to) having to spend extra END (and perhaps succeed with an EGO Roll) to Push an ability, a character has to spend 1 HAP per 5 points of effect Pushed for.
- *The Power Skill*: Instead of requiring a character to succeed with a *Power Skill* roll to do something unusual with one of his powers, the GM can require him to spend 1 HAP (or more).

Beyond that, the possibilities are nearly endless. As a rule of thumb, the GM should refer to the standard Luck rules and determine how many levels of rolled Luck he would require a character to obtain to achieve that same result. The Heroic Action Point cost equals 1 HAP per level of Luck required. (The GM can change the multiple, if preferred.) Here are a couple of examples:

- Mechanon throws our hero Ironclad out of an airplane. Ironclad doesn't have Breakfall, and even if he did it's a loooooonng way to the ground and he probably wouldn't succeed anyway. He asks the GM if he can spend some Heroic Action Points to land on something soft, have someone catch him, or the like. The GM decides that to walk away from a fall from that height would require 3 levels of Luck. So, if Ironclad pays 3 HAPs, something will happen to save him (depending on the situation, the player might describe what happens, or the GM might reserve the right to do so; see below). The GM says that if Ironclad wants to, he can only spend 1 HAP; that means he survives, but is so badly hurt he'll be out of the action for awhile. Ironclad, being no fool, ponies up 3 HAPs.
- An axe-wielding guard attacks Carolina Caldwell as he's exploring a hidden shrine. Caldwell happens to be standing next to a column. The GM says, "The guard's swinging the axe downward at you." Carolina asks if he can spend Heroic Action Points to change that so the guard swings the axe sideways, in a slash instead of a chop — that way he can duck behind the column and have a lot better chance of being protected from the blow. The GM decides that changing the way the guard is swinging his axe isn't much of a change at all — it's mostly just cosmetic. Therefore, he'd only require 1 level of Luck on a Luck roll to get that result. So, if Carolina spends 1 HAP, the guard slashes instead of chops, and he'll get a better DCV against the attack by using the column as cover.

Spending Heroic Action Points

Characters don't have to declare in advance that they want to spend Heroic Action Points. They roll the dice, look at the result, and can then decide whether to spend Heroic Action Points, and if so how many. Unless the GM rules otherwise, a character can spend Heroic Action Points more than once to keep decreasing a roll until he achieves the result he wants.

If a character spends Heroic Action Points on a roll but the roll still fails, and he chooses not to spend more to keep decreasing the roll until he achieves success, the HAPs he spent are lost. He doesn't get them back just because they didn't help him succeed. Sometimes even lucky heroes catch a bad break. (You may want to tell a player in advance exactly how many Heroic Action Points he has to spend to succeed, to save time and trouble.)

Situations may arise in which more than one character wants to spend Heroic Action Points to affect a roll (assuming the GM allows characters to affect other characters this way; see below). For example, a PC wants to spend Heroic Action Points to decrease his Attack Roll to hit a master villain, while the master villain wants to spend Heroic Action Points to increase the roll so he doesn't get hit. In this situation, the character who made the roll spends HAPs first. Then the other character spends his Points. Then the first character can spend HAPs again, if he so chooses, followed by the other character. They keep going in turn this way until they both decide to spend no more HAPs.

BLIND HEROIC ACTION POINTS

One potential problem with Heroic Action Points is that each player knows exactly how many his character has, allowing him to "hoard his luck" until he really needs it or otherwise manipulate the HAP rules. This isn't necessarily contrary to the spirit of many genres, but it may cause trouble in some games.

To counteract this difficulty, the GM may want to consider rolling the Heroic Action Points for each character himself and keeping the total secret. When a character chooses to spend some HAPs, the GM crosses the amount used off the character's total. When a character reaches zero HAPs, the GM tells him he's "out of luck." This adds an element of dramatic tension to the Heroic Action Points rules — each player has to constantly ask himself whether spending an HAP is worth it, because it just might be his last HAP this game session....

WHO CAN CHARACTERS AFFECT?

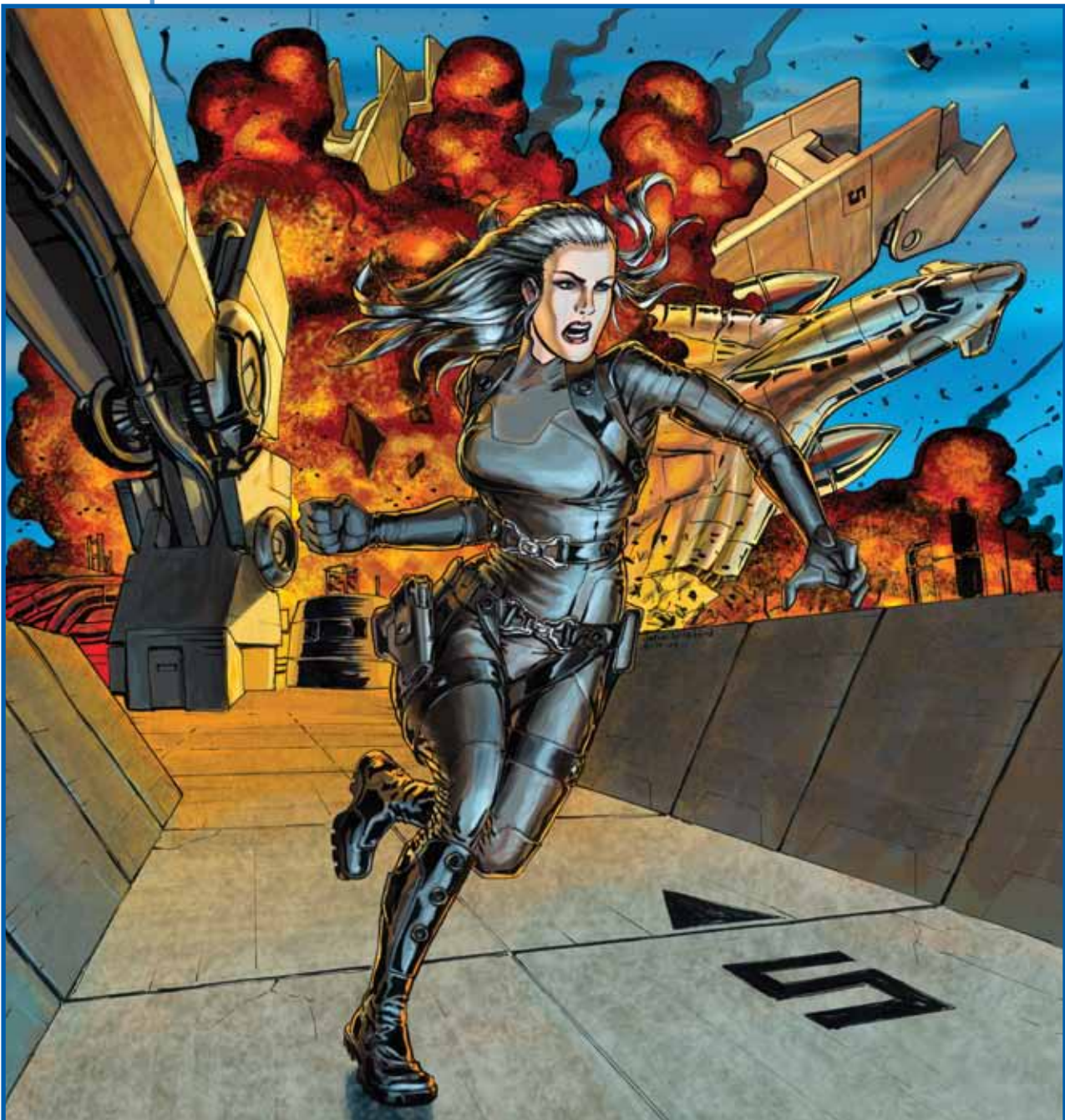
Typically a character can only use Heroic Action Points to improve his own rolls — reduce his Skill Rolls, increase the damage he does, improve his own DCV, and so forth. He cannot affect on another character's rolls. For example, he can't spend HAPs to increase another character's Attack Roll until his attacker misses, decrease the damage an attacker rolls, or increase another character's Skill Roll so he fails at a task.

However, the GM can allow a character to spend Heroic Action Points to alter other characters' rolls. A character has to be in reasonable proximity to the target to do this; he can't affect the roll made by a master villain who's miles away, or an enemy 300 feet away across a busy battlefield, unless they're directly interacting in some way (such as fighting a duel with psychic

powers). The character spends his HAPs to have the opposite effect that he has when he spends them on himself: he increases Attack and Skill Rolls, decreases damage rolls, and so forth. Typically the HAP cost is the same as for affecting his own rolls, but the GM may choose to increase the cost (to double it, for example) to represent the difficulty of a character affecting someone other than himself.

DESCRIBING THE EFFECTS

The GM has the final say over what a character can do with Heroic Action Points. He can rule that a character cannot spend them in a particular way (or at all), increase or decrease the cost to change a roll in given circumstances, change a character's description of their effects (see below), or change them in any other way he sees fit.



In particular, the GM decides just how much a character gets to define the effects of spending Heroic Action Points — how he can describe what happens, in other words. In the Ironclad example above, Ironclad spends HAPs to save himself from a fall. He could describe that in several ways: the attempt to throw him out of the plane fails because he grabs hold of the door, a wing, or a strut at the last second; he lands on something so soft he doesn't get hurt at all; someone or something catches him in mid-air. The GM could choose to allow or disallow any of those “special effects” for the expenditure of Heroic Action Points.

In many cases it won't matter what explanation a character chooses — just about any of them will do, and many of them will create interesting twists on the action that the GM can work with to spin the story out in new and exciting ways. However, some explanations may affect the plot so severely that the GM forbids them so they don't ruin what he has planned. Allowing the players greater power to control the action is generally a good thing in most *HERO System* games, but sometimes it hurts more than it helps. If the GM's spent hours mapping out the interior of a zeppelin for a big, climactic fight, but halfway through the game a player wants to spend Heroic Action Points with an explanation that will prevent the PCs from ever getting close to the zeppelin, the GM should forbid the explanation — it changes the course of the scenario too much.

In particular, the GM should be wary of, and usually forbid, any explanation for the effects of Heroic Action Points that allows a character to significantly alter the actions of another character. If a character wants to make a master villain's gunshot miss him, the explanation that “I dodge aside at the last second, avoiding the shot!” works just fine. An explanation that “the master villain's henchmen turns on him, attacking him so that he misses me” gives the player too much control over the actions of an NPC (the henchmen), and so should be forbidden... unless the GM likes it for some reason.

ALTERING THE BASICS

The standard HAP rules work well for most campaigns, but some GMs may want to change them to suit particular settings, styles of play, or scenarios. For example, characters in a gritty Dark Champions game or low-powered Horror Hero game might get fewer (or no) HAPs; they exist in harsher worlds where they have to learn to live with the vicissitudes of fate. On the other hand, characters in some Champions, Pulp Hero, or Fantasy Hero campaigns may get even more HAPs because they're The Heroes and fortune favors them.

For GMs who want to change how HAPs work, here are some guidelines:

DETERMINING HOW MANY HEROIC ACTION POINTS A CHARACTER HAS

As noted above, typically characters roll 2d6 for Heroic Action Points at the beginning of each game session — in effect these are sort of like Luck (6E1 246). That introduces a small element of randomness and keeps the PCs from counting too heavily on their Heroic Action Points every game. If he prefers, the GM may simply assign every character a defined amount of Heroic Action Points each game session (or adventure, or story arc...), or may determine how many a character has in any other way he sees fit.

The GM can also alter the rule about HAPs not “carrying over” from game to game. Allowing characters to “bank” Heroic Action Points provides an incentive not to spend them for no good reason (but also runs the risk of a character getting an unbalancingly high amount of HAPs for use in important scenarios).

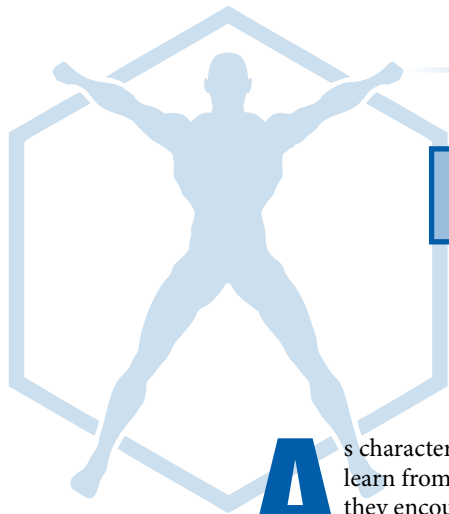
The GM may choose to “refresh” characters' pools of Heroic Action Points in mid-game, rather than making them wait to roll again at the beginning of the next game session. This gives the PCs more opportunities to affect events, or to prepare for a major confrontation of some sort.

Another possibility is to tie the recovery of Heroic Action Points to a character's Complications. If a character overcomes a Complication somehow, perhaps he gets back 1 HAP. The GM might even allow a character to “earn” more HAPs for a game session by deliberately bringing a Complication into play when it otherwise wouldn't matter. For example, if a character voluntarily brings his DNPC along on an adventure, even though he doesn't have to, the GM might give him back some HAPs that he's already spent, or even give him a couple extra.

UNIVERSAL OR PURCHASED?

In some games, Heroic Action Points aren't universal — characters have to buy them. Basically they take the place of Luck. A character buys dice of Luck, but instead of rolling them in the usual method for that Power, they're rolled to generate HAPs at session's start.

If all PCs get Heroic Action Points for free, the GM must decide whether any other dice of Luck a character purchases (a) add to his free Heroic Action Points dice, or (b) do not add, instead functioning like standard Luck dice.



EXPERIENCE POINTS

As characters play in a campaign, they learn from things they do and people they encounter. They learn even if they make mistakes during the course of their adventures; indeed, sometimes a mistake is a lot more educational than success. To reflect this process of learning and development, you should give each character *Experience Points*.

You must carefully consider how many Experience Points to give out after each adventure. If you give out too few points, the characters and the campaign become stagnant. If you give out too many points, the PCs may become unrecognizable and too powerful in a very short amount of time.

The accompanying table should help you decide how many Experience Points to give out to the characters. This table is a set of guidelines; don't take it as an absolute. A very large adventure may be worth as much as many small adventures which were resolved swiftly. Also, while the numbers in the table are generally based on completing an adventure successfully, remember that sometimes a character can learn as much from defeat as from victory.

Usually, a one-session adventure is worth about 2 Experience Points. If an adventure takes more than one session, add a minimum of +1 Experience Point for each session beyond the first (a three session adventure would be worth at least 4 Experience Points).

Each character is given Experience Points on his own merits. Therefore, the amount of Experience given to each character can vary. A player who roleplays well, contributes a lot to the adventure (and thus to everyone's fun), and makes a clever deduction or two can walk away from a scenario with quite a few Experience Points for his character, whereas a player who just sits there and rolls dice when told to will be lucky to get even one.

The GM may never take Experience Points away. Player Characters should almost always get a minimum of 1 Experience Point if they play in a scenario.

Spending Experience Points

Experience Points work like Character Points in all ways, they're just obtained in a different way. Characters can spend Experience Points to improve Characteristics, improve known Skills or learn new ones, buy new Advantages for powers (or buy off Limitations), buy new abilities, buy a new slot in a Power Framework, buy off Complications, and so forth. (The costs are the same as if he'd bought them with Character Points at the start of the campaign.) This reflects not only things the character learns from his experiences, but time he spends practicing and studying and other such efforts at self-improvement.

Characters usually spend Experience Points between adventures. However, the GM may allow a character to spend them during an adventure to learn a new Skill or do something similar. For example, Randall Irons could "just figure out" how to fly a DC 3 as it's spiraling downward into the ocean. Some Skills may require a fair amount of time in the campaign to learn; for others, a character may need training under an instructor. A character may have to go off the beaten path to find someone who can teach him some of the more esoteric Skills or Talents.

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EXPERIENCE POINTS

Situation	Experience
Base experience points for being in a scenario	1 point
Characters were on a very long, involved adventure	2 points
Adventure ran more than one session	+1 point/session
The adventure was difficult	+1 point
Characters heavily outnumbered	+1 point
Optional Guidelines	
Characters were clever, inventive, subtle, or roleplayed well	+1 point
Characters solved a mystery	+1 point
The adventure was a resounding success	+1 point
Characters roleplayed very poorly	-1 point
The adventure was a terrible failure	-1 point

Assigned Experience Points

The GM can also give out Experience Points for specific Skills or Characteristics the characters used or learned during the adventure. Each player may state at the end of the adventure one Skill (new or old) he believes his character used a great deal during that particular adventure (alternately, you can require the player to designate at the *beginning* of the adventure a Skill or Characteristic he's working hard to develop, and then justify that statement by using the Skill or Characteristic frequently during the adventure). If you wish, you can give the character an Experience Point to be used only for that specific Skill. Assigned Experience Points are usually a bonus, over and above the Experience Points given out for the adventure, but you may substitute them for regular Experience Points if you prefer.

Assigned Experience Points are usually given to Background Skills and Perks. You could also give out Assigned Experience to help a character buy off a Complication. Occasionally you may give a character 1 Experience Point toward a +1 with some Skill. You might even give out more than one or two Experience Points by assignment, thus helping the character grow in the direction indicated by his or her actions during the adventure. However, characters should always have some Experience Points they can spend on anything.

You can also choose to award specific Skills or Perks in lieu of Experience Points (assigned or otherwise). For example, if the PCs do a great favor for the king during the course of the adventure, each of them may receive a Contact with or Favor from him instead of raw Experience Points. Similarly, if the adventure involves an extended series of conflicts with VIPER, the PCs may acquire KS: VIPER.

Experience In Superheroic Campaigns

In a Superheroic campaign, you should take special care to manage how the characters spend their Experience Points. Each Experience Point is identical to a Character Point, so you should examine any new Powers or Talents bought with Experience Points as carefully as you would for a starting character. Also, a character should usually have a good rationale for spending his Experience Points, particularly when buying off Power Limitations or Complications. For example, a PC with a 14- Activation Roll could justify buying off the Limitation by saying that he gained more control over his power (and thus no longer had an Activation Roll). However, a character with a Focus couldn't put the item in a milkshake and drink it — there would have to be a better explanation for losing the *Focus* Limitation. Wherever possible, you should try to structure adventures so that characters can buy off Limitations and Complications.

And never forget, villains get Experience Points too....



kennedy



FINAL ADVICE

No one suggestion or guideline described in this chapter can make a *HERO System* campaign good, nor will an average or below-average use of any of them necessarily make a campaign bad. What's important is that you follow each of them as well as you are capable. The way your GMing techniques and methods interact with the PCs over time is what shapes the campaign and makes it what it eventually becomes.

One last ingredient affects the quality of the campaign, and that is the degree to which you listen to your players. This means not only asking them how they liked or disliked individual characters or other campaign details, but also listening during normal conversation, post-game chats, and mid-game meals.

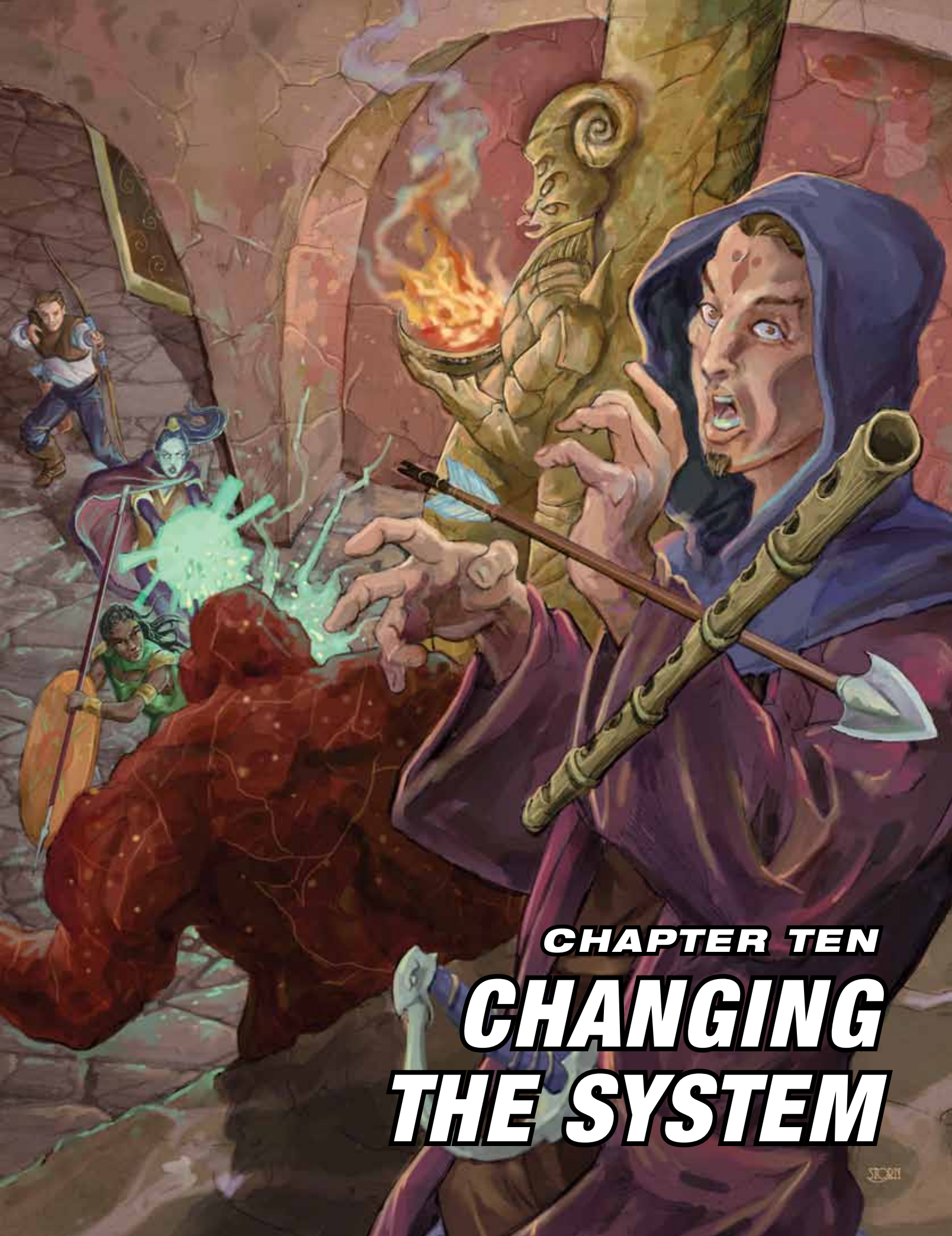
A player may make a mild comment suggesting he's dissatisfied with something happening in the campaign. The mildness of the player's voice may not have any bearing on the player's real emotions on this matter; he may feel very strongly about the matter, with shyness or common courtesy preventing the statement from being a stronger one. Take note of commentary, no matter how mildly offered, especially when the same comments come up time after time.

Players may discuss their impressions of what's happening in a campaign and, in their guesses, come up with better ideas than the ones you've been implementing. Don't be shy about using those ideas. The player in question will generally be pleased that he "guessed right" about what was going on — and you'll look like a great story planner.

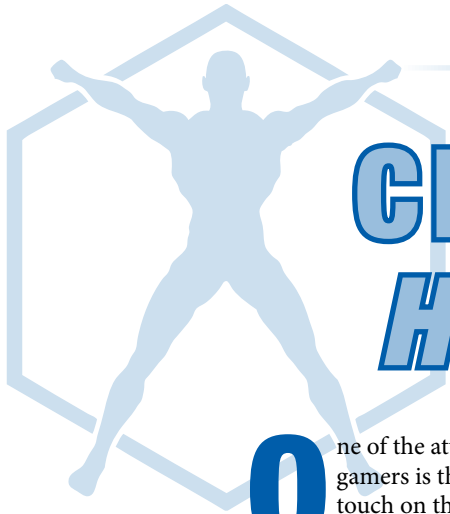
Players asking idle questions will unknowingly remind you that you've forgotten to tie up a loose end from a previous adventure, that you haven't addressed a mystery the PCs should have been solved by now, or that you've made a mistake in character or campaign-history details. *HERO System* campaigns are often long on details — you need to rely on your players' memories as much as you do on your own.

If you do listen to your players, and execute all the campaign's other elements to the best of your ability, you'll have a campaign that's likely to grow, adding depth and detail, and last for as long as you wish it to.

In conclusion, remember that *any* GM, good or bad, can defeat the PCs. As the GM you set the ground rules, you create the world, you control everyone in it, and you have an unlimited amount of Character Points to build anyone and anything. So killing the PCs, and thus "defeating" their players, isn't a challenge at all — you're not in competition with them. What *is* a challenge is to run the game in a fair and reasonable manner but keep the characters *thinking* that they're on the verge of failing, that disaster's looming, that they're all about to die. Then, when the PCs snatch victory from the jaws of defeat, you're rewarded with genuine feelings of elation and pride among the players. When the players talk about that adventure again and again over the years, when you hear them discuss how they thought they were doomed and how awesome the final outcome was, and when they can't help proudly going on and on about how great it was to overcome the obstacles you put in front of them, you'll know you've run a great game.



CHAPTER TEN
CHANGING
THE SYSTEM



CHANGING THE HERO SYSTEM

One of the attributes of many *HERO System* gamers is that they like to put their own touch on the rules. They like to change things around a bit to suit their own particular tastes in gaming, the nature of their campaign, or their players' desires. It's that adaptability that makes the *HERO System* so attractive to them. This section of the Sixth Edition discusses some of the design considerations and metarules of the *HERO System*, and how you can change the system or create new rules for it if you want to.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

The main object of the *HERO System*, just like any other roleplaying game, is for the players and the GM to have fun. The *HERO System* is a "Gamer's Toolkit" that each player and GM can use to create his own unique characters, equipment, and campaign worlds. Your creation might derive from a favorite novel or movie (or a combination of several sources), or it could be a completely original vision. In any case, the *HERO System* lets you create it just the way you want to.

Designing a set of roleplaying rules is a process of making numerous decisions. How is combat going to be represented and simulated? What numbers should be used to determine a character's chance to hit? How does wearing armor affect combat, and what rules should be used to simulate that?

In constructing these rules, a relatively simple set of guidelines were used. The goal was to keep the mechanics reasonably simple, encourage roleplaying, and create a flavor similar to that in books, movies, and comics. Most important was giving the game the "feel" of a good action novel or a movie. When realism conflicted with that goal, realism took second place — gaming is about adventure and excitement and larger-than-life deeds. Then the rules were made as simple as reasonably possible (without sacrificing game balance or the details necessary for play) so the game mechanics wouldn't get in the way of having fun. And, of course, many rules are crafted to encourage roleplaying and storytelling on the part of the players and the GM.

Above all, the *HERO System* is intended to be flexible and open-ended — capable of simulating any real or fictional situation. This flexibility means there's the potential for players to distort the rules and exploit loopholes that may exist. No game is "bulletproof"; any rules system can be misused and abused in different ways. A points-based rules set such as the *HERO System* is perhaps more subject to this problem, since flexibility inevitably means some gamers will "flex" the system until it breaks.

All game designers have to keep this problem in mind. The Hero Games philosophy on it is twofold. First, it's wrong to remove or change a worthwhile or fun rule just because some gamers can exploit or abuse it. That's a disservice to the good gamers who will use the rule as it's intended to be used and have a lot of fun doing so — it penalizes them because other gamers are going to act like jerks and misuse the rule. But it's equally wrong to make it easy for players to abuse rules — in short, to leave a lot of loopholes and poorly-written rules in the system. There's a fine line to tread between leaving good rules in and making rules as "bulletproof" as possible without leeching all the fun out of them, but we do our best.

We could have put a lot more "don'ts" in the rules, but that's not the way we wanted the *HERO System* to be. Because the system is so flexible, and is intended to simulate any genre, campaign type, or character, we'd rather let you make your own decisions about what's permissible. If you want to allow the characters to travel through time, it's silly for us to say you can't. After all, you've paid your money for the game, so why shouldn't you alter it any way you please? As a consequence, we've asked for a lot of decision-making from the GM, and a lot of enlightened self-interest from the players. It may be difficult for you, as GM, to tell your friends that no, they can't have a character with Extra-Dimensional Movement or Precognition. But they'll probably understand if you explain the reasons for your decision.

META-RULES OF THE HERO SYSTEM

Here are some of the “meta-rules” — guidelines, themes, and assumptions — which underlie the main rules of the *HERO System*. When designing new rules for your game, creating characters, and playing the game, keep these meta-rules in mind.

1. Most Powers, particularly Attack Powers, are designed around the principle that 5 Character Points buys 1d6 (or 1 DC) of effect — or, in other words, that each d6/DC of Power should cost 5 Active Points before Advantages are applied. Powers that tend to be more restricted than the typical Attack Power (such as Dispel) cost a little less; Powers that tend to be a little more powerful than average (such as Mental Blast) cost more. But by and large, the 5 points per d6 principle should be followed.

2. Every Attack Power or Power that can be used offensively should have some defense or way to avoid its effects, and the defense should be considerably cheaper.

3. Whenever possible, Powers and other game constructions should be open-ended, rather than absolute or fixed. In other words, the more points you put into something, the better or more powerful it should get. Game elements with fixed costs, like Desolidification, should be rare.

Similarly, there should be very few absolutes in the *HERO System*. Few Powers should have strictly predictable effects; there should usually be a chance for a spectacular success or a dismal failure. In particular, there should never be an irresistible attack or an unbreachable defense, even against a limited class of phenomena. There’s no way to obtain absolute immunity to damage from fire in the *HERO System*, for example. A character can buy so much defense that it’s extremely unlikely he’ll ever be hurt by fire, but there’s no such thing as 100% Damage Reduction for fire (or any other type of attack).

If you have a situation where a degree of predictability or uniformity of effect is desirable, apply the Standard Effect Rule and/or the Absolute Effect Rule.

4. The point cost of a Power should support game balance — the more useful or effective a Power is, the more it should cost. If the cost of an effective Power is set too low, everyone will want to have it; characters who don’t have it will be handicapped. If necessary for purposes of game balance or genre simulation, the GM should adjust the cost of a Power to make it rarer (or more common) in the campaign.

5. One Power should not be used to do what another already does. For example, Images already creates light and images made out of light, so you shouldn’t use Change Environment to create a similar effect. If a character wants to immobilize or paralyze other characters, he should buy an Entangle, not try to configure Mind Control or Drain to accomplish a similar effect.

However, there’s a corollary to this rule — choose the Power and Modifiers which best represent the special effects of the ability the character has. For example, some types of paralysis-like abilities may be best simulated with a Drain, rather than Entangle.

6. If two Powers (or other game elements) are equally valid ways to create a particular ability, you must use the more expensive of the two.

7. As has been stressed elsewhere, the Powers and other game elements are “generic.” Players have to decide for themselves what their characters’ *special effects* are, and then properly simulate that special effect in game terms with the right combination of Powers, Power Modifiers, and other game elements.

8. There are few, if any, rules you can’t change in the *HERO System*. This is a game, and the purpose of a game is to have fun. We think you’ll have the most fun with the game the way we designed it, but you should play the game the way you want to. If you want to double the END cost for everything, do it. If you want to abolish the SPD Chart, do it. You’re not required to obey any rule or guideline in this book if you don’t want to. If necessary, change them to suit your ideas of how things should work or to arrange the game so you’ll have the most fun with it.

TOOLKITTING

In the introduction to this book, the *HERO System* was described as “the ultimate gamer’s toolkit.” That means the system offers gamers and GMs the ability to build whatever they can think of. From worlds, to characters, to spells, to weapons, to vehicles, to anything else you might want to have in a game, you can build it with the *HERO System*. And you can do it in such a way that it’s easy to analyze your creation’s effect on and effectiveness in the game. No other game system offers this sort of adaptability, flexibility, and precision.

We call this the “toolkitting” aspect of the system, since the *HERO System*’s components are essentially a vast collection of tools for GMs and players to use to create great characters and games. They form both the building blocks of a successful campaign and the means to shape those building blocks to make them fit together just the way you want. Thus, the *HERO System* allows gamers to do two things with unmatched quality: simulate genres; and create and analyze characters and their tools.

Genre Simulation

Every genre is different. Usually those differences need to be reflected in the rules for a game simulating the genre. The way you construct a setting for a Fantasy campaign differs from the way you build a universe for a Science Fiction campaign or a city for a game of Dark Champions. Otherwise one genre seems just like another, which isn't the way things should be.

Furthermore, even within genres there are important differences. Space Opera Science Fiction is different from Cyberpunk Science Fiction; four-color superheroes is different from Dark Champions costumed vigilantes; high epic Fantasy is different from low Fantasy — and all of these differences affect how gamers conceive of and design campaigns and characters.

Most game rules don't provide much help for gamers who want to design campaign settings. The *HERO System* is different. Just like you can use the rules to create detailed and intriguing characters, you can use them to create rich settings in which the characters' ability to interact with each other and the world around them are governed by easy to use, balanced rules.

To do this properly, you, as GM, may have to do a few things. The first, of course, is to figure out what kind of game you want to run and what sort of world you want to set the game in. No game system can help you with that task, really; you have to exercise your own imagination. But the other two things you have to do are things the *HERO System* can definitely help you with.

Adapting The Rules To Your Game

The next thing to do is figure out how the rules system needs to be adapted to give your world the proper “feel.” If you want to emphasize or de-emphasize something (like psychic powers or combat skills), you can change the rules to reflect this desire. The *HERO System*, with its flexibility, is perfect for this sort of adaptation. With a tweak here and there you can remold it to fit whatever sort of “feel” you're striving for. This is one of the main strengths of a “generic” rules set like the *HERO System* — the ability to make it work for any genre with, at best, a few minor changes. That way players don't have to keep learning new rules to play in new genres.

This may sound difficult, especially to novice GMs, but it isn't really that hard. It's just a matter of figuring out what the main elements of the genre you want to simulate are, and then determining what changes, if any, you need to make to the *HERO System* rules to best simulate or reflect those elements.

Example: *Ed decides he wants to run a “cyberpunk” near-future Science Fiction campaign. To make sure the HERO System rules contribute to the “feel” he wants the campaign to have, he sits down and figures out what some of the important elements of the campaign are and how to simulate them with the rules.*

First, he wants the characters to be larger than life, but still more or less “ordinary” people. Therefore he chooses to run a Heroic campaign, and picks the character creation guidelines for a Standard Heroic campaign from the Character Types Guidelines Table on 6E1 34. However, to reflect the advanced technology of the setting, he notes in his campaign guidelines that characters can buy some Powers as cyberware or computer programs.

Second, he wants combat to be detailed, and often deadly. He decides his campaign will use all of the Optional Combat Maneuvers. To keep things from getting too out of hand, he limits Multiple Attack to a maximum of three attacks per Phase. He also decides the campaign will use the optional rules for Hit Locations, Wounding, and Knockdown.

Third, he wants there to be a Japanese influence on the culture of his cyberpunk setting. Japanese culture is so prominent that all characters know a little something about it. To simulate this, he adds KS: Japanese Culture and 1 point worth of the Japanese language to the Everyman Skill list. This may even give some players ideas of other Skills their characters would have — Japanese martial arts styles, for example.

CREATING YOUR WORLD'S ELEMENTS

Similarly, you can use the *HERO System* rules to create all of the artifacts, technology, spells, and other elements which make a campaign setting distinctive.

Example: *Ed knows that in a cyberpunk setting, technology is an important element, so he needs to simulate certain types of technology in ways which help get the feeling of the genre across and which make it easy for characters to use them.*

First, he has to create cyberspace — the “virtual world” of linked computer networks and data storage units. Many characters will enter this world by “jacking in,” allowing a computer construct that represents them to interact with constructs representing other computer users, files of valuable data, and computer security programs. When a character is jacked in, he cannot interact with the real world at all (except to the extent he can remotely activate electronic devices). Ed decides cyberspace is, in essence, another dimension, so jacking in is just a form of Extra-Dimensional Movement. The equipment that allows characters to “enter” cyberspace is just Extra-Dimensional Movement bought with appropriate Limitations, such as Focus.

Second, characters in cyberspace need computer programs to use there. While the Computer creation rules do discuss programs, in a cyberspace setting programs have their own constructs — a security program might resemble a guard dog, or an intrusion program a sword-wielding samurai. They interact by “fighting” each other. This sounds more like a form of combat than a simple 1-point computer program. Ed decides characters will buy programs as Powers with the Limitations Only In Cyberspace (-2) and Focus. For example, he might build a security program as a Barrier, and an intrusion program as a Killing Attack or Drain Barrier. Ed spends a few minutes creating about two dozen simple programs. That’s enough for the players to choose from initially; Ed knows they’ll come to him soon enough with ideas for programs they want to write up on their own.

Third, cyberpunk characters often have cyberware — electronic and mechanical augmentations built into their bodies. In fact, things like datajacks, enhanced musculature, computerized eye replacements, and fingertip “razor claws” are staples of the genre. At first Ed thinks characters can build cyberware as Foci, but he realizes that since surgery is needed to install or remove it, cyberware isn’t really a Focus. Instead, he decides they can buy cyberware with the Limitation Restrainable, since there are many ways to disable cyberware (EMP guns, for example) which are generally well-known.

These are fairly simple examples. The extent to which a GM can use the *HERO System* to help model his campaign setting depends entirely upon how much work he wants to do. A GM willing to construct lengthy lists of weapons, spells, equipment, and the like can do a lot to help define the feel and function of his world. But a GM who doesn’t want to go to all that trouble can accomplish a lot with a few simple steps like those described above. Other books from Hero Games provide plenty of resources, including complete campaign settings, for GMs who want to adapt them for their own campaigns.

Creating And Analyzing Characters

The other main way which you can put the *HERO System*’s toolkitting abilities to use is to create characters and their tools (weapons, spells, equipment, you name it) and analyze them for game balance. Even if you don’t want to use the *HERO System* to play games on a regular basis, it can still work for you as a tool for comparing characters.

For example, suppose you want to create some spells for a Fantasy campaign you’re running using another game system. That system doesn’t have detailed rules for spell creation; it’s mainly up to you to determine whether a proposed new spell fits in his world and how the character would

create such a spell. You might accidentally let in an unbalancing spell, since you have no way (other than rough “guesstimation”) to compare it to existing spells to see if it’s too powerful.

The *HERO System* provides the desired means. All you have to do is create *HERO System* versions of a few appropriate spells from the other game and the new spell. You can compare the Damage Classes, Active Points, Real Points, Advantages, and other aspects of the spells to see if the new one falls into the range of the others. If it’s far too powerful, or not powerful enough, you’ll figure that out easily. No more guesswork.

This principle applies to technological items, weapons, even entire characters. If they’re balanced in the *HERO System*, you can be reasonably sure they’ll be balanced in other game systems, too.

CREATING NEW GAME ELEMENTS AND RULES

There are many ways you can modify the *HERO System* rules to produce a much different game, or to create new game elements for use in the campaign. Here are some guidelines for doing just that.

Altering Characteristics

Some *HERO System* gamers like to alter the way Characteristics are bought or calculated. Some possibilities along these lines include:

- Increasing the cost of Characteristics that have proven to be inordinately useful in the campaign. For example, if characters in your campaign use Presence Attacks extensively, you might consider raising the cost of PRE to 2 Character Points per point to compensate.
- Subdividing Characteristics you consider too effective. For example, since many important abilities are based on DEX, characters often have very high DEXs. Gamemasters who object to this could, for example, split DEX into two “subcharacteristics”: one determines who acts first in combat, and perhaps governs some Agility Skills; the other is used for most Agility Skills and “DEX” Rolls.
- Adding new Characteristics. This is particularly useful for games in settings or genres which may have special ways for characters to affect (or be affected by) other characters and the environment. For example, a horror campaign might feature a SANITY (SAN) Characteristic which acts like STUN when a character encounters terrifying monsters — when he’s lost all his SAN, he becomes (temporarily?) insane. A Fantasy campaign centering around epic wizardry might have a MANA Characteristics that takes the place of END when characters cast spells.

LEADERSHIP

This Interaction Skill allows a character to lead and inspire men in battle. Any character can try to provide leadership and inspiration, but one with this Skill is especially talented, skilled, and/or trained at it.

A character leading men in battle may make a Leadership roll once at the beginning of each Turn to try to inspire his men. For every 2 points by which he makes the roll, the unit receives +1 to its Morale for that Turn. If the character makes his roll by half or more, the unit also receives +1 to its OCV for that Turn.

A character can also use Leadership to prevent his unit from suffering Morale losses. Anytime the unit loses one or more points of Morale (whether due to casualties suffered, magic, or any other reason), the character may attempt to counteract the loss with a Leadership roll (this takes a Half Phase). Every two points by which he makes the roll reduces the loss of Morale by one point.

If the unit's side in the battle is losing (and the unit knows it), or the unit thinks its side is losing, the Leadership roll suffers a

10 -1 to -5 penalty (depending upon how badly the side is losing or is perceived to be

losing). If the character is visibly wounded, he suffers a -1 to his Leadership roll for every 2 BODY taken. (In some situations this penalty may become a bonus; it can be inspirational to see a leader struggle on in the face of life-threatening injury.)

Creating New Skills

The Skill list was intended to simulate the Skills necessary to play in most standard genres. You can use Background Skills (such as KSs and PSs) to fill most gaps. But some genres or campaign settings are so unusual that some expansions to the Skill list may be necessary or worthwhile.

Designing new Skills involves two steps. First, decide whether the Skill is Characteristic-Based. Compare the proposed Skill to the ones on the list, and see if it could be an Agility, Intellect, or Interaction Skill. If it doesn't fit any of those categories precisely, it's probably a General Skill. Except for Background Skills, most Skills should cost 3 Character Points for a Characteristic-Based roll, and +1 to the roll should cost +2 Character Points.

Second, decide exactly what the Skill does — what knowledge and abilities it grants the character. What happens if the character makes his Skill Roll exactly, makes it by a lot, or fails? Then think about what situations or circumstances would affect a character's ability to make a Skill Roll with this Skill; that will provide you with ideas for modifiers specific to the Skill. Modifiers also provide suggestions to players as to how to roleplay the Skill and improve their chances of performing it successfully.

Example: *Brad's going to run a Fantasy campaign that focuses on inter-kingdom politics and warfare. He's even created a "mass combat system" to simulate large battles between armies of knights and warriors. This system involves treating units of fighters as individual "characters"; each unit has its own SPD, BODY, Morale, and other Characteristics to indicate how effective it is in combat. Now Brad wants to create a Skill to simulate a character's ability to lead men in battle.*

After thinking for a few moments, Brad realizes he should base this Skill on PRE, so it's an Interaction Skill. A character who makes his roll should be able to improve his men's Morale and perhaps even their fighting ability. If he fails his Skill Roll, he doesn't impress and inspire his men; if he fails badly, he reduces their Morale! Potential modifiers for the Skill Roll include whether the side the unit of men is fighting on is winning or losing and the injuries suffered by the character making the roll. Brad ends up creating the Leadership skill, shown in the sidebar.

SKILL BREAKDOWNS

Many of the Skills in the list are deliberately designed to be broad so that they can apply to many genres, situations, and campaign settings. However, this can result in some Skills becoming too useful in some campaigns. For example, in a Science Fiction campaign involving the use of a lot of shipboard sensors and similar equipment, Systems Operation may be so useful that every character will buy it and the GM will have difficulty creating scenarios that involve malfunctioning or unusual equipment as a plot element.

SYSTEMS OPERATION

Here's an example of how you might break down one Skill — Systems Operation — into categories. This example assumes Systems Operation is particularly useful in the campaign, so it costs 3 points for the first category and is based on an INT Roll. Additional categories cost 2 points each; individual subcategories are 1 point each.

- Communications Systems (may be purchased as a group)
- Telephone Communications (installing and using the phone system)
- Cellular & Digital Communications (cellular phones, pagers, and so forth)
- Radio (standard radio systems, CB radio, ham radio, military radios)
- Broadcast Communications (television or broadcast radio equipment)
- Satellite Communications (use of satellites and satellite networks to transmit signals, GPS systems)
- Communications Jamming Equipment (equipment specially designed to jam transmissions)
- FTL Communications
- Computer Systems (may be purchased as a group) (Characters with the Computer Programming Skill automatically have knowledge of this group, but may purchase Systems Operation with it for use as a Complementary Skill.)
- Basic Computers (basic desktop and laptop systems, PCs, Macs)
- Networks
- Mainframes (UNIX- and VAX-based systems, large corporate networks/intranets)
- Cyberspace Systems (BBSes, the Internet, commercial online services, true cyberspace)
- Military Computers
- Starship Computers
- Sensor Systems (must be purchased separately)
- Air Traffic Control Systems (other than radar and radio)
- Medical Sensors (x-ray equipment, MRI equipment, and so forth)
- Metal Detectors
- Radar
- Sonar (passive and active arrays, towed arrays)
- Sensor Jamming Equipment (equipment specifically designed to jam sensors)
- FTL Sensors
- Weapons Systems (must be purchased separately): Advanced weapons such as missiles are launched with the Systems Operation Skill. Each type of advanced weapon has its own Weapon System subgroup — Patriot missiles, ICBMs, Mark 48 ADCAP torpedoes, and so forth.

Thus, the GM may want some Skills to have more detail. He can arrange this by reconfiguring the Skill to work like Animal Handler, Transport Familiarity, Weapon Familiarity, or Survival. The GM splits the Skill up into two or more categories, each of which may have two or more subcategories. As a general rule, a character can buy the Skill to affect one category for 2 Character Points for an 11-roll (or Characteristic-Based roll). Each additional category costs 2 Character Points (perhaps more, for extremely useful Skills); subcategories, if they can be purchased individually, cost 1 Character Point each. A character can improve his Skill Roll with all categories for +2 Character Points for each +1 to the roll. The GM may adjust these costs up or down to reflect the relative usefulness of the Skill in the campaign.

SKILL CATEGORIES AS SEPARATE SKILLS

Conversely, GMs for some campaigns may want to take one of the categories listed under Skills like Forgery, Gambling, Navigation, Survival, Transport Familiarity, Weapon Familiarity, or Weaponsmithing and make it a separate Skill. For example, for a game in a sort of late medieval or early Renaissance setting, the GM might want to take WF: Siege Engines and make it a separate Intellect Skill, *Siege Engines*, and convert Weaponsmithing (Firearms) to an Intellect Skill, *Gunsmith*. That better simulates the genre and nature of the setting which the GM wants to simulate.

NEW LANGUAGE TABLES

The Language Table (6E1 81) is a marvelous tool for helping players build characters. Gamemasters who run campaigns set in other worlds (particularly Fantasy campaigns) may want to consider making their own Language Tables. Creating one is fairly simple; the main task involved is to figure out the relationships between the languages in the campaign; once you know that, representing the relationships graphically is easy.

Gamemasters who wish to be as linguistically accurate as possible can easily research how languages grow and evolve from one another before creating a Language Table. However, you can also deduce linguistic relationships from a world's history. For example, if two different races descended from the same tribe, their languages may have strong relationships. If a single god created all the world's languages, he may have built them from the same root words (on the other hand, maybe he deliberately made them all completely unrelated). Inventive GMs may even want to use their Language Table as a way of brainstorming ideas about cultural relationships — if two languages are closely related, what does that say about the cultures that created them?

NEW SKILL ENHANCERS

Skill Enhancers, such as Scientist or Scholar, are a great way for Skill-oriented characters to buy certain types of Skills. However, most of them are limited to a particular type of Skill. Gamemasters



may wish to create new Skill Enhancers, based either on Skill type or on the subject the Skill is related to. The typical Skill Enhancer should cost 3 points; every Skill bought through the Enhancer costs -1 point (minimum cost is still 1 Character Point).

For example, in a Fantasy campaign, the GM might create a Skill Enhancer called *Mystic*. Any KS, PS, or Language relating to magic or wizardry could be bought through this Skill Enhancer. Thus, a wizard PC could buy KS: Arcane & Occult Lore, KS: Demons, PS: Wizard, or Language: Magetongue as part of his Mystic Skill Enhancer.

Characters generally should not be allowed to buy standard Skills (such as Deduction or Combat Driving) in Skill Enhancers.

Creating New Perks

A Perk represents a benefit or resource a character has that most people do not. Most characters should have no trouble simulating such things with the list of Perks in Chapter Four of 6E1. If a player thinks up something that can't be represented by an existing Perk, the GM can easily make up a new one by comparing the proposed new Perk to the existing Perks. A new Perk should cost roughly the same as existing Perks that provide the same level of benefits; for example, a Perk that's about as useful as being wealthy or the leader of a nation would be worth 10 Character Points.

Creating new Fringe Benefits is a particularly good way to individualize a campaign. You can gauge the cost for new Fringe Benefits by comparing them to the costs of existing ones. For example, the GM for a Fantasy campaign might want an elaborate series of Fringe Benefits representing noble titles and privileges among the rulers of the setting's kingdoms. Since Lower Nobility costs 2 points, Aristocracy is 5 points, and Head Of State is 10 points, he knows roughly what his new Perks should cost. Being the ruler of a kingdom costs 10 points; if there are rulers who control several kingdoms (such as a High King or Emperor), that probably costs 15 or more points. Lower noble ranks cost 1-3 points; middle noble ranks 5-7 points; high noble ranks (dukes, princes) costs 8-9 points.

Creating New Talents

Creating new Talents can be tricky. Since Talents are a sort of “middle ground” between Skills and Powers, coming up with new ones that are balanced is sometimes a difficult task. As with Perks, the key is to use existing Talents as guidelines; compare the abilities and usefulness of a proposed new Talent to one that's in the rules to determine a good rough cost, then modify that cost as necessary for the campaign.

CONVERTING DETECTS INTO TALENTS

Some Talents, such as Absolute Range Sense, Absolute Time Sense, Bump Of Direction, and Danger Sense, are derived from the Enhanced Sense *Detect*. Gamemasters can, if they wish, convert other Detects into Talents by following these guidelines.

First, build the Detect as you want it to work. Don't forget to include Sense Modifiers such as *Sense*, *Range*, and *Discriminatory* if they apply. Then compare the Talent you have in mind to the Detect. Is it, like Danger Sense, much more useful or potentially powerful than a standard Detect? If so, it should cost more than the Detect. Danger Sense is a good upper limit for such Talents; if you think the Detect ought to cost more than Danger Sense, it probably should be some sort of Power instead.

If the Talent would be less useful than the Detect, reduce the cost. You should also consider reducing the cost if the Talent is primarily needed to construct gadgets and/or is not particularly useful or unbalancing. For example, Absolute Range Sense, Absolute Time Sense, and Bump Of Direction all cost less than a comparative Detect, and rarely require a roll. However, without them, building rangefinders, clocks, and compasses would be impossible. No one would rely on a clock that fails its roll every couple of minutes or so and begins displaying the wrong time. Therefore the rolls for those Talents were eliminated in most situations and their costs reduced to 3 points to make them easier to buy and use. Since none of these Talents has much impact on the game, making them so cheap and easy to use doesn't affect game balance.

CONVERTING POWERS INTO TALENTS

You can also convert Powers other than Detect into Talents, though this is rare. Typically this involves building a very restricted form of a Power which a normal person could learn or train himself to perform through diligent effort, access to Knowledge That Man Was Not Meant To Know, and so forth.

The best way to convert a Power into a Talent is to build the Power with all appropriate Advantages and Limitations (don't forget *Reduced Endurance*; Talents ordinarily shouldn't cost END). Then use the Real Cost of the Power as a basis for determining what the Talent should cost, rounding up or down as necessary to reflect the Talent's usefulness.

Hypnosis is a good example. It's a limited form of Mind Control that many physicians and other people know. A GM who wanted to create a *Hypnosis* Talent could do so by building a Limited form of Mind Control. Using the sidebar example of Basic Hypnosis on 6E1 257, and adding *Reduced Endurance (0 END)* as an Advantage, he obtains a Real Cost of 9 points. He decides that Hypnosis will cost 10 Character Points for an INT Roll, +1 to the roll for +2 Character Points. If a game effect is needed, Hypnosis equals Mind Control 7d6, +1d6 for every two points by which the hypnotist makes his INT Roll.

Creating New Powers

Creating new Powers should rarely be necessary; almost every conceivable effect can be simulated with the existing Powers and Power Modifiers. But that doesn't mean you can't or shouldn't come up with your own, especially if you think your Power will work better for your particular campaign than the ones presented. Another good reason to create your own Powers is when you think a “by the book” construction is too clunky or difficult to use and you want to “streamline” it.

Creating a new Power isn't difficult. The best way to do it and still preserve game balance is to build the Power as you think it should be built using the existing rules. Then use that Power (both its costs and the rules applicable to it) as a basis for determining how much your new Power should cost and how it should work. Keep the system “meta-rules” described above in mind as you do this; be careful not to violate any of them, or you may build a Power that's highly unbalanced.

Example: *Chris wants to create a “Slipperiness” Power that makes it difficult for characters to remain standing, hold on to objects, and so forth. As long as characters are in an area affected by Slipperiness, they have to make DEX Rolls at -3 (or worse, at the GM's option) to remain standing or to hold on to anything. He can think of two ways to build this: as a form of Change Environment; and as a Drain DEX. Since the Power he has in mind is Constant, he decides that Change Environment is the most applicable Power.*

He builds Slipperiness “by the book” as follows: Change Environment (create slippery area), -3 to DEX Rolls to move or hold anything while in area, Area Of Effect (2m radius Surface; +¼) (11 Active Points); Only Works On Horizontal Surfaces (-0) (9 Real Points).

With this construction in mind, Chris defines his new Power as follows:

SLIPPERINESS

A character with this Standard Power can create an area in which it's very difficult for characters to remain standing or hold on to objects. Examples of Slipperiness include a sheet of ice on the ground or an area in which all friction is negated. To create Slipperiness in a 2m radius area costs 10 Character Points; characters may double this radius for a +¼ Advantage (this Advantage can be purchased multiple times). Slipperiness costs END to use, is Constant, and works at Range.

Every Phase in which a character is in an area affected by Slipperiness, he must make a DEX Roll at -3 or fall down and/or lose his grip on any object he's holding. At the GM's discretion, this penalty may increase (such as, for example, when a character runs into a Slippery area at high speed). A character must be touching the floor or objects to fall down or lose his grip; a character who is, for example, flying and not holding anything will suffer no ill effects from Slipperiness.

At the GM's option, characters can apply Slipperiness, with different special effects, to different Characteristics. For example, a “Confusion Field” could force characters inside it to make all INT Rolls at -3, or a “Weakness Field” could impose a -3 on all STR Rolls.

Example: Geoff doesn't like building poisons and venoms with the current rules; applying so many Power Modifiers takes a long time and seems “clunky” to him. He'd rather define “Venom” as its own separate Power. So, he builds a “typical” deadly poison for his campaign as a guideline: RKA 3d6, NND (defense is appropriate Immunity; +1), Does BODY (+1) (135 Active Points); OAF Fragile (easily-diluted liquid; -1¼), No Range (-¼), No Knockback (-¼), Gradual Effect (6 hours, or ½d6 damage per hour; -1½), 1 Charge (-2) (22 Real Points).

Geoff now builds his Venom Power. Since damage is going to occur in ½d6 increments over a long period of time, meaning the victim has a significant chance of saving himself from death, he decides that a cost of 10 Character Points per damage increment (approximately half the Real Point cost of the Power above) is fair.

VENOM

A character with this Standard Power can poison another character, causing him to die or suffer other ill effects. Examples of Venom include curare, cyanide, rattlesnake venom, and the like. Each ½d6 of Killing Damage caused by Venom costs 10 Character Points. Venom costs END to use, is Instant, and has No Range.

To use Venom, the character makes an Attack Roll. If he hits, the victim immediately takes ½d6 damage (the Extra Time Limitation may be used to delay the onset time). Resistant defenses apply against this damage. Thereafter the victim suffers another ½d6 of Venom damage every half hour until the dice are all used up or he dies, whichever comes first. The damage applies to the victim's defenses cumulatively — each die adds to the earlier dice, and once the victim's defenses are exceeded, he takes all further damage with no defense.

Characters can make Venom damage accrue more quickly than every half-hour with an Advantage. For every +¼ Advantage, the time increment is moved up one step on Time Chart. Thus, for a +¼ Advantage, damage accrues every 20 minutes; for +½, every 5 minutes, and so forth. For a +1¼ Advantage, the victim takes damage on each of his Phases.

At the GM's option, characters can create Venoms to affect Characteristics other than BODY and STUN. For example, some poisons might simply make the victim very sick (affecting his CON) or addle his mind (affecting his INT or EGO). The GM must approve all such Venoms.

Venom is typically bought through a Focus, but this is not required.

NO ENDURANCE

To simplify Superheroic games, you may want to get rid of Power Limitations and Endurance costs. No Power will cost END to use, but you won't get any breaks on the cost. You can ignore END in Heroic games, though this means some combats may take a very long time.

Creating New Power Advantages

New Power Advantages should be even rarer than new Powers. The Advantages listed in Chapters Five and Six of 6E1 should suffice for virtually any Power. Creating new Advantages is also risky, since Advantages are more likely to unbalance an ability than just about anything else. Players should only create a new Advantage if (a) there is no other way to simulate the effect they want, and (b) the Advantage won't unbalance the campaign.

Before creating a new Advantage, a player or GM should try to build the desired effect using existing Powers and Advantages. If he can build it, then a new Advantage generally shouldn't be substituted for it (even if the effect is very expensive). Only when there is no other alternative should you consider creating a new Advantage. In such a case, every effort should be made to ensure that the new Advantage won't unbalance the campaign. It should cost at least as much, if not more, as comparatively useful Advantages, or its cost should be proportionate to similar but more useful Advantages.

Changing The Value Of Limitations

The values presented for Limitations reflect a standard value that works well for most (if not all) genres. However, based on the genre being simulated and the nature of the campaign, the GM may find it preferable to alter the value of some Limitations.

For example, the *STUN Only* (-0) Limitation described under *Blast* (6E1 174) is most applicable to the typical Champions campaign, where the Limitation's benefits and drawbacks more or less balance out. In a superhero campaign where the GM wants to emphasize the chaotic and destructive nature of superpowers by having innocent bystanders get injured in most superhuman battles, it might be a +¼ Advantage. In a campaign featuring a lot of robots, undead creatures, or other Automatons who cannot take STUN damage, it might be a -¼ (or greater) Limitation.

Altering a Limitation's value is also a good way to encourage characters to take it. For example, if a GM wants characters to have Mental Powers that affect targets physically, he might increase the value of *Based On CON* to -1½ so more characters take it for their powers.

Creating New Complications

As with Advantages, new Complications should be rare. The Complications were intentionally designed to be very broad so that they could apply to a wide variety of situations. Only when the existing Complications cannot be used at all to simulate what a player wants, or would require substantial modification, should the GM consider creating a new Complication.

Example: *Hugh's playing a character who has a severe allergic reaction to silver. He initially considers taking a Susceptibility to simulate this, but since the character isn't damaged by the presence of silver, he doesn't feel Susceptibility would apply as written. He'd rather have the character lose STR, DEX, and CON when in the presence of silver. He discusses this with the GM. The GM offers to configure Susceptibility to represent an allergy, much in the same way Dependence can be configured to represent an addiction. The points for the commonality of the condition stay the same. Instead of taking damage, the character will lose 1, 2, or 3 point from each Characteristic every Phase instead of taking 1-3d6 of damage. The character only suffers the effect when near silver, so rather than defining a time increment, the GM simply agrees to give a +5 Character Point "Allergy" bonus to the character, with the proviso that loss of Characteristics doubles in any Phase in which he actually touches silver.*

CHANGING THE RULES

We think the *HERO System* rules work well just as they are, and encourage you to use them that way. However, you may find that certain rules do not suit your style of play, or make it more difficult for you to do what you want to in the game. If that's the case, change the rules! The whole point of gaming is to have fun, so you shouldn't let the rules hold you back if they're getting in the way of that goal.

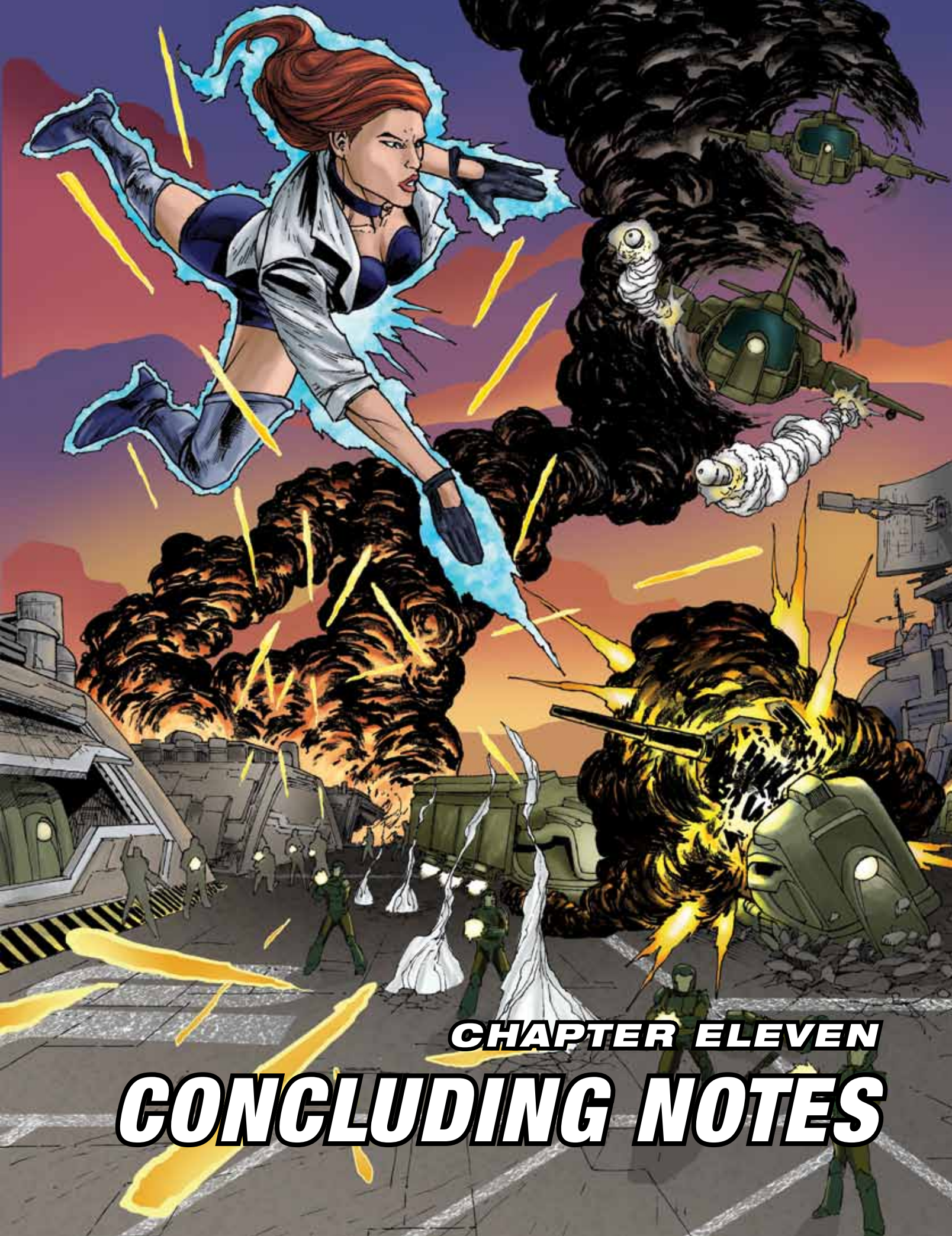
However, changing the rules can be dangerous. One of the key concepts underlying the *HERO System* is that of *game balance*. The *HERO System* has been designed so that the costs of things, and the rules applicable to them, are reasonably balanced. Any one game element is, in theory and on the average over the course of a campaign, as useful and worthwhile as any other game element with the same cost. One may be better than another in a given situation, but overall the usefulness should balance out.

Changes in the rules may have unintended effects on this rules structure, causing the system to become unbalanced. When something becomes unbalanced, it has a greater usefulness or effect than its point cost would seem to indicate (or, more rarely, has less effect than it should for its cost). A good rule of thumb is this: if all the players want their characters to have a particular Power or use a particular maneuver, the chances are good that it's unbalanced.

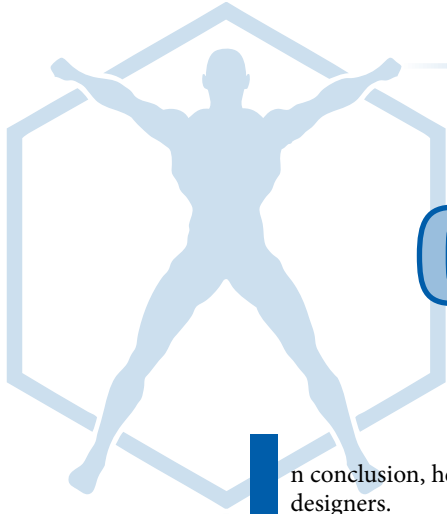
Changing rules is a good way to cause imbalance because it's often difficult to predict the exact effects a change will have. A change may seem clean and discrete, but as it's used more and more, other aspects of the system come into play and are affected by the change. This may lead to further changes, or having to change the rule back to what it was, or changes to other rules in an attempt to correct the problem. Pretty soon you've got a lot of pages of rules notes and a tangled mess on your hands.

So, in short, before you make any changes to the rules — particularly major changes, like to the costs of Characteristics or Powers — consider what you're going to do very carefully. Try to look at as many aspects of the system as you can and figure out how the change might affect them. And, most important of all, inform the players that this change is a temporary one intended as a "test run" — if it doesn't work as well as you'd hoped, you'll change it back.

Example: *Gary decides he wants Mental Defense to be a Characteristic in his campaign. He plans to use a lot of villains with Mental Powers during the course of several of his story arcs, and he figures the PCs ought to have some resistance to their Powers or the game won't be much fun for the players. He decides all characters have MD 2 for free, and can purchase additional MD for 1 Character Point per point.*



CHAPTER ELEVEN
CONCLUDING NOTES



CONCLUSION

In conclusion, here are a few notes from the designers.

ORIGINS OF THE HERO SYSTEM

Roleplaying game systems don't arise in a vacuum. They're the result of a lot of effort, playtesting, and, most importantly, devotion to the goal of getting the system published. Even then, game designers have to evaluate and improve their systems constantly, as new ideas occur and play experience reveals areas which need improvement. Here's how the *HERO System* developed.

BENEFITS OF A CLASSICAL EDUCATION

Long before there was a "*HERO System*," there was only *Champions*, Hero Games's comic book superheroes roleplaying game. *Champions* was born during a college lecture. George MacDonald was bored by the lecture, so he started designing a superhero roleplaying game in his notebook. The final result of that effort is the game you're holding.

George had some good ideas for combat and characteristics, but the problem of assigning powers was a difficult one. Then George met Wayne Shaw at a convention and saw his point system for distributing superpowers. The current system looks almost nothing like Wayne's original work, but owes much in spirit to Wayne and his group's pioneering effort. Thanks, Wayne.

The original edition of the *Champions* rules took about two and a half years of playtesting and revision. It was a cooperative effort among numerous gamers, but essentially George was responsible for testing the rules, and Steve Peterson was responsible for translating the ideas to paper. Jim Landes, Ray Greer, Glenn Thain, and Tom Tumey were all instrumental in getting the rules published.

THE SYSTEM IS PUBLISHED

Champions was first published in 1981 to rave reviews. The game proved to be so popular that it raced through its initial print runs. This gave George and Steve the opportunity to revise the rules twice: once in 1982 and again in 1984. Each new edition of *Champions* took advantage of additional playtesting and helped clean up the rules.

Meanwhile, the *HERO System* was branching out in new directions. In 1983, Hero Games published *Espionage*, the Secret Agent Roleplaying Game, followed in 1984 by *Justice Inc.*, the roleplaying game of the 1920s and 1930s. These were followed by *Danger International* (an *Espionage* revision), *Fantasy Hero*, *Robot Warriors*, and *Star Hero*.

The problem was that as the *HERO System* spread out over several genres, it became less unified. George and Steve never had a chance to sit down with all the rules at once and say "how do we want to handle mentalism?" or "how do we want to build gadgets?". As a result, each game was built on what came before it, but the basic system rules were changed to fit special circumstances. Hence *Fantasy Hero Magic* was different from *Champions Powers* or *Justice Inc. Talents*. Moreover, because there was no single set of rules, *HERO System* players ended up buying several different Hero games just to make sure they had all the rules.

THE FOURTH EDITION

In the summer of 1987, Hero first started thinking about fixing all this. What finally convinced them to change things was a desire to clarify the original vision behind the *HERO System*. They had always envisioned the *HERO System* as a complete and unified set of rules for roleplaying in any background — George and Steve's initial goal was to create rules which could be used to duplicate any setting from any novel, comic book, movie, or television show. But the earlier, "piecemeal" publication of genre-oriented games had sidetracked that goal.

To return to and realize its original goals, Hero Games decided to unify all the rules, smooth out the discrepancies, and put them under one cover. This also gave them the opportunity to clean up the presentation, fix some loopholes, and act on all the feedback which had been received in the years since the first *HERO System* book had gone to print.

Of course, the situation in 1987 was somewhat different from that in 1981. *Champions* was no longer a small game run by a handful of people — it was an established, successful game system. Hero Games had even signed an agreement with Iron Crown Enterprises to help alleviate the day-to-day concerns of publishing roleplaying games.

In 1987, Iron Crown hired a talented writer/editor, Rob Bell, to help manage the Hero Games line. His main job was the revision and unification of the *HERO System*. The revisions — the creation of the Fourth Edition — took almost exactly two years. George, Steve, and Rob went over the rules one by one; they also solicited feedback from over a hundred players. They playtested and replay-tested so the rules would be as good as possible. Finally the revisions were completed and the new edition published in 1989.

The Fourth Edition, like its predecessors, proved to be very successful — so successful, in fact, that it remained more or less unchanged for nearly ten years. During that time dozens of supplements, many containing new or alternate rules, were published, and HeroMaker, a computer program for generating *HERO System* characters, was created. The rise of Internet communications and the World Wide Web provided new avenues through which Hero fans were able to exchange information and experiences regarding the *HERO System*. Hero Games even attempted to adapt the *HERO System* to a new, simplified roleplaying system, Fuzion.

THE FIFTH EDITION

In 1995, Hero Games severed its relationship with Iron Crown, and shortly thereafter entered into a similar relationship with R. Talsorian Games. Hero also began granting licenses to other game companies, notably Gold Rush Games, to produce *HERO System* supplements. This gave the company the chance to expand its audience.

Around this time it was becoming apparent that the *HERO System* could once again use a few touch-ups. It didn't need broad revisions or changes, but there were a few things, such as the Powers *Aid* and *Hand-To-Hand Attack*, that obviously weren't working correctly. Even more importantly, since the publication of the Fourth Edition gamers had come up with hundreds, if not thousands, of questions concerning rules interpretation and interaction, and had made many suggestions for additions to the system. Finding a way to provide answers to the questions, plug the loopholes involved, and improve the *HERO System* became a company goal.

Furthermore, many of the Hero Games books published since the Fourth Edition, such as those in the *Dark Champions* line and the *Ultimate* series, contained new rules or rules variants which were deemed worthy of inclusion in the system's core rules. Because many of these books did not focus on *Champions* superhero characters, including rules from them coincided with another Hero Games goal — making the system more friendly for non-superhero characters. Despite the Fourth Edition revisions, a strong emphasis on superhero characters still existed in many parts of the system. Since the *HERO System* is intended to simulate *any* genre, eliminating this emphasis and making the system equally applicable to all genres became a second design goal.

In mid-1997, Hero Games finally decided to go ahead with the design and publication of a Fifth Edition of the *HERO System* rules. Experienced *HERO System* author and game designer Steven S. Long was recruited in December 1997 to undertake the task of rewriting the game's rules and text. Working from an outline of questions and discussion points prepared by Steve Long, he and Steve Peterson went over the rules one at a time and decided what changes and additions were needed. Additionally, a feedback form was provided for *HERO System* gamers, allowing them to indicate what changes they felt were needed, and what they'd like to see in a new edition.

Steve Long spent months working on the first draft, and turned it in to Hero Games in August, 1998. In February, 1999, he again met with Steve Peterson to review the suggested changes and revisions the company wanted. After several more months of work, he turned in the completed manuscript in May, 1999.

Unfortunately, by this point Hero Games was suffering some difficulties. R. Talsorian Games had effectively gone out of business, leaving Hero to go its way alone. Without sufficient income to keep employees working on developing manuscripts, Hero was unable to publish the Fifth Edition.

In 2000, a potential solution presented itself when Hero was purchased by a company called Cybergames. Thanks to the resulting infusion of cash and enthusiasm, Hero had full-time employees for the first time in its existence. However, various logistical and financial hurdles again kept the Fifth Edition from seeing the light of day. Hero lapsed back into hibernation.

Reluctant to continue its efforts to publish paper games, in mid-2001 Cybergames began negotiating with a company called DOJ, Inc. to sell the assets of Hero Games. After several months of discussion, during which some investors bowed out of DOJ and others entered the picture, the company finally concluded an agreement to purchase the Hero assets — including, most prominently, the manuscript for the Fifth Edition. The new Hero Games immediately began preparing the Fifth Edition for printing.

THE FIFTH EDITION, REVISED

Hero Games published the *Fifth Edition* in April, 2002 to strong sales and excellent reviews. Renewed interest in the *HERO System* attracted attention both from former players and from gamers who'd never tried the *HERO System* before. Over the next two years, Hero Games published over two dozen supplements, ranging from genre books, to *Ultimate* series books, to sourcebooks on a wide variety of subjects.

Inevitably, all this activity and interest led to new rules issues and questions. Furthermore, as the Hero Games staff became more and more experienced at publishing books, they developed more ideas about better ways to present the *HERO System* rules. After two years, it was time to revise the rulebook to include this new information and ideas, and so the *Fifth Edition, Revised* was published.

THE SIXTH EDITION

The Fifth Edition, Revised (or "FRED," as some fans liked to call it) remained the core rulebook for several years as Hero Games continued to publish numerous books — genre books, rules supplements, books of enemies and monsters, and many others. All those resources meant more players, more attention being paid to the *HERO System*, and more thought devoted to the way the rules should work. The existence of the World Wide Web made it possible for *HERO* fans to discuss their favorite RPG to a greater extent, and in greater detail, than ever before.

In mid-2007, *HERO System* Line Developer Steve Long first began giving some serious thought to publishing a Sixth Edition of the rules — what changes he'd need to make, what a new edition of the rules should include, and how best to approach the project. At a company meeting in October, 2007 he made a formal proposal to the DOJ partners about 6E. The decision was made to proceed, with a scheduled release in the late summer of 2009.

The planned Sixth Edition was announced in February 2008. At that same time Hero Games created a discussion forum on its website where fans could post and discuss suggestions for what the Sixth Edition should contain and how the *HERO System* rules could be improved. Fifteen months later Steve began writing the book, and his first task was to read every single post in that forum — over 1,200 pages' worth of comments, ideas, and enthusiastic debate. Combining that input with his own ideas, Long set to work... and the result is the book you're reading now.

What we said in the Fifth Edition holds equally true for the Sixth: at Hero Games, we like to think that each book we do is a little better than the last one, and we believe this is the best expression of the *HERO System* rules to date. It answers questions, smooths over rough areas, resolves problems, and in general makes the game better than ever, and thus more fun for everyone involved. We hope you'll agree.

WHERE YOU CAN GO FROM HERE

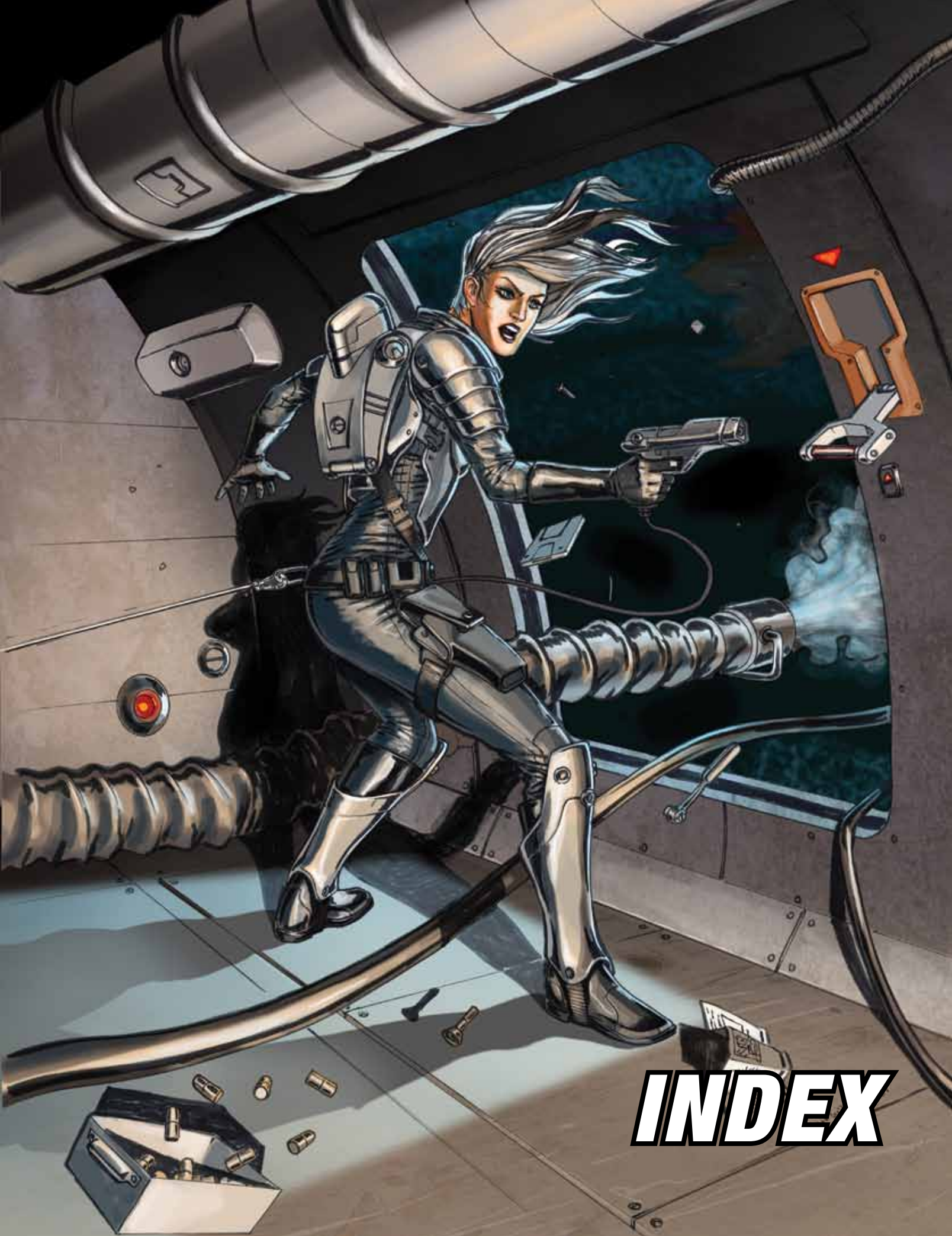
In addition to this rulebook, there are plenty of *HERO System* resources available to you — and many more to come.

First, you can find Hero Games on the World Wide Web at <http://www.herogames.com>. The Hero Games website has news and other important information for Hero Games gamers, in addition to many other fun features. For one, there's a large and active message board. If you have a question about the game, are looking for players in your area, want a clarification on a rules dispute, or just feel like talking with other Hero Games fans, it's the place to be. The Hero Games website also has an Online Store where you can order Hero Games products, including not just books but electronic products such as books in PDF format and the *Hero Designer* character creation program.

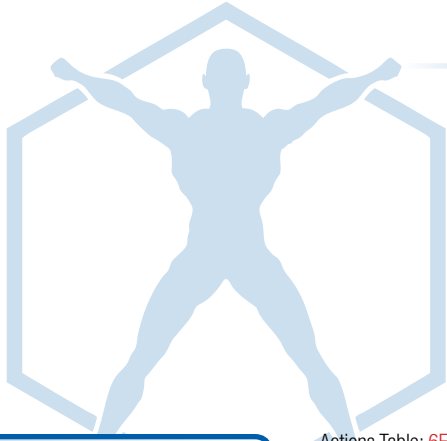
Second, there are other Hero Games products besides the Core Rulebook. Hero Games publishes a wide range of genre books, sourcebooks, and other supplements for its product lines. Additionally, there are older products published during the company's thirty-year history. The changes wrought by the Sixth Edition of the *HERO System* don't change the core elements of the rules; it's an easy matter to use characters and resources from the Fifth Edition or any earlier version of *HERO* in your Sixth Edition games.

So what are you waiting for?

Go out and Be A Hero!



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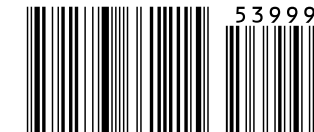
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