

OPTIONAL COMBAT RULES

These are rules in the “beta test” for Advanced Combat. All comments are welcome! Send reviews to ironclaw@one.net

Optional Rules and the poor Game Host

The Game Host has a hard job. Not only must they co-ordinate the actions of all the players, they also have to know all the rules that are in play, to be sure that they’re applied consistently. There are a lot of rules – and this document adds even more rules!

These rules are called “optional” because it’s up to the Game Host to choose whether they’re in play or not. Remember that if these rules are used, NPCs can take full advantage of them too, not just PCs. These rules greatly increase the complexity of Combat, and may not be suitable for all campaigns. If they are used, please be sure to use them consistently.

Called Shots

A combatant may voluntarily take a –2 Penalty To-Hit; in return, the combatant now gets their “Special” Weapon effect on any Success, Overwhelming or otherwise.

Example 1: Ma Shishou strikes at Xian Furui with his spear. Ma Shishou voluntarily takes a –2 Penalty for a “Called Shot”.

He must roll his To-Hit Dice three times and take the lowest roll — his Speed is d12, his Sword Skill is d12 & d10. He rolls three times: 8, 7, and 2 (score of 8); 4, 9, and 1 (score of 9); and 4, 4, and 2 (score of 4). The lowest Score of the three rolls is the 4 — that’s his To-Hit Roll.

Xian Furui rolls to Parry – she scores a 3. She’s hit! Ma Shishou automatically scores a “Special” hit, which for the spear is “Penetrates Armor: foe loses lowest showing armor die.”

Example 2: Wu Angli has Focus (q.v.), and she wants to teach Ma Shishou a lesson. She chooses to Strike Sure, and to spend her Focus for a Bonus To-Hit. She also chooses to suffer the –2 Penalty for a “Called Shot”. The +2 Bonus she’s earned for Striking Sure with Focus To-Hit cancels out the –2 Penalty for a Called Shot. Wu Angli will roll To-Hit normally, but if she hits, she automatically includes her weapon’s Special effect.

Multiple Strikes and Parries for highly-Skilled Combatants

A combatant with a Skill Level of 6 (d12 & d4) or more may “divide up their attention” to gain multiple Strikes and Parries in the same round. Whole Skill dice may be split into two (or three, or more) “sets” of dice, and rolled separately for To-Hit rolls or Parries. For each “set”, the combatant combines their Speed Dice and other Trait Dice that applies with that one die for To-Hit and Parries.

A combatant may still only choose one Maneuver per round ... but that combatant may now “Strike Sure” or “Strike Hard” at multiple targets – or even the same target twice!

Example 1: Hakamo has a Speed of d10, a Samurai Trait of d12, and a Sword Skill of d12 & d8. He is skilled enough that he may divide his attentions.

Hakamo divides his dice into two sets: one with the d12, one with the d8. His Speed Trait is included in both sets, as well as his Samurai Trait since it “applies to” Sword. Hakamo may now make two To-Hit rolls per maneuver: one with the first set (d10, d12, and d12), and one with the second set (d10, d12, and d8). He may also take two Parries per round: one at d10, d12, and d12, and one at d10, d12, and d8.

To simulate this split, the combatant should “split up” their Skill Dice physically; for example, they could set each die on one side of their character sheet.

Only whole dice may be split. For example, if you have a Skill Level of Level 6 (d12 & d4), you can only split them into sets of d12 and d4. You cannot split them into two “Level 3” sets of d8 and d8.

Frequently Asked Questions about Optional Combat Rules

We tried using these optional rules, and some of the players didn't like it. Or the Game Host didn't understand them. Should we continue to use them?

Probably not. Remember, the important thing is to have fun. If these rules cause people to scratch their heads in confusion or scowl in disapproval, don't use them. That's why we labeled them “optional”.

Technically, the Game Host is the final word on “what's going on”, so if all rules can be used or not, what does “optional” really mean? In the context of Ironclaw, we've labeled certain rules “optional” because these rules aren't part of the “default” campaign setting, because if used they change game-play in complex ways.

Remember, have fun! Don't let these rules get in the way of that.

If I'm using high Skill to divide my attentions, do I have to split my To-Hit rolls and my Parries into the same sets?

No. You can have two completely different sets – one for To-Hit and one for Parry. You can also choose not to form a set with one but not the other; for example, Hakamo could choose to have two sets for Parries, but keep his dice in one set for To-Hit rolls. Yes, this is very complex. That's why this is an optional rule.