


PYRAMID[®]



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ALTERNATE GURPS IV



POINTLESS MONSTER HUNTING
by Christopher R. Rice

KNOWING YOUR OWN STRENGTH
by Sean Punch

PLAYING WITH HEALTH
by David L. Pulver

SCHRÖDINGER'S BACKPACK
by Douglas H. Cole

POSSESSIONS UNDER CONTROL
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IN THIS ISSUE

Get ready to push the envelope of your **GURPS** campaigns again, with the latest from our leading-edge laboratory. This issue has rules, options, and possibilities that can take your games in bold new directions!

When you want to get to The Mission right away, dispense with the standard character-creation system and go *Pointless Monster Hunting*. Long-time *Pyramid* contributor Christopher R. Rice brings you a divergent character-creation system for **GURPS Monster Hunters** that *doesn't* use character points, making it as simple as choosing options off a menu – quickly and easily! And we won't even mention the tips for designing new options . . .

Sometimes coming up with an exciting campaign premise is just a matter of *Knowing Your Own Strength*. **GURPS** Line Editor Sean Punch takes a look at redefining **GURPS** Strength logarithmically. Learn how to get rid of three-digit ST scores, how to keep house cats in line, and how to assign scores when you want a threat that's 10 times as strong as an average guy!

When we're done tweaking Strength, why not try *Playing With Health*? **GURPS Basic Set** co-author David L. Pulver devotes this month's Eidetic Memory column to showing how HT can be made more *active* in a campaign, with a look at why to link it to Perception, how to define Speed-based skills, and more.

Not all games need to track all gear down to the last granola bar. For such campaigns, it'll speed things up to reach into *Schrödinger's Backpack*. This option from **GURPS Martial Arts: Technical Grappling** author Douglas H. Cole lets you rummage around for anything in your equipment pack . . . and it just *might* be there!

Do bad guys keep taking over your mind and soul? Then it's time to get your *Possessions Under Control!* This option recasts the **Technical Grappling** system to let you wrest control away from some demonic or alien possessor. Use the included techniques to get a better grip on sinister situations.

This issue also features a Random Thought Table that'll shake your **GURPS** game down to its very *bones*, plus some Odds and Ends we couldn't fit anywhere else. Whether you're trying to make your games faster, easier, or more flavorfully rich, this issue has something in its pack. With this *Pyramid*, you'll explore the alternatives like never before!

ARTICLE COLORS

Each article is color-coded to help you find your favorite sections.

- Pale Blue:* In This Issue
- Brown:* In Every Issue (humor, editorial, etc.)
- Green:* Columnist
- Dark Blue:* **GURPS** Features
- Purple:* Systemless Features

COVER AND INTERIOR ART

Brandon Moore

All things are possible until they are proved impossible – and even the impossible may only be so, as of now.

– Pearl S. Buck

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FROM THE EDITOR

GURPS Is All CAPITAL!

I suspect that most gamers start a tabletop game with a certain amount of “mental capital” to invest in the game. In other words, if a GM can only carve out 10 hours from his schedule before running a Mutant Bunny Cyberpunk Horror game, then he’s going to need to prioritize those hours to make sure he understands the game system, the world, the characters, and so on. So if it takes seven hours to understand the rules and two hours to get the world together, that doesn’t leave a lot of time to make sure Cottontail Bloodchip is a compatible character concept with Hoppy Goretech.

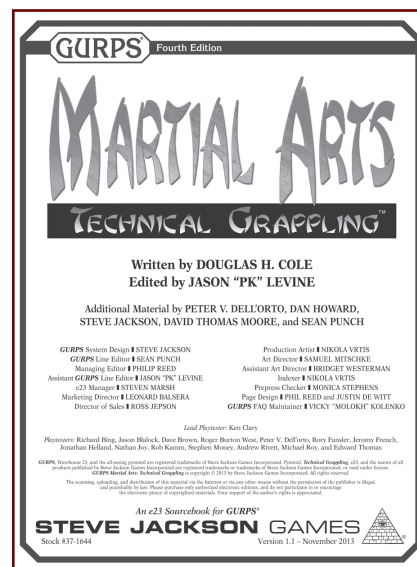
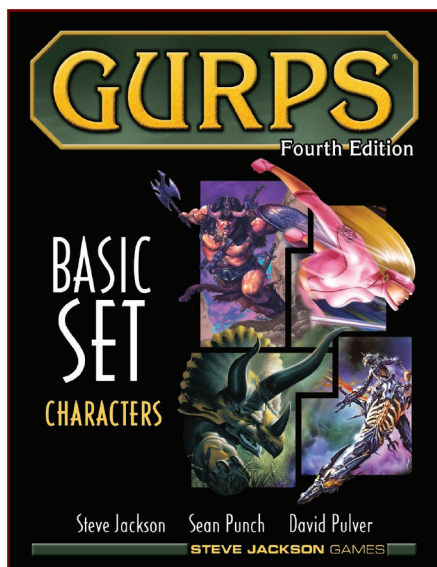
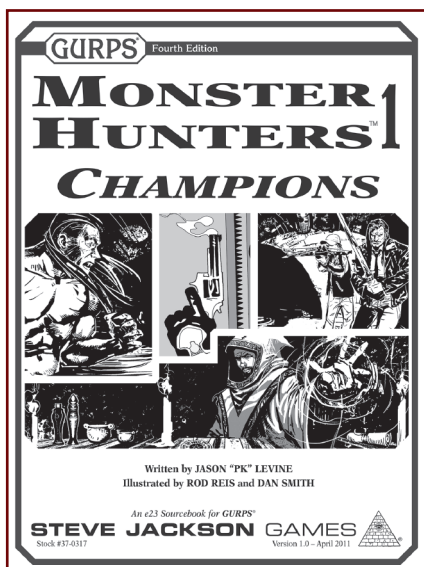
In fact, one of the elements that originally inspired the creation of **GURPS** was the notion of a unified system. Once you know **GURPS**, you don’t need to spend much time in subsequent campaigns (re-)learning the rules, even if you want to switch genres, tones, or focuses.

However, many gamers also have a certain *minimum* threshold for “mental capital” they want to invest in a game.

If you’re going to start something new and you’ve got a few hours, *why not* poke at the rules and see what new niftiness you can come up with? That’s where other enticing **GURPS** supplements and issues of *Pyramid* come in handy – especially the *Alternate GURPS* issues. If you’ve got a few hours of mental capital you’re looking to invest in the rules, and you already love **GURPS**, hopefully something herein will spark some new excitement for your next game! Just make sure you leave enough time for your bunnies . . .

WRITE NOW, RIGHT NOW

How well spent was your bunny money on this month’s *Pyramid*? Did something leap off the page and into your game immediately? Or is it getting added to your mental hopper for future evaluation? Let us know privately what you dig via email pyramid@sjgames.com, or adjust your computer’s rabbit ears and join the burrow at forums.sjgames.com.



Additional Material: Douglas H. Cole, Phil Masters, and Sean Punch

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POINTLESS MONSTER HUNTING

BY CHRISTOPHER R. RICE

The character templates in *GURPS Monster Hunters 1: Champions* greatly simplify character creation, but it's entirely possible to go even further and ignore point values, either before or after play, if the GM is willing to make preparations ahead of time. Drawing heavily from *Pointless Slaying and Looting* from *Pyramid* #3/72: *Alternate Dungeons*, here is a new character-creation option that does all the work for the GM who prefers a "pointless" approach to *GURPS Monster Hunters*.

CHAMPION ARCHETYPES

Harkening all the way to the very roots of the series (*GURPS Loadouts: Monster Hunters*, which in turn inspired *X-Terminators* in *Pyramid* #3/5: *Horror*), each champion is based on an archetype with a specific set of attributes and secondary characteristics; sage, scout, slayer, and a "hunter-of-all-trades." See p. 4 for methods of creating new archetypes for champions.

Sage

You're smart – but tough and quick enough to do the job. You're the brains of any group of champions and what you know helps the team outfox The Enemy.

Attributes: ST 10; DX 11; IQ 15; HT 11.

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 15; Will 13; Per 13; FP 11; Basic Speed 6.00; Basic Move 6.

Scout

Swift, athletic, and perceptive – though not as intelligent as the sage – you get in close and help track down the quarry.

The person who makes a success of living is the one who see his goal steadily and aims for it unswervingly.

– Cecil B. DeMille

Attributes: ST 10; DX 14; IQ 10; HT 11.

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 15; Will 12; Per 13; FP 11; Basic Speed 6.25; Basic Move 7.

Slayer

Monsters need a 'killin' and the slayer needs to kill' em. Like the scout you're not as bright as the sage, but you're fast, strong, and tough enough to go toe to toe with The Enemy.

Attributes: ST 15; DX 12; IQ 10; HT 13.

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d/2d-1; BL 34 lbs.; HP 15; Will 12; Per 11; FP 13; Basic Speed 6.00; Basic Move 6.

Hunter-of-All-Trades

You're a combination of the slayer, scout, and sage. You can fulfill any of those roles on a team, and this makes you highly sought after.

Attributes: ST 11; DX 12; IQ 12; HT 12.

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 29 lbs.; HP 16; Will 13; Per 13; FP 12; Basic Speed 6.00; Basic Move 6.

APTITUDES

Once the archetype has been chosen, the champion needs to pick his *Aptitudes*. The recommended number of *Aptitude* slots for a beginning *Monster Hunters* game is 20, though the GM can vary this to taste. *Primary Aptitudes* occupy at least three slots apiece, *Secondary Aptitudes* use two, and *Tertiary Aptitudes* use one.

Each *Aptitude* describes the standard traits that it gives the champion. These might include increased attributes or secondary characteristics, advantages, perks, skills,

or techniques. These work normally except as noted and subject to a few blanket exceptions:

- Attribute bonuses change secondary characteristics (and Basic Speed bonuses alter Basic Move) only where spelled out explicitly. Otherwise, they don't!

For instance, “IQ +1” means just +1 to IQ – not to Will or Per – while an Aptitude that improves IQ as in the *Basic Set* would explicitly indicate “IQ +1, Will +1, and Per +1.” No math is necessary outside of adding the visible modifiers to the archetype baseline.

- Techniques with a “1” have no fixed skill base and work with any Wildcard (pp. 11-14) that makes sense.

- Some Aptitudes affect the Destiny Point Limit (see p. 15), or DPL.

Aptitudes with levels provide tiers of benefits and “stack” with themselves. The number of levels a beginning character can have is limited, but the GM determines the highest level allowed after play has begun.

Some Aptitudes (and some levels of Aptitudes) have other ones as prerequisites, which are notated in boldfaced brackets – e.g., **[Mysticism]**. Lastly, some Primary and Power Aptitudes have an additional number notated beside them – e.g., **[4]**. This means that the Aptitude costs that many slots (per level, if leveled).

Primary Aptitudes

These Aptitudes use *three or more* slots apiece.

Adept **[Ritualist]** **[4]**. You use the adept times when casting spells. See *Champions*, p. 25.

Consecrated Aura 1-5 **[3]**. Each level gives you, and any caster within two yards of you, +1 to energy-gathering rolls. This stacks with being in a place of power (*Champions*, p. 36), but bonuses can never exceed +5.

Grace of Heaven/Hell **[Inhuman]** **[3]**. You are no longer burned when touching holy artifacts, being on holy ground, or when splashed with holy water. This can be because the forces of Heaven no longer consider you a foe or you’re so far up the food chain in Hell that you ignore most holy attacks.

Resurgent **[3]**. Extra Life (p. B55) and +1 DPL.

Seventh Son **[5]**. You’re the seventh child of a seventh child. Because of the circumstances of your birth, you get +3 DPL, you have +2 on all reaction rolls, *and* both Serendipitous (p. 6) and Fortunate (p. 6) have no level caps for you. You also have an uncanny sense when it comes to supernatural beings and phenomena; treat this as Detect (p. B47) with the Vague limitation. This Aptitude can also be repurposed as a general “Chosen One” if the GM likes.

Secondary Aptitudes

These Aptitudes take up *two* slots apiece.

Coordinated 1-3. Each level gives DX +1 and Per +1.

Connected (Group). You must specialize by group (see p. B44). Such contacts are Somewhat Reliable, appear on a 12 or less, and have a skill of 12 (for supernatural capabilities) or 15 (for those without).

Daring. Daredevil (p. B47) and +1 DPL.

Deductive Mastery **[Learned 2 and Photographic Memory, or Sage Archetype and Photographic Memory]**. Use the rules for Psychometry (p. B78), except that you read days as hours, and years as days. Your ability is not a psychic power, but instead due to a very observant nature, and can be used on people as well as places or things. Make an IQ roll normally,

but you must be able to see, hear, and smell your subject. If you can only do two of the three, you roll at -2 if you can only use one, you roll at -4; if you can’t use any of your senses, you cannot use this ability.

Dual-Weapon Mastery. Gives Ambidexterity (p. B39) and Dual-Weapon Attack! (p. B230).

Ears like a Bat. Acute Hearing 1 (p. B35), Discriminatory Hearing (p. B49), and Parabolic Hearing 1 (p. B72). This can be taken as an **[Enhanced]** Aptitude, in which case a second level is allowed and gives both Parabolic Hearing 2 *and* four more levels of Acute Hearing.

Energetic. HT +1 and FP +5.

Enhanced. This trait serves as an Unusual Background, allowing access to Bioenhancement Aptitudes (p. 7), certain other Aptitudes, and the Bioenhancement! Wild-card (p. 12).

Evasion 1-2. Each level gives Basic Speed +1.00 and Basic Move +1. *Evasion 3* is allowed with **[Enhanced]**.

Fearless. Will +1 and Unfazeable (p. B95).

Heroic Archer. See *GURPS Martial Arts* (p. 45). All rolls use Archery!

Intuitive. Intuition (p. B63) and +1 DPL.

OTHER ARCHETYPES

The GM may wish to introduce other archetypes into his campaign or perhaps create a “sidekick” version of each. The four presented types use these guidelines:

1. Each is built with 130 points.
2. Minimum ST and IQ are 10 – physically weak or incompetent champions don’t last long!
3. Minimum DX is 11 and minimum Basic Speed is 6.00, to avoid complete combat incompetence.
4. Minimum HT is 11 and HP is 14, to prevent easy character death.
5. Minimum Will and Per are both 11, to enable the character to spot and survive supernatural threats.

Only the first rule is immutable. The GM is free to disregard the others.

Linguist 1-3. You have Accented comprehension of *any* language that you may have plausibly studied in the past; **[Language Talent]** raises this to Native. The exceptions are inhuman tongues (*Champions*, p. 24) and any other language the GM feels you couldn’t have possibly learned. You may simultaneously use a number of languages equal to your level in this Aptitude; e.g., with Linguist 1 you can understand any *one* language at a time, but with Linguist 2 you could translate between any *two* languages.

Lucky 1-2. Lucky 1 gives Luck (p. B66) and +1 DPL. Lucky 2 doubles the benefits: Extraordinary Luck and +2 DPL.

Mana Reserve 1-7 **[Ritualist]**. Each level gives you a 7-point mana reserve.

Mystic. An Unusual Background granting access to Mysticism Aptitudes (pp. 7-8) and certain other Aptitudes. Decide if this counts as Clerical Investment (p. B43); if so, you acquire Spiritual (p. 10) or Religious (p. 10) on top of your other Foibles.

Negotiator. Cultural Adaptability (p. B46) and Social Chameleon (p. B86) eliminate *all* social penalties for class, culture, and race, as well as give +1 to *all* reaction rolls.

Nimble 1-2. Each level gives DX +1 and Basic Move +1.

Psychic. This trait serves as an Unusual Background allowing access to Psionic Aptitudes (pp. 8-9) and an expanded Parapsychologist! Wildcard (p. 13).

Resolute. Will+1 and Indomitable (p. B60).

Ritualist. An Unusual Background granting access to other certain Aptitudes and the ability to cast spells with the Ritual Path magic system using Path! specialties (p. 13). Use the non-adept times when casting unless you have Adept (p. 4).

Inhuman Options

Those who want to play an inhuman can choose one of the templates from **Champions** (pp. 49-51) and get 20 fewer Aptitude slots. Optionally, your character can be “inhuman-blooded.” Pick *one* inhuman racial template (**Champions**, pp. 49-51), and purchase up to 10 points worth of any positive traits (attribute bonuses, advantages, skills, etc.) from that template as an Inhuman Aptitude costing one slot. If you choose lycanthrope, also select a were-form; while you may not afford to buy the Alternate Form trait itself, you may add traits from the were-form as well as the base template.

Scent Tracker. Acute Smell 2 (p. B35) and Discriminatory Smell (p. B49). This can be taken as an **[Enhanced]** Aptitude. In this case a second level is allowed, which adds the Emotion Sense enhancement to Discriminatory Smell (which can be used up to four yards away) *and* three more levels of Acute Smell.

Sensitive Palate. Acute Taste 5 (p. B35) and Discriminatory Taste (p. B49).

Serendipitous 1-4. Each level gives a level of Serendipity (p. B83) and +1 DPL.

Shoulder Checker. Per +1 and Peripheral Vision (p. B74).

Shootist. An Unusual Background granting access to certain other Aptitudes and an enhanced version of Gun! (p. 12).

Situational Awareness. Combat Reflexes (p. B43) and +1 DPL.

Sixth Sense. Danger Sense (p. B47) and +1 DPL.

Slayer's Strike. By spending 1 Destiny Point per attack, you can ignore *one* particular protective trait your target has (who *must* be a supernatural being). For example, you could shoot a vampire with a gun and ignore his Injury Tolerance (Unliving) for that one attack.

Smart 1-3. Each level gives IQ +1, Will +1, and Per +1.

Swift Strike 1-2 **[Enhanced or Warrior Training]**. Extra Attack 1-2 (pp. B53-54) with *one specific* Wildcard (pp. 11-14). Specify this Wildcard when selecting the Aptitude.

Wild Talent 1-4. Each level allows one roll for any *non*-Wildcard skill per session. Use your *best* Wildcard level and the usual controlling attribute; in effect, the Wildcard temporarily encompasses the skill. Champions with **[Ritualist]** can use unknown Path! specialties; the level is the higher of IQ or an IQ-based roll on Ritual Magic! (p. 14). See pp. B99-100. Alternatively, those with **[Linguist]** or the **[Sage Archetype]** can temporarily speak *any* language at Accented comprehension.

Tertiary Aptitudes

These Aptitudes use *one* slot apiece.

Ancient Scholar **[Linguist or Sage Archetype]**. As for Linguist (including its prohibition against Inhuman Tongues), but only for esoteric languages like Mayan, Old Norse, Sanskrit, and so on.

Appotation **[Ritualist]**. Each level gives Telekinesis 2 (Magical, -10%). You may purchase levels up to your IQ *plus* your highest Path! Wildcard Bonus.

Cat's Eyes. Night Vision 9 (p. B71).

Charm 1-2. Each level gives +2 to *all* reactions *all the time*, due to a combination of appearance, conduct, voice, and possibly even supernatural compulsion. If the latter, specify a reasonable condition that ends this effect, but you can have up to 4 levels of this Aptitude, not 2!

Connected (Specific Person). You must specialize by type (see p. B44). Such contacts are Usually Reliable, appear on a 12 or less, and have a skill of 12 (for supernatural capabilities) or 15 (for those without).

Defender of the Faith **[Mysticism or Religious Foible]**. Gives +2 to all rolls to protect areas sacred to your religion, guard a member of your faith, recover holy artifacts belonging to your faith, and so on.

Dual-Weapon Specialist. Gives Ambidexterity (p. B39) *and* Dual-Weapon Attack (p. B230) for *one* Wildcard.

Durable 1-2. Each level gives HP +5. Those with **[Warrior Training]** or **[Slayer Archetype]** can have up to three levels, while those with both can have *four*.

Eagle Eyes 1-2. Each level gives one level of Telescopic Vision (p. B92) and *two* levels of Acute Vision (p. B35). Those with **[Shootist]** can take up to *three* levels. Those with **[Enhanced]** may take up to their HT in levels, but suffer the blinding effects as per **Champions**, p. 41.

Empath 1-2. Empath 1 gives the roll noted for Empathy (p. B51) at IQ-2, and +2 to all Wildcard rolls for Body Language, Detect Lies, Diplomacy, Fortune-Telling, and Psychology. Empath 2 improves the Empathy roll to full IQ and the skill bonus to +4.

Fitness 1-2. Fitness 1 gives HT +1, FP +1, and Fit (p. B55). Fitness 2 improves Fit to Very Fit.

Forceful Strike 1-2 **[Enhanced or Warrior Training]**. Striking ST 2 (pp. B88-89). Those with **[Enhanced]** can take up to three levels.

Fortunate 1-8. Each level gives +2 DPL.

Gear 1-8. Each level gives an additional \$10,000 worth of starting equipment.

Gun Fu Master 1+ **[Shootist]**. Maximum level is one plus the Wildcard bonus (p. 11) for Gun! Each level allows you to pick *one* of the perks listed in the *Gun Fu Perks* box in **Champions**, p. 10, and use it. You may change your perk as a free action.

High Pain Threshold 1-2. See p. B59; the second level raises the bonus from +3 to +8 *and* gives HT +1.

Iron Will 1-2. Each level gives Will +2.

Knowledge Seeker **[Learned 1 or Sage Archetype]**. Gives +2 on all rolls to study new creatures, find rare tomes of forgotten lore, negotiate with sphinxes, etc.

Language Talent. As per p. B23.

Learned 1-4. Each level gives IQ +1.

Like the Wind. Whenever you use a Wildcard skill with Stealth, you can vanish *instantly* if you can reach concealment of some kind. When you reappear, you can be up to your (Move × seconds of absence) yards away at *any* location you could reach by running, climbing, etc.

Magic Resistant. Magic Resistance 5 (p. B67).

Magical Traditionalist [Ritualist]. Pick a specific form of magic like “fire magic,” “druidism,” or “warding.” For such spells, you gain +2 to Path! rolls in addition to your level.

Minor Psychic. This gives access to *one* Psionic Aptitude (pp. 8-9) and an expanded Parapsychologist! Wildcard (p. 13).

(Monster Type) Hunter 1-2. You must specialize by type (see *Know Thy Enemy*, **Champions**, p. 16). Each level gives +2 to any roll to research, track, or slay that particular type of creature. This includes rolls to attack, defend, damage, or resist that particular type of foe. Those with the **[Slayer Archetype]** can have up to three levels of this Aptitude.

(Monster Type) Specialist 1-2. Your knowledge of a specific type of foe is profound. You must specialize by type (see *Know Thy Enemy*, **Champions**, p. 16). Each level gives +1 on the listed skills for its type on all Wildcard rolls. Those with **[Sage Archetype]** can have up to three levels of this Aptitude. This also gives the ability to speak the language of the chosen foe – *if* it has one. At level 1, the champions understand it at Broken, two is Accented, and three is Native.

Pack Mule. Lifting ST 3 (pp. B65-66). Those with **[Enhanced]** can take two levels for total Lifting ST 6.

Photographic Memory. See p. B51.

Prepared. Each level gives Gizmos 2 (pp. B57-58). Maximum level is one plus the Wildcard bonus for Inventor!

Prophetic Dreams. As per **Champions**, p. 23, except that you roll against IQ+5.

Psychic Null 1-2. Level 1 is Resistant to Psi (+3) (pp. B80-81), while level 2 increases this to +8 *and* gives you Mind Shield 2 (Limited, Psionics) (p. B70).

Recovery. See p. B80.

Resistant. Resistant to Metabolic Hazards (+3) (pp. B80-81).

Sensitive Touch 1-2. For level 1, see p. B49. Level 2 gives Acute Touch 5.

Sidekick. Ally (Sidekick about half as powerful as PC; Constantly); see pp. B36-38. Pick an Archetype, six Aptitude slots, five Foibles, and five Wildcard levels. Gets *no* Destiny Point Limit boost from Wildcards, only from Aptitudes – but can *temporarily* accumulate Destiny Points from Foibles.

Skill Specialist. Pick a skill that one of your Wildcards covers; for that *one* skill, you get +5 to all rolls. Melee weapon skills have **[Warrior Training]** as a prerequisite, while gun-related skills have **[Shootist]**.

Strong 1-10. Each level gives ST +1 and HP +1.

Strong Arm. Arm ST 2 (p. B40) in two arms.

Throwing Mastery. Gives +2 damage per die *and* doubles the range of all thrown weapons. Those with **[Enhanced]** or **[Warrior Training]** can take a second level for +4 damage per die *and* quadruple range.

True Grit 1-2 [Enhanced or Warrior Training]. Each level gives HT +1, FP +1, Damage Resistance 1 (Tough Skin) (pp. B46-47), and Hard to Kill 1 (p. B58).

Tough as Nails. Regeneration (Slow) (p. B80).

Vigilant 1-3. Each level gives Per +2.

Warrior Training. An Unusual Background granting access to combat Aptitudes.

Weapon Specialist 1-2 [Warrior Training]. Each level gives +1 to hit (beyond Wildcard level), Enhanced Parry 1 (p. B51), and Striking ST 1 (pp. B88-89) with *one specific melee weapon* – axe, katana, spear, etc. For this purpose, *all* knives count as one weapon.

Zeroed. See p. B100.

Backers and Patrons

For games that use them, having a Patron (**Champions**, p. 24) with a Modest Budget and Light Influence costs one Aptitude slot. Those with either a Modest Budget and Heavy Influence *or* a Large Budget and Light Influence cost two slots. Those with either a Large Budget and Heavy Influence *or* a Loaded Budget and Light Influence cost three slots. Those with a Loaded Budget and Heavy Influence costs four slots. The GM may require you to have Agent (p. 9) in addition to your other Foibles (pp. 9-10).

Bioenhancement Aptitudes

These Aptitudes can only be taken by champions who have *Enhanced* (p. 5). They cost one or more slots. Such Aptitudes correspond to their entry in **Champions** and use all those rules (which are not repeated here). All page notations in this section refer to that supplement. Some Aptitudes have additional properties or differences; these are noted in their entries.

Adrenal-Muscular Trigger [1/level]. As per p. 41, except each level gives +5 to ST. You may not have more levels of this Aptitude than your HT/5 (round up).

Biomechanical Reinforcement [2]. As per Injury Tolerance (Unliving), p. 42.

Cellular Restoration 1-3 [2, 3, or 5]. As per p. 41.

Cerebral-Motor Multitasking 1-2 [3 or 5]. As per p. 41.

Circadian Rhythm Control 1-2 [1/level]. As per p. 41.

Enhanced Ground Move 1-2 [2 or 3]. As per p. 41.

Enhanced Speed 1-3 [2, 4, or 5]. As per p. 41.

Epidermal Resilience 1-3 [1/level]. As per p. 41, except each level gives you DR 3.

Equilibrium Enhancement 1-3 [1/level]. Level 1 gives the benefits of Catfall (p. B41), while successive levels give +2 to all Wildcard rolls for Acrobatics (including Aerobatics and Aquabatics), Body Sense, Climbing, Free Fall, Parachuting, and any roll to keep your feet (see *Perfect Balance*, p. B74). Equilibrium Enhancement 3 improves the skill bonus to +4.

Neural Computational Matrix 1-2 [1/level]. As per p. 42, but also allows you to store up IQ×10 GB in your memory *and* interface directly with any computer you can touch. Level 2 increases the storage space to IQ×20 GB.

Ocular Adaptability 1-2 [1/level]. As per p. 42.

Super Jump 1-3 [1/level]. As per p. 42.

Mysticism Aptitudes

Only champions who have *Mystic* (p. 5) can take these Aptitudes. Such Aptitudes correspond to the entries in **Champions** and use all those rules (which are not repeated here). All page notations in this section refer to that supplement.

Some Aptitudes have additional properties or differences; these are noted in their entries.

Each Aptitude costs one or more slots per level. Aptitudes marked with an asterisk cannot have more levels than half your Will (round up).

*Armor of Faith** [1/level]. Each level gives DR 2 versus evil undead or spirit beings and DR 1 against all other sources.

Blessed 1-2 [1/level]. As per p. 43.

Consecrate Ground 1-2 [5 or 9]. You can turn a roughly circular area of up to 7,000 square feet (about the size of a large church) into holy ground by walking its perimeter. For unholy ground, Bad Places, etc., they get a roll against HT 12 to resist. Success means the area gains a ward (*Champions*, p. 35) against evil spirit beings and undead equal to your Will + Mysticism! If you fail you can try again, at -2 per failed attempt. Level 2 increases the area to roughly one square mile, and allows you to roll a Quick Contest of Mysticism! versus the area's effective HT.

Eyes of the Dead [2]. As per p. 43.

Ghost Weapon [2]. As per p. 43, but you *also* gain +1 to hit (beyond the Wildcard level) *and* +1 to your ST when dealing with insubstantial targets.

Heroic Feats (Attribute) 1-2 [1/level]. As per p. 43.

Lay on Hands 1-2 [3 or 5]. As per p. 43.

*Mind Shield** [1/level]. As per p. 43, but each level gives *two* levels of Mind Shield.

Mystic Coincidence [2/level]. As per p. 43, except you cannot have more levels of this Aptitude than *half* your Mysticism! Wildcard bonus (p. 11).

Prayer 1-2 [3 or 5]. As per p. 44.

Rebirth [3]. As for Extra Life (p. 43), except that you know the moment of your death. This allows you to make the most of it (even if you're going to come back!). Game mechanically, you roll 1d+1 for the number of seconds you get for a dying action (see *Dying Actions*, p. B423).

Resistant to Evil Supernatural Powers [1]. As per p. 43, but the bonus is +8.

Shock and Awe 1-2 [2 or 4]. As per p. 43.

Smite 1-3 [2, 3, or 4]. As per p. 43.

Spirit Channeling [2]. As per p. 43, but includes the benefits of the Autotrance perk (p. B101) *and* gives you +8 to resist possession, not +5.

Spirit Communication 1-2 [2 or 3]. As per p. 44, except you have +2 to all reaction rolls versus spirits you communicate with.

Spirit Empathy [1]. As per p. 44.

Smite 1-3 [2, 3, or 4]. As per p. 43.

Supernatural Sense 1-2 [1 or 2]. As per p. 43.

Turn Evil 1-2 [2 or 3]. As per p. 44, except you roll Will-2 or Will-based Mysticism!-2 at level 1. At level 2, you roll against Will, but your target must use the lower of their Will or HT.

Visualization [1]. As per p. 45.

Psionic Aptitudes

Psionic Aptitudes require either *Minor Psychic* (p. 7) or *Psychic* (p. 6). Such Aptitudes correspond to their entry in *Champions* and use all those rules (which are not repeated here). All page notations in this section refer to that book.

Some Aptitudes have additional properties or differences; these are noted in their entries.

Each Aptitude costs one or more slots per level. Aptitudes marked with an asterisk cannot have more levels than half your Will (round up).

At the GM's option, anyone may have an ESP Aptitude as a "wild talent." If it comes in levels, the champion may only have up to Will/5 levels.

ESP Aptitudes

Aura Reading [2]. As per p. 45.

Precognition [2]. As per p. 45.

Psi Sense 1-2 [1 or 2]. As per p. 45.

Psychometry [2]. As per p. 45.

Remote Senses 1-2 [4 or 5]. As per p. 45, except both levels only require two minutes of concentration – not four.

Seekersense [3]. As per p. 46.

Spirit Channeling [2]. As per p. 43, but includes the benefits of the Autotrance perk (p. B101) *and* gives you +8 to resist possession, not +5.

Spirit Communication 1-2 [2 or 3]. As per p. 44, except you have +2 to all reaction rolls versus spirits you communicate with.

Psychokinetic Aptitudes

*Cryokinesis** [2/level]. As per p. 46.

*PK Shield** [1/level]. Each level gives DR 2 but is otherwise as per p. 46.

*Psychic Healing** [3, 4, or 6]. As per p. 46.

NEW APTITUDES

The GM decides which Aptitudes are available during character creation, and which "unlock" during play. He also can invent new Aptitudes for the campaign.

Tertiary Aptitudes are packages of traits that add up to 10 points, ±1 point. *Secondary Aptitudes* add up to 20 points, ±2 points. *Primary Aptitudes* add up to 30 or more points, ±3 points (or ±10% of total point total, maximum of ±5 points). The following is a small list of what might go into an Aptitude.

- Attribute levels, with or without secondary characteristic improvements.
- Secondary characteristic levels.
- Advantages, standard or with modifiers. For a treatment on Allies, see p. 14.
- Perks, though these can be "free" except where unusually useful. Use Modular Abilities if you can get access to any *perk* of a specific type. See *Gun Fu Master* (p. 6) for an example.
- Bonuses to standard skills (e.g., "+1 to Stealth"), priced as *racial* bonuses; see p. B452. These benefit all Wildcard rolls for that one skill.
- Techniques, usually at triple cost to make them "wildcard techniques" that benefit all applicable Wildcards.
- Destiny Point Limit (DPL), at 5 points per +1.
- Equipment, at 1 point per +10% starting cash in value.

A notable exception to these are some Power Aptitudes (e.g., psi or mysticism powers). For most of these traits, they've been priced with more leeway than the normal ±10% variance, for ease of play.

*Pryokinesis** [2/level]. As per p. 46, but includes Temperature Control (p. 47) with the *Heat* limitation (p. B92)

Telekinesis [1/level]. Each level gives a cumulative two levels (e.g., Telekinesis 5 gives you a telekinetic ST of 10), but is otherwise as per p. 46. Your total telekinetic ST cannot exceed your (ST + Will).

*Temperature Control** [1/level]. Each level gives Temperature Control 2 but is otherwise as per p. 47.

Telepathy Aptitudes

Mental Blow [3]. As per p. 47.

Mind Control 1-2 [3 or 5]. As per p. 47, but you also get +1 on all reaction rolls as others unconsciously do what you want.

Mind Probe [2]. As per p. 47.

Mind Reading [3]. As per p. 47.

*Mind Shield** [1/level]. As per p. 43, but each level gives two levels of Mind Shield.

Mindwipe [3]. As per p. 47.

Telecontrol 1-2 [5 or 6]. As per p. 47.

Telescan [3]. As per p. 48, but you also get +3 to spot those impersonating those you know (e.g., if a skinchanger steals your contact's face).

Teleportation Aptitudes

Autoteleport 1-3 [2, 4 or 6]. As per p. 48.

Combat Teleport [Autoteleport 1+] [2]. As per p. 48.

Exoteleport 1-3 [4, 6, or 8]. As per p. 48.

FOIBLES

Each hero must choose five *Foibles*. These aren't disadvantages, but words or short phrases describing the champion's weaknesses – in a sense, quirks (pp. B162-165) writ large. By paying Destiny Points (DP; p. 15) to the player, the GM can invoke these to cause problems in either of two ways:

- He can pay DP to use *Buying Success* (p. B347) to improve enemies' success rolls – or to invert that rule, to worsen success rolls made by *the champion* or *someone trying to aid him* – as long as the bad results befit the Foible.

- He can inflict -10 points of *suitable* disadvantage effects that *aren't* simply success-roll modifiers – say, Fright Checks for Phobias, or reaction penalties for Odious Personal Habits – per DP paid. All effects end after one “scene”: battle, search of a room, social encounter, etc.

These DP go to the player, who can spend them later, though never to offset *ongoing* effects of a Foible. However, when the GM makes an invocation, the player may instead pay out DP equal to the GM's offer in order to avert the disaster in the first place; e.g., if the GM offers 3 DP to turn success into critical failure, the player could take the 3 DP and critically fail or *pay* 3 DP and keep the success.

Below are sample Foibles with examples of “suitable disadvantages.” These are simply suggestions . . . if the shoe fits, the GM can ask the hero to wear it. If it doesn't fit, the GM should be kind.

Adrenaline Junkie: You like to live your life on the edge of a knife. Suitable disadvantage effects include Compulsive Thrill-Seeking, On the Edge, Overconfidence, etc.

OPTIONAL RULE: EXCHANGES

A key goal of these rules is to avoid the wheeling and dealing that comes with character points. Still, the GM may want to be *somewhat* flexible – if only to support interesting character concepts – by allowing some or all of the following trades at character creation:

- One Aptitude slot for one fewer Foible.
- Two Aptitude slots for three Wildcard levels.
- Three Wildcard levels for two Aptitude slots.
- Half starting money (start with \$10,000) for one Aptitude slot.
- All starting money (start with \$0 and a set of filthy clothing) for two Aptitude slots.*
- Double starting money (start with \$40,000) for one fewer Aptitude slot, x5 starting money for two fewer slots, x20 starting money for three fewer slots, and x100 starting money for five fewer slots.

Agent: You're a part of a top-secret government group or similar clandestine organization. Suitable disadvantage effects include Duty, Enemies, and Secret.

Bon Vivant: Disaster involves partying and enjoying a luxurious lifestyle. Suitable disadvantage effects include Compulsive Carousing, Compulsive Spending, Gluttony, and Lecherousness.

Burnout: You've seen and done it all, but nothing ever changes. Disaster involves most social situations when your attitude shows. Suitable disadvantage effects include Alcoholism, Callous, No Sense of Humor, and Stubbornness.

Butterfingers: Disaster involves anything related to being agile or *not* being awkward. Suitable disadvantage effects include Ham-Fisted, Klutz, Noisy, and low DX when trying to be precise or careful.

Covetous: Disaster involves the acquisition of things. Suitable disadvantage effects include Greed, Kleptomania (when valuable items are nearby), Jealousy (when someone has something you don't), and Miserliness.

Cursed: Disaster results from a supernatural curse; the GM will match effects to the entity that cursed you. Suitable disadvantage effects include Divine Curse, Frightens Animals, Unluckiness, and Weirdness Magnet.

Diva: Disaster results in situations where you believe someone is better off than you. Suitable disadvantage effects include Intolerance, Jealousy, Paranoia, and Selfish.

Eerie Presence: Disaster involves your creepiness. Suitable disadvantage effects include Frightens Animals, Lifebane, and Supernatural Features.

Gloryhound: Disaster involves chances to shine – even if you're stealing someone else's thunder. Suitable disadvantage effects include Compulsive Lying, Odious Personal Habits, On the Edge, and Overconfidence.

Gremlin: Disaster involves any situation involving the use of technology. Suitable disadvantage effects involve Weirdness Magnet (for when your GPS tries to lead you to Hell-sinki while in Chicago), Unluckiness (equipment breaks down around you), and Supernatural Features (for bogus emitters).

Inflexible: Disaster involves doing things differently or taking a novel approach. Suitable disadvantage effects include Hidebound, Obvious, and Stubbornness.

Law-Abiding: You follow the letter of the law and expect others to do the same. Suitable disadvantage effects include Gullibility, Honesty, and Truthfulness.

Lunatic: Disaster results in any situation where your inner crazy can shine. Suitable disadvantage effects include Delusion, Flashbacks, and Phantom Voices.

Manic-Depressive: Your highs are heavenly, and your lows are abysmal. Suitable disadvantage effects include Chronic Depression, Insomnia, Manic-Depressive, and Stuttering (you talk too fast!).

Monster Magnet: The Enemy finds you no matter where you go. This isn't a conscious action, but rather chronic "wrong place, wrong time." Suitable disadvantage effects include Divine Curse (Monster Magnet), Enemy (Monster of the week), and Unluckiness.

Murphy's Luck: Anything that can go wrong, will go wrong and at the worst moment. Murphy was a ground-pounder and you epitomize his law (lucky you!). Suitable disadvantage effects include Cursed, Unluckiness, and Weirdness Magnet.

Nemesis: You hunt monsters because you *hate* them. Suitable disadvantage effects include Fanaticism (The Mission), Intolerance (Non-humans), and Obsession.

Nerd: Disaster results from most social situations and "real life." Suitable disadvantage effects include Absent-Minded, Clueless, Gullibility, Oblivious, and Odious Personal Habits.

Nosy: Disaster results when you inevitably put your curiosity ahead of everything else. Suitable disadvantage effects include Absent-Minded, Curiosity, and Xenophilia.

Optimistic: You're just a ball of sunshine and rainbows. Suitable disadvantage effects include Chummy, Delusions, Odious Personal Habits, and Selfless.

Outsider: You're from another country or place. Any social situation invites disaster – especially from xenophobes or bigots. Suitable disadvantage effects include Odious Personal Habits, Social Stigma (Minority Group), and low literacy in the common language.

Reckless: Disaster results when you need to show restraint or act carefully. Suitable disadvantage effects include Impulsiveness, Overconfidence, and Short Attention Span.

Religious: Disaster results from putting faith before practical concerns. Suitable disadvantage effects include *religious* Codes of Honor, Disciplines of Faith, Fanaticism, Sense of Duty, and Vow.

Skeptical: Despite the evidence of your eyes, you still believe the supernatural can be explained with natural laws. Suitable disadvantage effects include Delusion (Untrue Beliefs; see **GURPS Horrors**, p. 24), Guilt Complex, Odious Personal Habit (Annoying skeptic), and Stubbornness.

Sociopath: Disaster results in most social interactions or when others discover your lack of emotional depth or empathy. Suitable disadvantage effects include Bad Temper, Bloodlust, Callous, Compulsive Behavior, Low Empathy, and Secret.

Spiritual: Disaster results from putting your personal enlightenment before practical concerns. Suitable disadvantage effects include *spiritual* Disciplines of Faith, Sense of Duty, and Vow.

Surly: Disaster results when you lose your temper. Suitable disadvantage effects include Bad Temper, Berserk, Bloodlust, and Bully.

Thousand-Yard Stare: You've seen too much combat and have become numb to it. Suitable disadvantage effects include Bad Temper, Flashbacks, Insomnia, Light Sleeper, and Nightmares.

Uncoordinated: You're a bull, and the world is a china shop. Disaster results in any situation where delicate or agile maneuvering is required. Suitable disadvantage effects include Bad Grip, Ham-Fisted, Klutz, and Noisy.

White Knight: Square jaw or not, you're a hero through and through. Suitable disadvantage effects include Honesty, Pacifism (Cannot Harm Innocents or Reluctant Killer), Sense of Duty, Truthfulness, and Vow.

*This thing . . . man . . .
whatever it is . . . evil may
have created it, left its mark
on it . . . but evil does not
rule it. So I cannot kill it.*

*– Van Helsing,
in Van Helsing*

VIRTUES

Each character may optionally choose one or two Virtues. These aren't advantages in the normal sense, but words or short phrases describing something about the character's personality or strengths. There are no examples of Virtues; each one is customized and particular to the character.

Each Virtue costs *two* Aptitude slots per level and may have up to three levels. Optionally, a Virtue may be combined with a Foible! This reduces required Aptitude slots by one, *but* the GM can use it as a Foible against you normally – even if you're using it as a Virtue at the same time!

Once per session, the player can invoke his champion's Virtue and receive up to its level in Destiny Points (DP) to be spent in one of three ways:

- He can immediately spend a number of DP, up to its level, on *anything* that is plausibly linked to the Virtue *and* involved with what his hero is currently doing during a "scene": battle, search of a room, social encounter, etc. See p. 15 for more information on what Destiny Points can do.
- He can gain +1 per DP spent on *all* rolls related to the Virtue, up to its level. This is a task bonus similar to the one granted by Higher Purpose (p. B59). All effects end after one "scene."

- If he rolls a critical failure during the scene, he may either reroll it *or* reduce it to a normal failure (player's choice). Higher levels can mitigate this further! Level 2 can be used to reroll two critical failures *or* reroll a single critical failure twice *or* make a critical failure into a success. Level 3 allows you to reroll up to *three* critical failures (or any combination of up to three rerolls) *or* make a critical failure into a critical success.

Those with more than one level of a Virtue can split the benefits however they like. For example, a champion with a Virtue he calls "And Stay Down!" at three levels could spend three DP to turn a failure into a critical failure against a prone target and give +1 on a roll to attack one zombie at a vulnerable spot so they don't rise again.

Additionally, an already-used Virtue can be used again if the player pays *two* DP. This may be done a number of times up to the Virtue's level.

WILDCARDS

*Wildcard*s are enhanced versions of wildcard skills (p. B175). Like those skills, they replace sets of ordinary skills. However, they *also* raise the Destiny Point Limit (p. 15), and many grant bonuses elsewhere, such as to damage or reaction rolls. Most important, Wildcards *replace* the standard skills in the **Basic Set**, which become tasks that can be accomplished using Wildcards, not traits bought independently of them.

Wildcards come in levels. The recommended starting number of Wildcard levels is 10, but the GM is free to vary this.

Levels work as shown on the table.

<i>Wildcard</i> Level	Skill Roll	<i>Wildcard</i> Bonus	Half Bonus
1	Attribute-1	0	0
2	Attribute	0	0
3	Attribute+1	+1	+1
4	Attribute+2	+2	+1
5	Attribute+3	+3	+2
6	Attribute+4	+4	+2
+1	+1	+1	+1/2 (round up)

Wildcard Level: The number of levels dedicated to the Wildcard. Visualize this as an advantage level, not a skill level. The GM sets the maximum number of starting levels allowed in any one Wildcard; five is recommended.

Under the Hood: Virtues

Each Virtue is a combination of increased Destiny Point Limit (p. 15) and Daredevil (p. B47). The former has been made so that it regenerates *every* session, but *only* when used in combination with the altered Daredevil advantage. The latter assumes that narrowing "risky behavior" to a similar, specific action is a Feature. Finally, Daredevil becomes a leveled trait that stacks the benefits gained (e.g., +1 to skill rolls and rerolling a critical failure per level), and the bonus to skill rolls becomes a *task* bonus to any roll, much like Higher Purpose.

Skill Roll: The target to roll against for a task. "Attribute" means the usual controlling attribute for the skill governing that task. For instance, somebody with three Wildcard levels might roll versus DX+1 for Stealth or IQ+1 for Shadowing. Block and Parry are $3 + [(DX\text{-based skill roll})/2]$.

Wildcard Bonus: Used to assess certain benefits of high Wildcard levels.

Half Bonus: Some powerful benefits, like reaction bonuses, use *half* the Wildcard bonus, rounded up.

Using Wildcards Together

If several Wildcards can stand in for a skill for the task at hand, *total* their levels for the roll. The attribute modifier will be the total level, minus two; e.g., two Wildcards at level 3 act as level 6, for a roll of attribute+4. For the Wildcard bonus, use the *highest* bonus among the relevant Wildcards. Never sum Wildcard bonuses or calculate a bonus from a sum. In the example, the bonus would be +1 for level 3 – *not* +2 for two level 3 bonuses, much less +4 for the total Wildcard level of 6!

Wildcard List

Wildcards allow all uses of the indicated skills except where qualified, plus any other application the GM deems thematic. The wildcard skills from **Champions** (pp. 28-31) have not been repeated here, though additional notes on using them with these guidelines have been added. Such skills are marked with a (*).

Warrior Training enables a champion to add the Wildcard bonus to ST when fighting with skills marked with a (†).

Many of these skills reference the rules for Complementary skills (see **GURPS Social Engineering**, p. 21, or **GURPS Action 2: Exploits**, p. 5)

Why did the stupid knife have to pick me? I was a totally average ninth grader – I didn't want to be a hunter, fighting monsters on my own.

– Kendra C. Highley, **Matt Archer: Monster Hunter**

Archery!†: Bow, Crossbow, Sling, and related Fast-Draw. Any use of Armoury or Connoisseur to recognize, evaluate, or repair suitable weapons. Any Per-based skill (Observation, Scrounging, etc.) when the goal is to locate spent arrows or well-shaped sling stones; a single Per-based roll after battle will recover *and* repair one used arrow, plus one per point of success. Archers with Heroic Archer or Warrior Training add the Wildcard bonus to ST when using relevant weapons, and to Will rolls to keep Aim with them. Those with Heroic Archer (p. 5) may also make IQ-based rolls for Zen Archery, and not only add Acc even when they don't Aim, but get extra Acc (equal to *half* the Wildcard bonus) when they *do* Aim!

A Different Approach

A GM who owns *GURPS Martial Arts* or *GURPS Gun Fu* has a reason to use techniques even though *Monster Hunters* glosses these over traits. For the purposes of this character-creation system, techniques can still be used, but in a different way. Instead of buying techniques, players with Wildcards add their full Wildcard bonus to Average techniques or *half* their Wildcard bonus to Hard techniques to *any* thematically appropriate technique. This is different but similar to how some Aptitudes treat techniques (they convert standard techniques into wildcard techniques).

Bioenhancement!: Autohypnosis, Biology, Body Control, Chemistry, and Speed-Reading. It can take the place of *any* skill to analyze or deduce a rogue experiment's capabilities. It can be used as First Aid when treating yourself, or for any roll to diagnose an issue with your own body or mind. It allows you to add *half* your Wildcard bonus to rolls to resist targeted pathogens or drugs. It's used in place of any required roll (if better) for all Bioenhancement Aptitudes (p. 7). Finally, purchasing specific Bioenhancement Aptitudes adds additional capability to this skill: *Neural Computational Matrix* adds Computer Operation, Computer Programming, Computer Hacking, and Mathematics; *Muscular-Adrenal Trigger* adds Lifting; *Enhanced Ground Move* adds Running and Hiking; *Equilibrium Enhancement* adds Acrobatics and Body Sense; *Ocular Adaptability* allows you to add *half* your Wildcard bonus to all non-skill Perception rolls when using those Aptitudes; *Super Jump* adds Jumping.

Blade!†*: Add *half* the Wildcard bonus in Quick Contests when resisting Feints, dirty tricks, etc. by those wielding a weapon covered by your skill.

Blunt!†: As per *Blade!* (see above and *Champions*, p. 29), but instead covers *impact* weapons such as those used with Axe/Mace, Broadsword, Flail, Kusari, Shortsword, Staff, Tonfa, Two-Handed Axe/Mace, Two-Handed Flail, Two-Handed Sword, and Whip. Can also be used in place of any unarmed skill when wielding fist loads (p. B192).

Burglar! Climbing, Electronics Operation (Security), Escape, Filch, Forced Entry, Lockpicking, Search, and Stealth. Also, Acrobatics for negotiating ledges and reducing falling damage; Architecture for assessing building access and finding secret rooms; Crossbow and Throwing for lobbing grapnels (but *not* fighting); Observation for "casing the joint" ahead of time; Streetwise for contacting the underworld to

trade in thieves' tools or swag; and Traps specifically to *spot* or *disarm* traps. Add the Wildcard bonus to ST for all purposes related to break-ins – battering down doors, bending window bars, Throwing rolls to lob a grapnel, etc. – and to Per rolls to notice guards.

Computers!: Computer Hacking, Computer Operation, Computer Programming, Cryptography, Electronics Operation (Communications and Media), Electronics Repair (Computers), Expert Skill (Computer Security), and Mathematics (Computer Science and Cryptology). This can also stand in for any skill when creating, retrieving, reading, or changing digital files – but not when working with printed or handwritten documents. For example, you could use Computers! for Forgery to create fake badges or Administration to alter PTS reports. For cyborgs, evil computers, and other digital entities (including digitized demons or the like), you may use this Wildcard as an influence skill *and* add half your Wildcard bonus to reaction rolls. Computers! replaces Ritual Magic! for campaigns that use *Technomagic* (see *Applied Xenology*, pp. 14-23).

Crook!: Counterfeiting, Filch, Forced Entry, Forgery, Holdout, Pickpocket, Shadowing, Sleight of Hand, Smuggling, Streetwise, and Urban Survival. Can also stand in for *any* influence skill when dealing with a criminal element. Add the Wildcard bonus to reaction rolls after using this skill in front of criminals or to Per rolls to spot law enforcement or other criminals.

Detective!†*: Add *half* the Wildcard bonus to *all* Deduction rolls (*The Mission*, pp. 9-11).

Fist!†: Boxing, Brawling, Judo, Karate, Parry Missile Weapons, Savior-Faire (Dojo), Sumo Wrestling, and Wrestling. Also Body Language and Observation to anticipate a sucker punch; Acrobatics, Climbing, and Jumping in combat; Detect Lies to spot empty threats of violence or Fast-Talk and Intimidation to *make* them; Forced Entry with your bare hands; and Tactics for unarmed fighting. Add half your Wildcard bonus to ST when fighting supernatural foes (e.g., a vampire but not a rogue psi).

Grifter!: Acting, Carousing, Counterfeiting, Disguise, Fast-Talk, Forgery, Holdout, Gambling, Mimicry (Speech), Propaganda, Savoir-Faire, Sex Appeal, Smuggling, and Streetwise. Replaces Administration and Psychology for the purpose of social manipulation; Leadership for group efforts to deceive or manipulate others; and Fortune-Telling when it's part of a con. Add the Wildcard bonus to spot or resist mundane tricks and cons.

Gun!†*: Those with Shootist (p. 6) add the Accuracy of their weapon to skill rolls for handguns or *half* the Accuracy for two-handed firearms. Furthermore, they add *half* their Wildcard bonus when making Aimed attacks.

Inventor!†*: Add *half* the Wildcard bonus to the malfunction number of any equipment you operate or to negate penalties for haste (see *Time Spent*, p. B345) when inventing a new device.

Lore!†*: Add *half* the Wildcard bonus to resist *any* supernatural attack or affliction, spell, etc.

Medic!†*: Add *half* the Wildcard bonus to HT rolls to resist infection, to your Zombification Resistance (*The Enemy*, p. 12), to HP restored for First Aid (p. B424), and to patients' HT rolls to recover.

Ardeth Bay: If I were to say to you that, "I am a stranger traveling from the East, seeking that which is lost . . ."

Rick: Then I would reply that, "I am a stranger traveling from the West, it is I whom you seek."

Ardeth Bay: Then it is true. You have the sacred mark.

Rick: What, that? No, that got slapped on me when I was in an orphanage in Cairo.

Ardeth Bay: That mark means you are a protector of man. A warrior for God.

A Medjai.

Rick: I'm sorry. You've got the wrong guy.

– *The Mummy Returns*

Monster-Hunting!: The "generic" monster-hunting skill. Covers any roll to discover a case (*The Mission*, p. 4); Current Affairs, Occultism, or Research rolls for *Books and Records* (*The Mission*, p. 7); Interrogation or Psychology rolls for *Interviews* (*The Mission*, p. 8); rolls to locate *Monster Underworlds* (*The Mission*, p. 9); and any Current Affairs, Intelligence Analysis, or Occultism roll for *Deduction* (*The Mission*, pp. 9-11). It can also be used to determine a given monster's weaknesses, but only *after* the champion knows what he's dealing with. You also can use this in place of any influence skill when dealing with other champions, friendly monsters, or monster hunters. When assisting a fellow hunter in the tasks above, you give him *half* your Wildcard bonus, if better than the standard complementary skill bonus.

Mysticism!: Diagnosis, Esoteric Medicine, Exorcism, Hidden Lore (any *religious* specialty or Spirits), Meditation, and Occultism. Additionally, pick a specialty: *Abrahamic* adds Detect Lies, Diplomacy, and Law (Liturgical); *Shamanic* adds Animal Handling (any), Naturalist, and Pharmacy (Herbal); *Voodoo* adds Intimidation, Symbol Drawing (Voodoo), and Thaumatology. You have Religious Ritual and Theology appropriate for your specialty. It also is used in place of any required roll (if better) for all Mysticism Aptitudes (pp. 7-8). Add *half* your Wildcard bonus to reaction rolls from your allied spirits, god, or their servitors.

Outdoorsman!: Animal Handling, Camouflage, Falconry, Fishing, Mimicry (Animal Sounds and Bird Calls), Naturalist, Navigation, Riding, Survival, Tracking, and Weather Sense. It can stand in for Hiking, Observation, or Traps in wilderness environments. It can also be used for *Foraging* (p. B320) rolls or for any roll related to cryptids or strange-but-natural animals. Add *half* your Wildcard bonus to rolls to resist *natural* threats of all kinds (e.g. snake venom, hypothermia, etc.).

Parapsychologist!: Electronics Operation (Medical, Psychotronics, and Scientific), Engineer (Psychotronics), Expert Skill (Psionics), Hypnotism, Mind Block, Occultism (for psionic threats), Physics (Paraphysics), and Psychology. It can be relied on for weapon skills used to wield psychotronic devices. Add *half* your Wildcard bonus to rolls to spot genuine psychic activity or latent psis, or on any roll to debunk a fake. Those with Psychic or Minor Psychic can use this skill if better in place of any roll for Psionic Aptitudes. They also add Autohypnosis, Mental Strength, and Fortune-Telling (for ESP

abilities). Add *half* the Wildcard bonus to any contested roll with another psi.

Parkour!†: Acrobatics, Body Sense, Climbing, Escape, Jumping, Running, Stealth, and Urban Survival. It also stands in for Area Knowledge, Flying Leap, Forced Entry, Hiking, and Light Walk in urban environments; for Feints (p. B365); and in place of any unarmed skill when being flashy or acrobatic. You also roll at *full* skill for any acrobatic technique. Add the Wildcard bonus to any roll related to acrobatics or movement, including ST rolls to break free of enemies or bonds; DX rolls to avoid falling down, to evade foes or traps, or to negotiate bad footing; HT rolls to avoid FP losses to athletics; and Will rolls to use extra effort for movement.

Path! [Ritualist]: Stands in for one particular Path skill as well as Thaumatology, making the latter redundant if you only wish to cast spells. It also stands in for Alchemy, Herb Lore, or other skills when making a specific type of charm or conditional spell – this removes the need for Path of Magic for conditional spells. A Per-based roll can also help you determine if a subject is under enchantment, or help you unravel a spell. Make a Will- or HT-based roll when resisting spells that your skill covers. Add your Wildcard bonus to Path level when using the Golden Rule (*GURPS Thaumatology: Ritual Path Magic*, p. 24). Add *half* your Wildcard bonus to damage or healing dice for any ritual your Path! specialty covers. When determining how many conditional spells you can have active at once, add together the Wildcard bonus for *all* your Path! Wildcards *and* Ritual Magic! *plus* your IQ. Lastly, you may spend up to *half* your *highest* Wildcard bonus from Path! in DP per session to gain access to (total DP spent × 25) mana as a temporary source (which is tapped normally). You may use this energy for any spell you cast, but leftover energy does not carry over from session to session.

Recon!: Body Language, Camouflage, Hiking, Lip Reading, Observation, Running, Shadowing, Stealth, and Tracking. Also, Area Knowledge in areas previously scouted by the user, Cartography to map a scouted area, Forward Observer to call in artillery, Gesture and Mimicry (Bird Calls) to signal fellow scouts, and Traps to *spot* (but not *set* or *disarm*) traps. When actively observing or looking for a specific subject, add the Wildcard bonus to *all* basic Per rolls to notice details and IQ rolls to understand them.

Ritual Magic!: Alchemy, Esoteric Medicine, Hidden Lore (Sacred Spaces), Hypnotism, Innate Attack, Meditation, Occultism, and Thaumatology. Those with this skill can use it to cast Ritual Path magic spells at -6 to their roll (for those with Ritualist) or -11 to their roll (for those without). In either case, maximum effective skill is 12.

*Science!**: Add *half* the Wildcard bonus to negate penalties due to no or improvised equipment or to negate penalties for haste (see *Time Spent*, p. B345) when using the skill.

Scrapping!†: Brawling, Gun (Pistol, Rifle, or Shotgun), Intimidation, Knife, Throwing, or Wrestling. This skill allows you to wield any improvised weapon with the Axe/Mace, Broadsword, Shortsword, or Staff skill. It can also stand in for DX when using *any* improvised fist load (p. B192) not used with any of the previous skills.

*Talker!**: Add *half* the Wildcard bonus to reaction rolls after using the skill to make a first impression.

Teamwork! This capability only matters when working with one or more teammates. It counts as Body Language and Gesture to “read” and signal allies; First Aid to bandage them; and Climbing, Hiking, Stealth, or any other mundane skill in a scenario where the whole team must roll and you lack another applicable Wildcard. As a general guideline, an IQ-based roll enables you to “do something useful” – and you give your friend *half* your Wildcard bonus, if better than the standard complementary skill bonus. Finally, add the full Wildcard bonus to your rolls to spot impostors in your party.

Techie!: Stands in place of *any* skill required to *operate* or *fix* any sort of equipment (get *Inventor!*, p. 12, if you want to *create* gear!). Notable skills include Armoury, Electrician,

Electronics Operation, Electronics Repair, Machinist, and Mechanic. Such technology could be as strange as a TL0+6^ Atlantean sound extruder or as mundane as a TL4 clock. It can also stand in place of Expert Skills when answering strictly factual questions about technology, or as Hazardous Materials when proper handling procedures are called for. Add *half* the Wildcard bonus to the Malfunction number of *any* piece of gear you maintain. Add the full bonus to the HT of gear you redline for the first time (but not subsequent times).

*Ten-Hut!**: Add your Wildcard bonus to reaction rolls against soldiers and other military types. Add *half* the Wildcard bonus to negate penalties due to no or improvised equipment.

Throwing!†: Make a DX-based roll to throw *anything*, including a projectile that calls for Bolas, Dropping, Spear Thrower, Throwing, or any specialty of Thrown Weapon. Also allows Armoury and Connoisseur to recognize, evaluate, or repair throwing weapons; any Fast-Draw for throwable items; Parry Missile Weapons against thrown attacks; and Scrounging or similar Per-based skill rolls to find stones for throwing. Add the Wildcard bonus to ST to all rolls for *Catching* (p. B355). For those with Warrior Training (p. 7) or Enhanced (p. 5) and Neural Computational Matrix (p. 7), this *also* enables the use of Throwing Art.

Transporter!: Bicycling, Boating, Driving, Freight Handling, Navigation, Parachuting, Piloting, and Submarine. For games that have them, it includes Packing, Shiphandling, and Teamster. It can be used in place of any skill to fire weapons systems, operate onboard sensors, fix a broken-down vehicle, follow someone in a vehicle (Shadowing), plot a course (Navigation), or attack rolls to use the vehicle as a weapon. Add *half* your Wildcard bonus to rolls for you or your passengers to resist vehicle-related ailments (e.g., acceleration, motion sickness, the bends, etc.). Add your full bonus to a vehicle’s HT rolls to stay operational when redlining it, or to cargo you’ve *personally* stored.

UNDER THE HOOD: THE POINTLESS SYSTEM

For those who want to tinker about with the system, here are the guidelines that were used.

- Each archetype is 130 points.
- Tertiary Aptitudes are worth *roughly* 10 points, Secondary Aptitudes are worth *roughly* 20 points, and Primary are *roughly* worth at least 30 points. (See *New Aptitudes*, p. 8, for more details.) Since all champions have 20 Aptitude slots, this totals to 200 points.
- Foibles replace the standard disadvantages on the *Monster Hunter*’s templates and encompass about -50 points in traits. Because they don’t really do anything unless invoked (for DP), each Foible is worth approximately -10 points.
- Wildcards use the price scheme under *Wildcard Skills* (p. B175). Levels start at attribute-1, so each level costs 12 points. So the starting 10 levels are worth 120 points. Note that the Wildcard bonus (p. 11) replaces damage bonuses for unarmed skills, Weapon Master, reaction bonuses for Talents, and so on.
- Destiny Points (DP) have been expanded from their original role (see *Champions*, p. 23) and made more generic. Wildcard skills still give bonus points for *Hyper-Competency* (*Champions*, p. 28), but they can be used for anything, *not* just the wildcard they are gained from. Since they can be used for anything, DP recharge at a rate of one per session.

This totals to 130 + 200 - 50 + 120 = 400 points. *Exchanges* (p. 9) honors these point equivalences with two exceptions. First, it equates two Aptitude slots [20] to *three* Wildcard levels [36] to curb optimization abuse – one of this system’s goals! Second, it handles halved starting money as Wealth (Struggling) [-10], giving an extra Aptitude slot [10], and simply doubles this for *no* starting gear. Additionally, some of the Power Aptitudes (e.g., Bioenhancement, Mysticism, or Psionics) have a wider variance in points so they can use their original rules from *Champions* without too many modifications.

For sidekicks and junior hunters, reduce the amount of points given: Archetype [130], six Aptitude slots [60], five Foibles [-50], and five Wildcard levels [60], totaling 200 points. For Allies, do the same, except “sell back” their Destiny Point Limit from Wildcards [-25], add another Aptitude slot [10], and increase their Archetype’s points by [15].

DESTINY POINTS

Champions have a *Destiny Point Limit* (DPL) equal to their total number of Wildcard levels (normally 10), plus any Aptitude bonuses granted by Daring, Fortunate, Intuitive, Lucky, Serendipitous, Situational Awareness, or Sixth Sense. They start play with *Destiny Points* (DP) equal to this limit.

Destiny Points can be spent in place of character points on *Buying Success* (p. B347). The GM may allow options from *GURPS Power-Ups 5: Impulse Buys*, too; see pp. 21-22 of that supplement for what's fitting. If no DP remain, no DP can be spent – DP can't go negative. Spent DP refresh at the rate of one DP at the start of each game session until the DPL is reached.

As explained in *Foibles* (pp. 9-10), the GM can also give the player DP to invoke Foibles, while the player can spend DP to avoid these invocations. A hero's DP total *can* exceed his DPL as a result of this. However, DP above the DPL only last until the end of the game session. DP gained from *Virtues* (pp. 10-11) must be immediately spent, regenerate every session, and are distinct from this limit.

IMPROVEMENT IN PLAY

Removing points from the equation can cause a whole slew of issues for the GM since character points are a measure of power. Probably the easiest way for a player to upgrade his character is for the GM to simply keep track of what points they'd otherwise earn per session (pp. B498-B499). When the total character point amount hits 10, convert that into an Aptitude slot. For faster progressions, reduce the conversion threshold to 9 (or less for *rapid* advancement). For slower progressions, increase the threshold to 11 (or more). This allows players to know approximately how many unspent "character points" they have.

If the GM wants, he can use the rules under *Exchanges* (p. 9) for these earned Aptitude slots. This would allow players

to spend each slot to improve or buy a Wildcard skill, buy off a Foible, or buy an Aptitude or Virtue. The GM may also wish to simply give players special rewards whenever he feels it appropriate. For example, if one player consistently scores critical hits to the head when using a shotgun, the GM may give him a special Aptitude. Thus, "Surgeon with a Shotgun" might give +2 to Guns (Shotgun) rolls beyond any Wildcard levels *plus* the ability to reroll any failure or critical failure while wielding a shotgun as per Luck (p. B66). Likewise, if Heaven blesses a champion, giving him the ability to summon a flaming sword like an angel (*The Enemy*, p. 16), then simply note this on the character sheet as "Angelic Blade" with any relevant page references.

There are special people in this world. We don't ask to be special. We're just born this way.

– Cassie Holmes, in *Push*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christopher R. Rice is well-known in monster-hunting circles (he writes the monthly newsletter). From Portsmouth, Virginia, he dreams of being able to write full-time, or at least eke out a living doing it. Of course, if he's not writing about *GURPS*, he's blogging about it. Visit his site "Ravens N' Pennies" (www.ravenspennies.com) for more *GURPS* goodies. He wishes to thank L.A., his own personal muse, as well as the rest of his gaming group; Antoni Ten Monrós; Beth "Archangel" McCoy, the "Sith Editrix"; and Walter "Nyndok" Wilson, Timothy "Humabout" Ponce, Travis Foster, and Shawn Fisher, for being the Irregular Regulators.

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KNOWING YOUR OWN STRENGTH

BY SEAN PUNCH

GURPS leaves the task of setting limits on character abilities to the GM, by and large. While the *Basic Set* offers suggestions, it errs on the larger-than-life side, recommending improbably high upper bounds for humans. That might meet the needs of “cinematic” or “heroic” gaming, but it makes suspending disbelief difficult when dealing with more-or-less realistic people. Attributes are the worst offenders – scores as high as 20 (higher, for ST!) are permitted but produce implausible results.

For DX, IQ (and hence Will, and Per), and HT, it’s easy to keep the lid on: Treat the 6-to-15 range described in *How to Select Basic Attributes* (p. B14) as the scope of realistic ability for adult humans. To avoid implausible resistance to bleeding, poison, and so on, the GM might cap HT slightly lower; the 14 for the hardest natural creatures (pp. B455-460) works, and even 13 is defensible. The GM may permit extraordinary people to buy *one* level over the usual limit if they take Unusual Background (Peak Attribute), which costs as much as a single level of that attribute; e.g., 5 points for Will or Per, 10 points for HT, or 20 points for DX or IQ. This extreme sets the “hard” limit on human ability.

The GM may let superhumans go higher in return for an Unusual Background that costs 5, 10, or 20 points *per extraordinary level* if they coexist with ordinary human PCs who are limited to 13 to 15. Conveniently, anyone who can afford such scores is almost by definition operating at a power level where harsh penalties are routine for adventuring tasks, reducing target numbers to 18 or lower and making it meaningful to roll 3d. Thus, while it’s easy to define IQ 100 or DX 500, there’s little *need* for it; 30 or 40 is generous enough to absorb the worst penalties, so capping supers and even deities there wouldn’t ruin the game. Using “By Default” (*Pyramid* #3/65: *Alternate GURPS III*, pp. 30-31) to take care of skills would be a good idea; then 34 to 36 would be a natural upper bound, granting a default of 15 or 16 with Very Hard skills and making the single most severe penalty mentioned in the *Basic Set* (-22) downright tolerable.

All of the traits discussed so far are used mainly for success rolls, which is why it’s so important to set an upper bound where – accounting for modifiers – target numbers will fall into the 3-18 range. That isn’t how ST is normally used, though. The most important role of ST is to rate the capacity to inflict and absorb physical punishment (Damage and HP), and to do work (Basic Lift). There’s a genuine need for a broader scope here, as the mass of real-world beings that **GURPS** treats as individuals (and not as microbes or tiny vermin) spans seven

orders of magnitude – and speculative fiction goes further. Fitting *that* on the same scale as other attributes isn’t convenient . . . but neither is working with three-figure ST scores.

Fortunately, mathematics offers a solution: the logarithm. A single ST level per factor of 10 would be too coarse-grained, compressing the entire natural world into a handful of levels and completely obscuring human variation, but there are alternatives; e.g., the *Size and Speed/Range Table* (p. B550) has six steps per factor of 10. The questions are what scaling to use – how many steps per factor of 10 – and how to apply that scaling. As the only easily measured facet of ST is Basic Lift, let’s start there.

LOGARITHMIC BASIC LIFT

If we require that physical feats involving Basic Lift (pp. B349-357) continue to work as written and assume that competition weightlifting techniques test $15 \times BL$ – the upper limit for carrying rather than shoving (p. B353) – we can examine world-record lifts. While disputed, these fall into the range of 1,010-1,180 lbs., which suggests BL 67-79. If we keep average people with ST 10 at BL 20, setting the human-maximum ST that goes with BL 79 will let us work out a logarithmic progression.

Using the *Size and Speed/Range Table* progression to relate BL and ST (every +6 to ST gives $\times 10$ BL) would cap human ST at 13-14 – a bit of a squeeze. Looking over the discussion of other attributes, we could instead decide that the hard limit for human ST is 16, as for DX and IQ. Associating BL 79 with ST 16, so that +6 to ST means $\times 3.95$ BL, gives a logarithmic scale where every +10 to ST gives $\times 10$ BL. That’s easy to remember, greatly compresses the range of ST values found in nature, and lets realistic humans vary enough to be interesting. See the *Revised Strength Table* (p. 17) for how this looks.

RESCALED DAMAGE

The realism problems with ST-based damage are twofold:

For humans, ST-based damage gets too large. Letting a barbarian warrior buy ST 20 and swing a huge axe for $3d+5$ damage is fun but unrealistic – that averages the damage of an assault-rifle bullet! Capping ST at 16 and slapping an Unusual Background cost on that solves the problem.

Swing damage outstrips thrust damage inordinately. Levers help, yet stabbing is the traditional way to pierce armor.

If you're strong enough, there are no precedents.

– F. Scott Fitzgerald

Looking at animals, powerful predators like tigers and grizzly bears, which rely on thrust damage, cannot compete with weapons swung by far weaker humans. On the meta-game level, combatants who favor thrusting attacks – e.g., a swash-buckler's rapier, a leopard's fangs, or a superhero's fist – must buy *two* levels of ST to see benefits, which becomes an even bigger deal if narrowing the human ST range. The fix for all this is to keep thinking logarithmically: levers multiply force, multiplying a quantity *adds* to its logarithm, so swing damage rates a flat bonus. Extending the “thrust = swing-2” found at ST 10 across the board implies that swinging multiplies force by about 1.5.

The question of *how much* damage ST should give is still open, but the **Basic Set** uses +1 to swing (and in this system, thrust) per +1 to ST. That's both easy to remember and reasonable when capping human ST. The change here is *maintaining* this progression at all ST levels rather than flattening it out above ST 26. See the *Revised Strength Table* for the results.

Doing all this means the strongest men swing weapons for around 2d+2 damage or thrust for around 2d. Meanwhile, silverback gorillas with “five times human strength” (see *Assigning ST*, p. 19) have ST 17 and inflict unarmed thrusting attacks in the 2d+1 range, while grizzlies “10 times as strong as a man” have ST 20 and bite for around 3d. Both creatures become *scary* and give humans cause to resort to rifles.

SPECIAL CASES

While mainly aimed at natural creatures of human size or larger, these rules can be adapted to a broader range of purposes.

Small Strength

The *Revised Strength Table* works well at ST 7-9. Basic Lift doesn't change from the **Basic Set**, but damage falls off more rapidly, helping to explain why low-tech warriors require average or better ST. In a hyper-realistic campaign, this range would fit ordinary women who are 50% to 80% as strong as ordinary men.

Beings with ST 1-6 end up being able to carry significantly *more* than the **Basic Set** allows – but this is probably realistic. *Assigning ST* (p. 19) tends to lower the ST of such creatures. For instance, a 10-lb. house cat ends up with ST 2 and BL 3.2, while the one on p. B456 has ST 4 but still BL 3.2 – and a 15-lb. rattlesnake gets ST 4 and BL 5, while the specimen on p. B458 has ST 5 while keeping BL 5.

What falls down is damage – below ST 7, small things can't hurt each other, which is unrealistic. Here are a couple of optional rules for tiny creatures.

Rule of 10s

Below ST 7, add 10 to ST to find damage but also divide all damage rolls by 10. Drop all fractions for crushing attacks; round 0.5 or better up for non-crushing ones. Note this by writing “/10” after damage.

Example 1: A ST 2 house cat claws for 1d-1/10 cut, inflicting no damage on a roll of 1-5 on the die (0-4 divided by 10 is 0 to 0.4, which rounds down to 0), 1 point on a roll of 6 (5 divided by 10 is 0.5, which rounds up to 1).

Example 2: A ST 5 rattlesnake bites for 2d-2/10 imp, inflicting no damage on a roll of 2-6 on the dice (0-4 divided by 10 is 0 to 0.4, which rounds down to 0), 1 point on a roll of 7-12 (5-10 divided by 10 is 0.5 to 1, which rounds up to 1).

Fractional Damage

Even more optionally, when the Rule of 10s applies, track fractional damage and HP (i.e., don't round!) when creatures attack others of *their SM or less*. On a rat or a rabbit, the rattlesnake above would inflict 0 to 1 damage, averaging 0.5 damage, doubled to 1 HP for being impaling. If it rolls 5 on the dice, for 0.3 damage, it inflicts 0.6 HP on its dinner.

REVISED STRENGTH TABLE

ST	Basic Lift*	Thrust†	Swing†	Descriptive
1	2.5	1d-11	1d-9	One-eighth as strong
2	3.2	1d-10	1d-8	One-sixth as strong
3	4.0	1d-9	1d-7	One-fifth as strong
4	5.0	1d-8	1d-6	One-quarter as strong
5	6.3	1d-7	1d-5	One-third as strong
6	8.0	1d-6	1d-4	
7	10	1d-5	1d-3	Half as strong
8	13	1d-4	1d-2	Two-thirds as strong
9	16	1d-3	1d-1	Three-quarters as strong
10	20	1d-2	1d	Average man
11	25	1d-1	1d+1	
12	32	1d	1d+2	Half again as strong
13	40	1d+1	2d-1	Twice as strong
14	50	1d+2	2d	
15	63	2d-1	2d+1	Three times as strong
16	80	2d	2d+2	Four times as strong
17	100	2d+1	3d-1	Five times as strong
18	126	2d+2	3d	Six times as strong
19	159	3d-1	3d+1	Eight times as strong
20	200	3d	3d+2	Ten times as strong

* For ST 21+, start with a value in the ST 10-19 range and multiply Basic Lift by 10 per +10 to ST; e.g., ST 44 is ST 14 + 30, +30 is three factors of 10, so BL is 1,000 times the 50 lbs. for ST 14, or 50,000 lbs. For those who like equations, BL = 2 lbs. × 10^(ST/10).

† For ST 21+, start with a value in the ST 17-20 range and add +1d per +4 to ST; e.g., ST 44 is ST 20 + 24, +24 is six times +4, so add 6d to damage for ST 20 to get 9d/9d+2.

Strength and Machines

When a machine requires a minimum user ST, look up the BL associated with that ST on the *Basic Lift and Encumbrance Table* (p. B17), find the smallest ST needed to match that BL on the *Revised Strength Table*, and use that as the new requirement. For ST 1-20, that converts as follows:

Old ST	New ST	Old ST	New ST
1-3	1	12	12
4	2	13	13
5	4	14	13
6	6	15	14
7	7	16	15
8	8	17	15
9	9	18	16
10	10	19	16
11	11	20	16

Thus, most common melee weapons, which fall in the ST 6-13 range, are unaffected. Those who prefer an equation can use this one, which won't give *quite* the same cutoffs because it doesn't compare two rounded-off values:

New ST = [20 × log(Old ST)] - 10, rounded nearest, minimum ST 1

Vehicles, on the other hand, are best converted as though they were animals. Convert empty weight in tons (LWt. minus Load) to pounds, apply *Assigning ST* (p. 19), and add +6 for being in the category of Unliving beings and machines. With minor rounding, this gives:

ST = [10 × log(weight in tons/3)] + 36, rounded nearest

For instance, the van on p. B464, with LWt. 3.5 and Load 1, ends up with ST 35.

WEIGHT-BASED HIT POINTS

If HP remain equal to ST on the compressed ST range while damage is based on ST in more-or-less the same way as before, huge things will demolish each other much too easily. The simplest fix for this is to keep HP based purely on weight, per the *Object Hit Points Table* (p. B558). This offers the major benefit of not requiring an overhaul of the entire damage system! Thus:

HP = 2 × (cube root of weight in lbs.) if living

HP = 4 × (cube root of weight in lbs.) if Unliving or a machine

HP = 8 × (cube root of weight in lbs.) if Homogenous or Diffuse

For living beings, round down or up as desired to reflect variations in build. Thus, a 90-lb. child with ST 8 has 8-9 HP for 0 or 2 points, a 150-lb. man with ST 10 has 10-11 HP for 0 or 2 points, and a 250-lb. man with ST 12 has 12-13 HP for 0 or 2 points. A male gorilla weighing 400 lbs. has 14-15 HP, a male grizzly that weighs 700 lbs. has 17-18 HP, and an elephant that weighs 12,000 lbs. has 45-46 HP, relative to the ST 18, 21, and 33, respectively, in *Assigning ST* (p. 19).

For inanimate objects use empty weight and round up. The 2.5-ton van on p. B464 still has 68 HP, despite having only ST 35.

PRICING REVISED STRENGTH

When using the *Revised Strength Table*, ST still costs 10 points/level. The No Fine Manipulators and Size modifiers on p. B15 are no longer necessary. The first corrects for an inability to use melee weapons that enjoy swing damage, which isn't the problem it was – it amounts to -2 to damage, not the loss of *dice* of damage. If that seems unfair, give out an extra -2 points for the No (Fine) Manipulators disadvantage!

The second limitation adjusts for the fact that massive creatures need to buy a lot of ST that gives them relatively little. That isn't much of an issue when using *Assigning ST* (p. 19). For instance, the 12,000-lb. elephant on p. B460 needs ST 33 [230] and gets BL 4,000 and thrust 6d+1 in the bargain, instead of paying for ST 45 (Size, -30%) [245] and getting BL 405 and thrust 5d.

It's probably fairest to re-price some parts of ST, though:

Hit Points: Cost is unchanged at ±2 points per level above or below ST, but the Size limitation no longer applies. That 12,000-lb. elephant with ST 33 and 45 HP would also buy +12 HP for 24 points, making its final ST and HP cost 230 + 24 = 254 points.

Striking Strength: With every four levels of ST giving +1d to ST-based damage, each level of ST for damage only is *about* the same as 1/4 of a die of Crushing Attack (Melee Attack, Reach C, -30%) [3.5/level]. While advantages and weapons can improve damage type, Reach, and so on, those have their own costs in points or cash. It seems fair to use the cost given by basic arithmetic (0.875 points per die) and round up to 1 point/level to account for the rest. Again, ignore the No Fine Manipulators and Size limitations.

Lifting Strength: By subtraction, this ends up at 7 points/level – and again, the Size limitation isn't applicable. This cost is *much* higher than the 3 points/level in the **Basic Set**, but arguably, with BL improving as 10^(ST/10) rather than as ST², no cost is too high; e.g., for a ST 10 character, Lifting ST 5, 10, and 20 formerly multiplied BL by 2.3, 4, and 9, but now they multiply it by 3.2, 10, and 100, and it goes up from there! See *Strength Rolls* (p. 19) for another reason why Lifting ST costs so much.

Strength rates the capacity to inflict and absorb physical punishment and to do work.

Caps

The GM will want to assign a racial maximum ST to each living species. These rules assume that's ST 16 for humans. For other creatures, use the top of the range found in *Assigning ST* (p. 19), typically by looking at the weight of the most massive *non-obese* specimens of the species – usually large males, for mammals. This is the “hard” limit, and requires Unusual Background (Peak ST) [10]. The “soft” limit is one level below this, or ST 15 for humans. One level means a lot in this system: the hard limit allows lifting a respectable 25% more than the soft one at *all* ST levels!

A more nuanced treatment could phase in the Unusual Background earlier, perhaps at 5 points for the soft limit and another 5 points (total 10 points) for the hard one.

Thus for humans, ST would in effect cost 10 points/level up to ST 14, but 15 points/level for ST 15-16. Supers could go beyond the hard limit – and to make ST competitive with other super-abilities, the GM might allow *any* ST to supers who pay the 10-point Unusual Background cost for ST 16, charge a slightly higher flat cost for access to ST 17+, or scale up the cost at another 5 (not 10) points/level.

The basic ST cap would apply to total ST + Lifting ST. A man could save 18 points by buying Lifting ST 6 [42] instead of ST 16 [60], but either way he'd end up buying a 10-point Unusual Background for being at the hard limit. A super in a campaign where anybody who purchases Unusual Background (Super) [25] can buy up to ST 50 (10,000 times human ST!) could have any combination of regular and Lifting ST that totals no more than 50.

Hit Points must fall within $\pm 30\%$ of the value worked out in *Weight-Based Hit Points* (p. 18). This is independent of ST. If free HP from ST fall outside this range, adjust them manually. This can make ST cheap for human-sized supers – an intended consequence!

Striking ST, if permitted at all, has whatever limits the GM likes. Realistic humans simply *can't* have it, and it probably isn't a plausible trait for any natural species. If it's allowed, caps might be suggested by the campaign's damage limit, if any. For instance, if the GM decides to cap damage from supers at 20d, it would be logical to limit ST + Striking ST to 88, which gives thrust 20d. There might be a lesser requirement that supers can't have more Striking ST than ST; e.g., *reaching* the 88 levels in the example would mean buying ST 44 [340], which may require an Unusual Background, and then adding Striking ST 44 [44]. By virtue of how Striking ST is priced, this will always be balanced against ranged attacks – though if the GM is allowing one or two levels as a special ability for cinematic heroes, an extra Unusual Background [1/level] would be fair.

STRENGTH ROLLS

The *Basic Set* allows for the possibility of ST rolls, but they don't make much sense except when they're opposed by other ST rolls in a Contest. The revised ST scaling here doesn't change that, but it *does* mean *Extreme Scores* (p. B349) won't be needed as often for human-scale Regular Contests. Use ST + Lifting ST for all Contests of ST. In effect, Lifting ST doesn't only boost lifting capacity but also serves as a de facto Talent for ST vs. ST tasks. This is another reason why Lifting ST costs so much under these rules – it covers the “dice roll” facet of ST.

An interesting alternative where margins of victory and loss are important is to have both sides roll thrust damage based on ST + Lifting ST (not Striking ST) and interpret the difference as the margin; e.g., a power-lifter with ST

13 and Lifting ST 2 would roll 2d-1 to an ordinary ST 10 man's 1d-2, and if he rolled a total of 6 to his rival's 1, he'd win by 5. This could be used even with the *Basic Set* as written, but it works better with the damage progression given here.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sean “Dr. Kromm” Punch set out to become a particle physicist in 1985, ended up the *GURPS* Line Editor in 1995, and has engineered rules for almost every *GURPS* product since. He developed, edited, or wrote dozens of *GURPS Third Edition* projects between 1995 and 2002. In 2004, he produced the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition* with David Pulver. Since then, he has created *GURPS Powers* (with Phil Masters), *GURPS Martial Arts* (with Peter Dell'Orto), *GURPS Zombies*, and the *GURPS Action, GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*, and *GURPS Power-Ups* series . . . among other things. Sean has been a gamer since 1979.

ASSIGNING ST

Real-world sources tend to express strength in terms of human norms; e.g., “A chimp has twice human strength” or “The average woman is 2/3 as strong as the average man.” In such cases, assume the speaker is comparing to ST 10, apply the multiplier to BL 20, find the closest BL on the *Revised Strength Table*, and look up ST from that. Thus, “twice human strength” means BL 40 and about ST 13, while “2/3 as strong as a man” means BL 13 and around ST 8. See the “Descriptive” column of the table for comparisons in the ST 1-20 range. To give an equation, a factor of *F* relative to ST 10 implies the following ST:

$$ST = 10 + 10 \times \log(F), \text{ rounded nearest}$$

If you know only body weight, assume that natural creatures can wrestle their own kind without penalties. Using the rules for “pickups” in *GURPS Martial Arts: Technical Grappling*, the weight limit for no penalty is 3×BL, so divide weight by three to find BL and look up ST from that. Those who prefer a formula can use:

$$ST = 10 \times \log(\text{weight in lbs.}/6), \text{ rounded nearest}$$

Below 7.5 lbs. of body weight, assume ST 1 and see *Small Strength* (p. 17).

Examples: Male gorillas weighing 300-400 lbs. have BL 100-133 and thus ST 17-18. Male grizzlies that weigh 400-790 lbs. have BL 133-263 and so ST 18-21. An elephant that weighs 12,000 lbs. has BL 4,000 and ST 33.

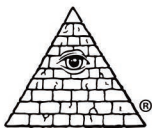
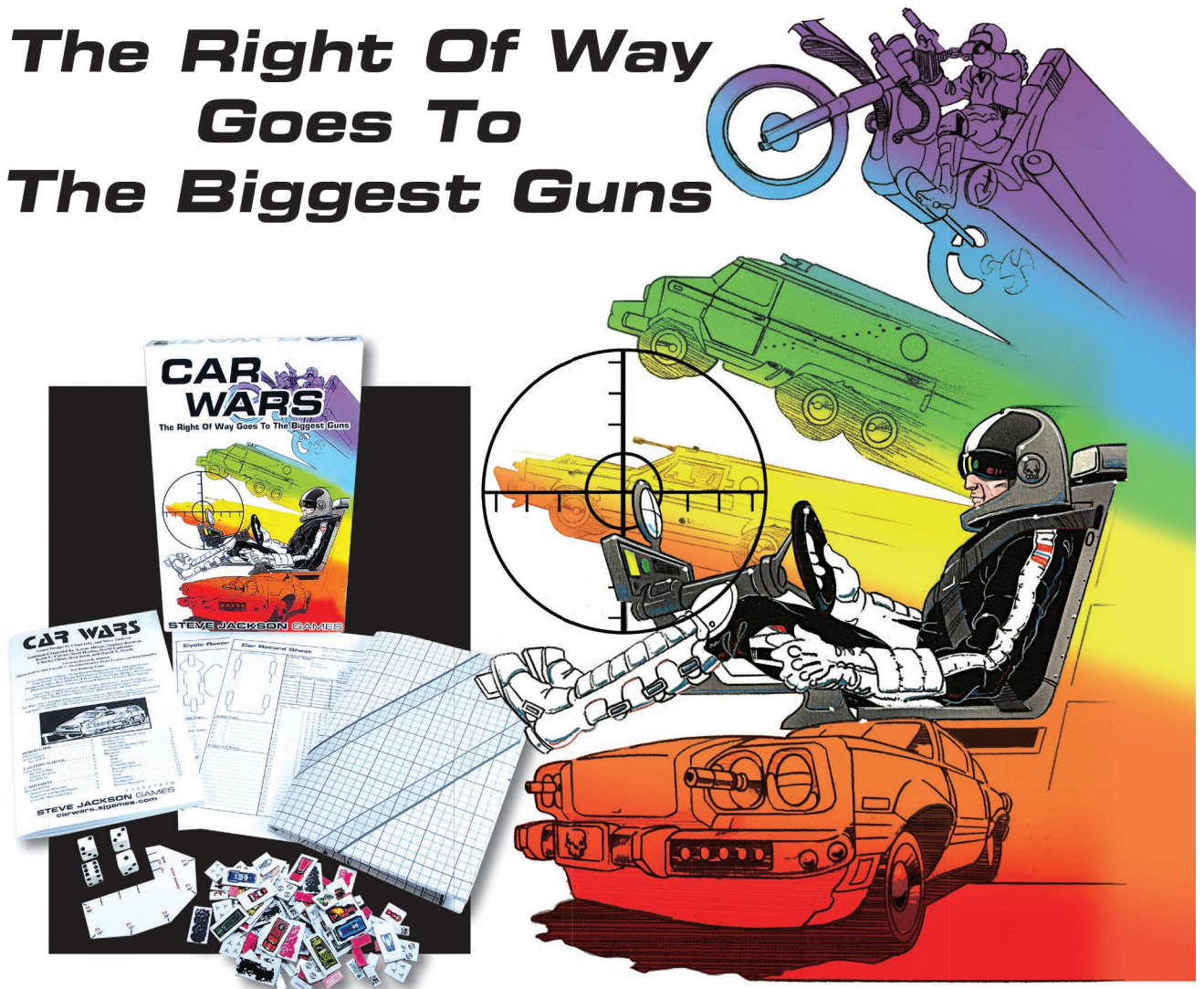
Humans are notably weak in this department for reasons tied to specializing in fine work. It's reasonable to apply up to -4 to racial ST calculated this way for sapient (IQ 6+) species that don't suffer from *any* of racial Bad Grip, Ham-Fisted, or No (Fine) Manipulators. A typical 150- to 160-lb. man gets ST 10, not ST 14!

If you have a descriptive comparison *and* a body weight, use the *better* result. Some animals are very strong for their weight!

To create “realistic” supernatural entities, add from +1 to +6 to ST if Unliving or a machine, or from +1 to +12 if Homogenous or Diffuse. This will multiply BL by a factor of up to four or 16, respectively, which is what would happen if you multiplied HP by two or four as in the *Basic Set*, kept ST = HP, and worked out BL as (ST × ST)/5.

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EIDETIC MEMORY

PLAYING WITH HEALTH

BY DAVID L. PULVER

Health (HT) is often the attribute of fourth priority when it comes to character creation. Health lacks the direct role of ST in both dealing and sustaining damage and, compared to DX and IQ, has relatively few skills based on it. Fatigue Points – a major use of HT – are often de-emphasized by many GMs, except where they directly power spells or other advantages. This leaves HT with boosting the Speed attribute and keeping characters from passing out or dying in dire situations – all quite important, but rather passive.

These variant rules suggest some character creation changes I've experimented with that make Health a more active role. Their side effect is to make DX and IQ a little less powerful . . . potentially resulting in a greater diversity of character builds in the process.

BASING PERCEPTION ON HEALTH

One way to make Health a bit more important is at the expense of Intelligence. To do this, Perception is based on HT instead of IQ. The justification for doing so is that Health is a good measure of overall fitness, and this would seem to correlate just as well as intelligence with the quality of physical senses. High visual acuity, great hearing, and so on all tend to be associated with good general health. It also is an excellent fit from a fictional, storytelling perspective, which is just as important – if not more so – in a roleplaying game! Characters who are rugged barbarians, rangers, or wiry pilots are usually portrayed in fictional sources as both being in robust health and possessing keen senses. In contrast, the high-IQ mage, geek, or professor-type in fiction – with the exception of a few detective prodigies – are typically portrayed with average or even below-average sensory acuity. While in *GURPS* “wearing glasses” and “absent-minded” are both ably handled by disadvantages, the conflation of these two tropes with high-IQ stereotypes is yet another indication that IQ is not always a natural fit for high Perception!

Linking HT – rather than IQ – to Perception also works better for beasts. At present, anyone building an animal in *GURPS* has to take the extra step of buying up levels of Per

from its natural low base IQ (e.g., IQ 2-5) followed by layering on any additional sensory advantages. While this is perfectly workable, it does complicate the process of character creation. If Perception is based on HT, this is simplified. The average healthy beast will *start* with Perception 10-12, and a few levels of Acute Senses, Discriminatory Smell, or further Per can then be added to differentiate those with unusually keen senses.

A further advantage of HT-based Per is to make use of Comprehension rolls (p. B358) – rolls vs. IQ or an IQ-based skill to *understand* what a character has successfully sensed – more distinct. For example, in a fantasy game, an IQ 15 mage with HT 11 would probably have Per 15 unless the player deliberately bought that trait down. He'd be equally good at Sense rolls and Comprehension rolls, making the latter a bit of a redundant exercise. In either case, his companion, the IQ 10, HT 14 barbarian is equally useless, unless she expensively bought up her Perception or associated Per-based skills, something many players don't bother to do. This change gives both characters something to do: The healthy barbarian likely begins with Per 14 and has much better motivation to spend points on Per-based skills at a decent level, and she may have the best Sense rolls for the party. But it's the mage – after the barbarian has pointed out what has been spotted – who is the one most likely to *comprehend* it.

*If you haven't got your
health, then you haven't
got anything.*

*– Count Rugen,
in The Princess Bride*

Incidentally, this also makes IQ a bit less anomalous an attribute: instead of two secondary characteristics – Per and Will – based on it, it goes to having only one.

This rules change results in HT being more useful and IQ a bit less useful. Per can still be bought up or down at ± 5 points per level, but starts at a base of HT rather IQ. So, should IQ and HT retain their usual cost, or cost more? Here are three alternatives.

Raise HT Cost and Lower IQ Cost

The first option is to raise the point costs of HT and lower the point cost of IQ by an amount equal to the 5-point cost of one level of Perception. With this change, the point cost of IQ would drop to ± 15 points, while the point cost of HT would rise to ± 15 points. This has a logical symmetry; the main disadvantage of this is it requires recalibration of any existing templates or other rules that are based on the existing point calculations. (Changing the 20-point cost of IQ would also affect a few advantages like Affliction where the cost of IQ-affecting attacks is tied to the high relative point cost of IQ.)

Keep Costs the Same

A second option – keep the costs the same – is predicated on the premise that IQ is already a little over-powered and HT a little weak relative to other attributes. This is arguable, but as a GM, I've rarely seen player many characters have HT above 13 or 14, whereas – even though it costs twice as much per point – I regularly see IQ 14-16 characters. If IQ and HT remain at their present costs, this has the big advantage of not mucking up existing character and racial templates! However, one objection is that being able to buying down Per to raise HT (at a net cost of 5 points per +1) might prove just a little too tempting with this point-cost option, resulting in players building many high-HT characters who don't die or pass out very often. However, this might be seen as a positive from a game-play standpoint, as long as the GM resists over-using this choice for NPC opponents.

Leaving costs the same can create problems if characters buy down HT-based secondary characteristics such as Perception, Fatigue Points, or Basic Speed. If the newly upgraded HT attribute stays at a cost of 10 points/level characters should be allowed to only sell back *one* HT-based

secondary characteristic. Alternatively, assume that Basic Speed is tied to Perception – you need to be able to perceive where you're going to move quickly, avoid obstacles, and have sufficient situational awareness to maintain a proper Dodge score. If so, someone may buy down HT-based secondary characteristics, but Basic Speed is instead calculated from $[(\text{lowest of HT or Per}) + \text{DX}]/4$.

Raise HT Cost Only

A third option is to leave the cost of IQ the same but raise the cost of HT by 5 points to ± 15 points. This keeps one of the more complex elements of existing templates – the many IQ-based skills – unchanged, while avoiding the specter of low-priced HT by characters who opt to buy-down Per. On the other hand, this change may be unpopular with players as it raises the overall cost of character creation without giving them anything back in return. Or does it? Which brings us to . . .

Expanding Per-Based Skills

If Perception is based on Health instead of Intelligence, a certain justification arises for expanding the number of Per-based skills. This works well if the GM wants to increase the cost of Health to 15 points/level to compensate for Per-based HT yet still feels HT needs a little extra to justify a 50% increase in price.

The best candidates for becoming Per-based are the long-range missile combat skills – Guns, Bow, and so on – as arguably they rely as much as on good eyesight as on finger coordination. In addition, another element to accuracy – controlling one's breathing and avoiding tunnel vision during high-stress combat situations – are perhaps better tied to Perception and Health-related attributes than to dexterity and agility. When Per is based on IQ, making smarter people into better archers or shooters doesn't feel right, but by shifting it to HT, it becomes more sensible!

The list of expanded Per-based skills should include Beam Weapons, Bow, Crossbow, Innate Attack, Liquid Projector, Gunner, and Guns. Optionally the GM might extend it to Bola, Blowpipe, Spear Thrower, Throwing, Throwing Art, and Thrown Weapon, but as they're used mainly at close ranges, they should probably remain DX-based skills. Given the importance of vision and situational awareness to

vehicle skills, the GM may want to consider going beyond missile weapons and adding Piloting and perhaps Driving or Boating (but not Submarine), although leaving them DX-based is perhaps wiser.

This change somewhat reduces the utility of Dexterity in combat, which, like IQ, has sometimes been considered overpowered. Under this interpretation, DX is focused more on overall agility and close-range motor skills. Moving these ranged combat skills from DX to Per (by way of HT) naturally increases the importance of HT for certain character types, particularly those who fight with ranged weapons, spells, or ranged innate attacks. Although this does lessen the utility of DX, it doesn't do it much, so DX cost should remain unchanged.

*What you see and hear depends
a good deal on where you are
standing; it also depends on
what sort of person you are.*

– C.S. Lewis,
The Magician's Nephew

Your scientists have yet to discover how neural networks create self-consciousness, let alone how the human brain processes two-dimensional retinal images into the three-dimensional phenomenon known as perception. Yet you somehow brazenly declare that seeing is believing!

– Man in Black, in *The X-Files* #3.20

In terms of character design, probably the major change in character build strategy is to sharpen the distinction between the dedicated “melee fighter” who wants to focus on DX (and ST) and the dedicated “shooter” who wants to raise HT and/or Per (and ST if using big weapons or powerful bows and slings).

Per-based missile skills make it cheaper to design cops or detectives, as they want a high Perception for both gunplay and finding clues. It also benefits a Robin Hood-like ranger archetype (or modern special forces equivalents), where tracking and alertness are combined with missile-fire ability (and where a high HT is part of the trope of the rugged wilderness survivalist).

The same is true of pilots, who will find a high HT beneficial for both acceleration tolerance and improved Per, the latter of which aids situational awareness and air-to-air Gunner skills. Again, this seems to also support “story logic” where in the real world people in these demanding occupations all tend to be young, very fit individuals in excellent health with superior eyesight!

Some combat mages will also likely find a shift of ranged combat skills to Per benefits them, as a mage can use high HT for FP to power spells; with high HT also improving Per, it gives them somewhat less reason to buy up DX.

SPEED-BASED SKILLS

The secondary attributes of Speed and Move are presently based on half the average of Health and Dexterity. The direct effect of Speed is limited to who goes first and the Dodge score, but arguably the “faster” you are, the better you should fight in melee!

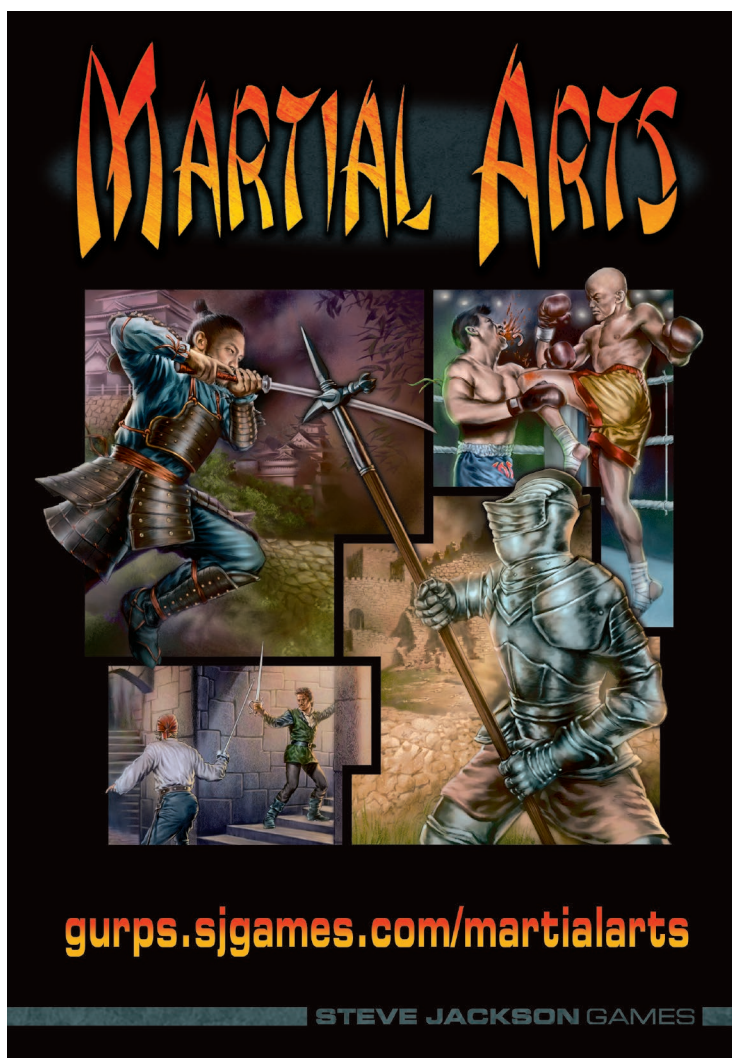
This suggests an even more radical way to increase the utility of HT – and lessen but not diminish that of DX: base all melee combat skills, natural melee attacks, and their defaults on (Speed × 2), rounded down, rather than on DX. (This is nearly equivalent to saying they’d be based on the average of DX and HT, except that Speed can be bought up or down independently if desired.)

This variant affects the following skills: Boxing, Brawling, Cloak, Fast-Draw, Judo, Karate, Lance, Net, Parry Missile Weapons, Push, and Shield, along with all Melee Weapon skills. This includes any Combat Art and Sport versions as well. Sumo Wrestling and Wrestling are borderline cases; it may be better to leave them DX-based.

If this change is made in concert with Per-based skills, it might justify changing DX, IQ, and HT to a unified ±15 points per level.

ABOUT THE COLUMNIST

David L. Pulver is a Canadian freelance author. An avid science-fiction fan, he began roleplaying in junior high with the newly released *Basic Dungeons & Dragons*. Upon graduating from university, he decided to become a game designer. Since then, David has written over 70 roleplaying game books, and he has worked as a staff writer, editor, and line developer for Steve Jackson Games and Guardians of Order. He is best known for creating *Transhuman Space*, co-authoring the *Big Eyes, Small Mouth* anime RPG, and writing countless *GURPS* books, including the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*, *GURPS Ultra-Tech*, and the *GURPS Spaceships* series.



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SCHRÖDINGER'S BACKPACK

BY DOUGLAS H. COLE

The typical army rifleman operating in the war in Afghanistan carried weapons, armor, and equipment weighing about 70% of his body weight, with variation from about 60% of his weight for platoon leaders, and an amazing 80% of body weight for those whose job it was to hump heavy weapons and ammunition around – usually machine gunners and mortar teams. While detailed breakdowns of every piece of gear are available, tracking stuff in game is a fun-vampire, sucking the entertainment out of the campaign for many players.

Still, gear is important and a staple of many genres – not limited to modern-day military or action. This article presents a way to cut down on the advance preparation portion of packing a load. Instead, simply choose a few starting parameters, and then set off to kill bad guys and take their stuff. It also helps character abilities matter as much or more than player foreknowledge.

BACKPACK OF HOLDING

The key assumption used with these rules is that the pack is stuffed with a specified weight and cost of gear, which is not precisely defined until one looks for it. At that point, the hero either finds what was, of course, already in the pack (carefully prepared against a moment of need) – or he does not. The key parameters chosen are the total weight of unspecified gear, and the maximum value of the gear found within. See *Specialized Packs* (p. 25) to add extra mission focus to the contents.

Building the Pack

A good starting assumption is that a baseline adventuring pack will contain up to 50 lbs. of gear, plus the weight

of the pack itself. The pack – including frame, container, and straps – weighs $\text{Max Load} \times (\text{Max Load} + 25) / 1,250$ lbs. from TL0-8; weight is halved at TL9+. The carried weight can be any amount, perhaps tailored to a character's Basic Lift, or selected based on particular source material.

Assume that the pack is roughly 70% frame and straps, and 30% for the container itself. The pack costs \$1 per pound of capacity regardless of TL.

Modifiers: CF -0.4 if the pack is a frame with no container (the contents are exposed to the environment), CF -0.4 if the pack is a container with no frame (such as a duffel bag). Combining these for CF -0.8 yields a formless mesh bag that is basically a set of straps on a net-like sack.

This provides a serviceable pack for hiking or exploring with HT 12. Ruggedized packs that provide +2 to HT are available at $\times 2$ cost and $\times 1.2$ weight (*GURPS High-Tech*, p. 10).

Total Equipment Value

The typical choice for how much equipment to put in a pack will hover around 10-20% of an adventurer's starting wealth, but it can be any value that the person can afford. When kitting out, the character pays the maximum amount that might be put in it. It is this total carried value that matters, however it is defined. Options include:

- *Hard-dollar cash:* Pay the full value of what might be found in the pack out of not-so-petty cash before a mission or adventure.
- *Fraction of starting wealth:* The GM and players can work out a value of gear subsumed into starting wealth or provided by a convenient Patron.

RUMMAGING AROUND

Pulling something out of the pack is straightforward. State (specifically) what you're going to be rummaging around for, such as "another magazine for my assault rifle, which weighs 1 lb. and costs \$34," or "a 10-lb, \$2,000 block of PLASTEX-B." Anything may be sought for that fits within the cost and weight constraints of the pack.

To discover the chosen item within a pack, make an IQ-based Scrounging roll (but see *Other Skills*, p. 25) with penalties based on the weight and cost of the item being withdrawn. Roll against the skills of whoever owned and filled the pack for determining what's in it.

I Like Big Stuff and I Cannot Lie

These rules abstract away volume, since while every piece of gear has cost and weight stats, few of them come with a volume listing. This comes down to GM fiat – if it's reasonable that a device might fit inside or be strapped onto a piece of load-bearing equipment, it should be allowed. Pulling a lightweight but high volume air cylinder out of a small pack might be forbidden, but a backup sword might be strapped to the outside of the pack, so could be permitted.

The closer to the maximum remaining undefined weight and cost, the less likely that item is to be found. Consult *Rummaging Modifier* (below) to determine the penalty.

Rummaging Modifier

The rummaging modifier is given as a penalty for both the cost and weight of the item being extracted; these modifiers stack. The penalties are on the table below, where “Max” is the remaining undefined cost or weight left in the pack. Always round fractions to the nearest higher value on the table.

Percent of Max	Skill Penalty	Percent of Max	Skill Penalty
100%	-8	10%	-2
70%	-7	7%	-1
50%	-6	5%	0
30%	-5	3%	+1
20%	-4	2%	+2
15%	-3	1.5%	+3

Example: An explorer wants to withdraw a 21-lb., \$2,000 item from a pack with 69 lbs. and \$45,000 of undefined space and value. Dividing 21 lbs. by 69 lbs. gives 30.4% – larger than 30%, so -6 to Scrounging. Also, \$2,000/\$45,000 is 4.4%, so there is no penalty for cost. He rolls at a total penalty to Scrounging of -6.

Time and Space

The rummaging roll is a free action – you either have the item in your pack, or you don’t. Getting it *out* of the pack is a different story. A DX-based roll vs. the same skill used for rummaging can be used to extract the item. Digging an item out of someone else’s pack is at -6, unless you *both* have the Standard Operating Procedures (On Alert) perk. Any married couple can tell you that what’s a logical spot to store something for one person might be totally foreign to the other.

Other Skills

While the default roll to find and remove an item from a pack is a Scrounging roll, other skills – such as Hiking, Soldier, Survival, or another appropriate skill – can be used (IQ-based for finding; DX-based for removing). Soldier should be used to extract any combat-related items, while Hiking or Climbing might be relied on for rope, harness, and rappelling gear.

If applying the rules for *Specialized Packs* (below), you may *only* use the appropriate skill to pull an item from a designated block of gear. To withdraw a handgun or spare ammo belt from a combat-designated space always requires a Soldier roll and may not be attempted with Scrounging. That’s the price of specialization.

Specialized Packs

Certain parts of the total pack load – or even all of it – may be specialized by equipment type. The specialization is tied to the skill used to withdraw items from that section of the pack. Combat specializations use Soldier, while camping, hiking, and expedition gear typically use Hiking.

A specialized pack section gets +2 to the rummaging roll when withdrawing something that’s obviously within the specialty (using Hiking to pull a spare pair of boots from a

Hiking-designated pack section). If the item is not definable as part of that skill, such as using Hiking to extract a spare ammunition belt from a Hiking-specific partition, no roll is allowed. If there’s a question – such as using Soldier to pull out that spare pair of boots – allow a roll but at -4.

Packs may be designated with as many, or as few, specializations as necessary. A soldier might say that the 90-lbs. and \$10,000 of unspecified gear available in his pack is partitioned into 20 lbs. and \$2,000 of unspecified gear; 40 lbs. and \$6,000 of combat gear requiring Soldier skill; 10 lbs. and \$500 of medical gear using First Aid (including the default from Physician); and 20 lbs. and \$1,500 of expedition gear, based on Survival (Woodlands).

One may certainly combine unspecified and specified gear freely! It would be reasonable to state that a 40-lb. combat load is 10 spare magazines (10 lbs. and \$340) and 30 lbs. and \$6,000 of unspecified equipment, some of which may or may not be additional ammunition. You’ll have to look inside to find out.

See This Rabbit?

Once an item is withdrawn from the pack, the undefined cost and weight are reduced by the cost and weight of the item “found,” and the item is added – permanently – to the character’s inventory. If you use Schrödinger’s Pack to produce a pair of low-profile ruggedized night-vision goggles, putting them back in your pack does not suddenly make them amorphous.

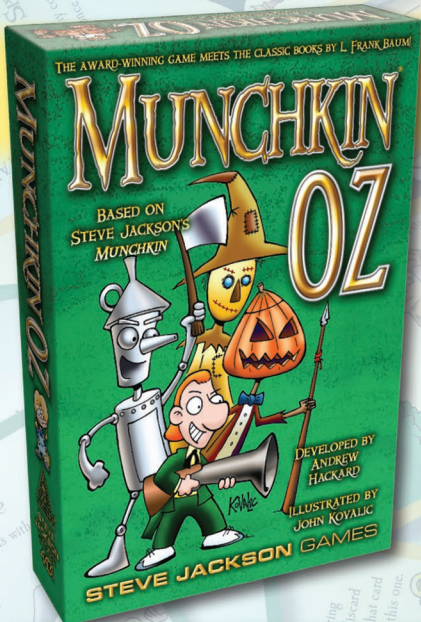
Failed Rolls and Retries

If a rummaging roll is failed, the specific item is not in the pack, period. The player may try again up to twice more if there’s a different piece of gear that would also suit. A spare 100-round drum of rifle ammunition might not be available due to a failed roll, but a 30-round individual magazine might be, and failing that, there might be 100 rounds of loose ammunition. Three strikes and you’re out, though – in the above example, three failures mean that there’s no spare ammo of that type to be found in the pack.

Example: An SFOD-D operative is confronted with entering a darkened warehouse that the mission briefing had said would be well lit. He decides he’s going to attempt to pull a pair of \$20,000 1.7-lb. AN/PVS-21 goggles (*Pyramid* #3/57: *Gunplay*, p. 10) out of his combat-specialized pack, which is rated for 50-lbs. and \$50,000. He’s at no penalty based on weight, but -6 based on cost. Fortunately, he’s got Soldier-15 and gets +2 because he has a specialized pack, so he rolls versus Soldier-11. If he fails the roll, that item is not in his pack for the duration of the mission, but he might also try for some AN/PVS-31 lightweight goggles (\$15,000 and 0.9 lbs) at only -5 for cost and +2 for weight – this time he’ll roll vs. Soldier-14, and is almost certain to have these slightly less capable goggles with him.

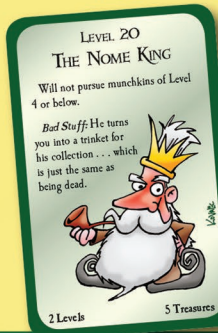
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Douglas Cole is a sometimes writer and oft-times blogger, where he tries to spread the *GURPS*pel at Gaming Ballistic (gamingballistic.blogspot.com). He has been roleplaying since 1981, and playing *GURPS* since 1988. He is the author *GURPS Martial Arts: Technical Grappling*.



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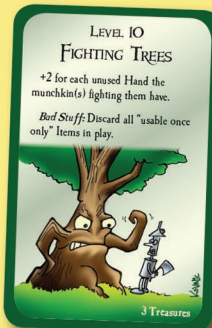
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POSSESSIONS UNDER CONTROL

BY TIMOTHY PONCE

From *The Exorcist's* Pazuzu to *Stargate SG-1's* Goa'uld, a plethora of fictitious villains rely on possession to achieve their goals. Possession, as presented in *GURPS Basic Set* (p. B75), is a fast, all-or-nothing Quick Contest between a possessor and a host. While this suits some games and genres, quite often a protracted battle is more appropriate. Creating a dramatic

struggle for control between a host and possessor, this article offers a new take on possession. It draws primarily on rules presented in *GURPS Martial Arts: Technical Grappling*, but possession of that supplement is not necessary. However, it is strongly recommended, as is *GURPS Powers*.

THE BASICS

Anyone who wants to possess another individual must have the Possession advantage (p. B75) or access to a similar ability via magic spells, rituals, cybernetic hardware, etc. must meet all of the requirements of their means of possession – e.g., touching or seeing their target, physically entering the target's body, electronically hacking into the target's brain, and so on. Once the necessary mental contact is made, the possession can begin.

Resolving possessions requires two new concepts that increase detail and drama.

Dean, you're panicked, you're wide open to demonic possession so you need to calm yourself down, right now.

– Sam Winchester,
Supernatural #1.4

TRAINED WILL

Trained Will represents skill in focusing one's Will to attack or defend mentally or spiritually for the purposes of possessing them. This is an adaptation of Trained ST from *Technical Grappling*, p. 4, to handle spiritual battles of will.

Determine Trained Will by adding the highest applicable bonus from the *Training Bonus Table* (below) to the character's Will. Mind Shield adds its level to Trained Will only for the purposes of defending, as does any form of Resistant that might apply (see p. 31 for one example).

If more than one skill can provide a training bonus to Will in a situation, add *only* the highest.

MENTAL CONTROL POINTS

These rules provide varying degrees of "possessed." Successful possession attacks inflict *Mental Control Points* (MCP) that represent the attacker's increasing control of the host's actions. Determine how many MCP you apply by making a Possession Point roll: use thrust damage based your Trained Will instead of ST on the *Damage Table* (p. B16).

Once achieved, you automatically maintain MCP until you relinquish your hold on the host's mind, encounter circumstances that would prevent your possession ability from functioning – e.g., Static, losing physical contact, etc, or otherwise spend them.

Mental Control Points reduce the host's ability to command his own actions. For every full 2 MCP inflicted, he suffers -1 to DX, IQ, Will, and Per. You need not *spend* MCP to inflict these penalties, and they do apply to all attack rolls, damage rolls, defense rolls, Possession Point rolls, and Quick Contests. At your option, you may choose to allow your host to act unpenalized without losing accrued MCP.

Training Bonus Table

Skill	Attribute+1	Attribute+2	Attribute+4	Attribute+7	Attribute+10	Each +3 Skill
Meditation	–	–	+1	+2	+3	+1
Exorcism or Mental Strength	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+1

Spending Mental Control Points

Someone who has accumulated MCP over another can spend them in a number of ways. (All point expenditures must be declared before rolling dice, but they are not lost until after the roll.)

- You may spend MCP to reduce your foe's ability to win possession-related Contests such as the ones for Enervation (p. 32), Feint (p. 33), Inquisition (p. 33), etc. Spending MCP can reduce a Will-based or Trained Will roll, but never below the Will score itself. Your opponent is at -1 for every 1 MCP spent.

- You must spend MCP when attempting to inflict mental afflictions using techniques; see *Techniques* (pp. 32-33).

- You may spend MCP when attacking an opponent's possession. If your attack is successful, add the MCP spent to your MCP roll to dislodge that possessor, see Possession, below.

- You may spend MCP to reduce your foe's skills beyond any passive penalties to DX, IQ, Perception, and Will. Each MCP spent lowers one skill by 1 for a single use.

Contagion, Sympathy, and the Power of Names

Some would-be possessors may try to exploit magical laws, such as the *Law of Contagion* or *Law of Sympathy* (see *GURPS Thaumatology*, pp. 243-245). Others use the power of *Names* (*Thaumatology*, p. 245) to affect their subjects. Possessors use Contagion and Sympathy to offset range penalties to their possession attack rolls, while incorporating Names affects Possession Point rolls.

TECHNICAL POSSESSION

All possession attempts involve a series of mental attacks during which the combatants vie for dominance. Anyone using a form of possession with particular requirements – e.g., skin-to-skin contact, physically entering a host, spiritually merging with the host's body, etc. – must maintain these conditions throughout the entire possession process or immediately fail.

The Attack Sequence

Possession attacks are handled like any other attack with a few notable differences.

- A possessor attacks using the highest of his Trained Will or a new technique called Possession (p. 33). If he hits, he rolls for MCP inflicted.

- A host may use a *possession defense* against an attack; this is similar to a Block or Parry. He rolls against (defense skill + Mind Shield)/2+3, where "defense skill" is the best of Trained Will, Exorcism, Meditation (but at -2), Mental Strength, or the Possession technique (p. 33). A host taken by total surprise (p. B393) suffers -4 to possession defenses, rather than not being allowed to make one. On a success, his opponent inflicts no MCP.

Possession

Possessing a host requires that you reduce his Will to zero. This is usually accomplished by accumulating (subject's

Will)×2 MCP. Afflictions, magical spells, and physical pain also can reduce Will.

The host is not helpless throughout the process, however. He can attack, accumulate MCP, and spend it to break his possessor's grip! The possessor makes possession defenses normally. If a possessor's maintained MCP ever falls below zero, his possession attempt immediately ends, and he is mentally stunned for 1d seconds.

The possessor may choose to end a *successful* possession at any time as a free action, after which his host is mentally stunned for 1d seconds. This means that in the few seconds after you leave, your host will be extremely vulnerable to possession attempts!

The Cost of Possession

Independent of any FP costs for using Possession or casting spells, the struggle for mental dominance is *tiring*. Any possession attempt that lasts more than 10 seconds costs 1 FP plus an additional 1 FP per minute thereafter, just as if fighting a physical battle. Other actions that deplete FP, like extra effort or spell casting, have their usual costs.

Additionally, possession attacks and defenses are *distracting* and require focus. While engaged in a possession, both possessor and host must decide whether the mental struggle or their physical activity takes priority. Whichever they choose is unpenalized, but *all* lower priority tasks – including skill rolls, defense rolls, sense rolls, etc. – take -4.

SPECIAL SCENARIOS

The basic rules cover most attempts to possess a target, but sometimes situations are more complicated.

Multiple Possessors

Sometimes multiple entities get involved in a possession. This includes situations where two or more entities fight for control of a host, two or more entities gang up on a host, or where one or more entities help a host fight off one or more possessors. While this can be confusing and require a fair amount of bookkeeping, the rules for handling such scenes are simple.

Each entity involved – including the host – attacks, defends, and rolls for MCP normally. Possessing entities inflict their MCP against the host. Entities attempting to wrest control from another being attack that "possession" attempt. Make the attack roll normally, but rather than inflicting MCP against the host, subtract rolled MCP from those the possessor is maintaining.

Any entity whose maintained MCP falls below zero is exorcised and may attempt to repossess a host or otherwise engage in the possession once his stun wears off. New entrants to the mental melee initiate possession attempts normally.

The penalties to the host's abilities resulting from MCP are cumulative.

Exorcisms

The act of casting a possessing entity from a host is called an exorcism. This includes the host's own defenses against possession. A host's own exorcism attempts are covered by the normal rules for possession, but what if a third party intervenes?

The Exorcism skill permits such interdiction, often with bonuses from complementary skills like Expert Skill (Demonology), Religious Ritual, Theology, etc. For an assisting party to use Exorcism, he must be in the host's presence. Both his Exorcism skill and his Trained Will take a penalty equal to his distance from the host, in yards.

If the possessing entity has already dominated its host, the possessor begins the exorcism with MCP on its host equal to the possessor's Will. If it is still possessing its host when the exorcism begins, use its current maintained MCP total. During the exorcism, the exorcist attacks the possessor's "possession" as described in *Multiple Possessors* above. While these rolls last only a second, additional bonuses for *Extra Time* (p. B345) apply. Traditional exorcisms involve taking time to gathering bonuses from complimentary skills.

Multiple Possessions

The rules presented here assume only a single entity takes over a host, but what if a host is already infested? Possessing

PAINFUL POSSESSION

Possessors sometimes want to *hurt* their hosts as well as control them. This can help diminish a host's ability to defend himself against future attacks, and some possessors just *enjoy* it. Exorcists also employ this tactic to end possessions.

The attacker spends MCP and rolls a Quick Contest of his Trained Will or attack skill against the defender's Trained Will or Trained HT. Low Pain Threshold gives -4 to the defender's roll; while, High Pain Threshold gives +3. Margin of victory is capped at double the expended MCP.

Margin of victory determines the possible level of affliction inflicted: drowsy or tipsy at 1; coughing, drunkenness, or moderate pain at 2; euphoria or nauseated at 3; severe pain at 4; daze, hallucinating, or retching at 5; terrible pain at 6; or agony, ecstasy, or seizure at 10+. The attacker is free to inflict a lesser affliction than his margin of victory might indicate.

entities may wrestle for control over the host at any time. Any possessing entity may attempt to take control of a vessel by "possessing" the currently dominant entity. Resolve the attempt normally, as though the attacker were possessing a host, except that when a combatant's MCP drops below zero, it merely loses the match – and possibly control of the host – but it is not exorcised.

One possessing entity may attempt to completely exorcise another possessing entity at any time. If using DX or IQ, it may add a training bonus based on its Exorcism skill (if any); see *Training Bonus Table*, p. 27.

EXISTING TRAITS

Many of the traits found in *Basic Set*, *Powers*, and *Martial Arts* require some clarification when using these rules.

ADVANTAGES

A number of advantages from *Basic Set* and *Powers* need elaboration or modification to fit with these rules.

Blessed

see p. B40

Any form of Blessed allows use of the Exorcism skill without penalty. It is appropriate for most shamans and holy exorcists, although Power Investiture offers another option. Blessed (Ghost Weapon) from *GURPS Powers: Divine Favor*, p. 8, has the added bonus of enabling the exorcist to physically attack a spirit with a weapon. Of course, attacking a spirit while it possesses a host would also result in harm to the host.

The following variation on Blessed is also available.

Soul Hammer: Whenever you attack a possessed target, you may opt to attack the possessor rather than the target itself. If you do so, you must still be *capable* of affecting the possessor – e.g., able to affect insubstantial entities, wield

a weapon that exploits an Achilles Heel, etc. Calculate your Basic Damage (p. B16) using Trained Will instead of ST. At the GM's discretion, levels of Striking ST with an appropriate power modifier may add to this roll. 10 points.

Channeling

see p. B41

Those with Channeling must be very careful about what sorts of spirits they contact. Because of this, they always benefit from +1 to defenses for wariness while channeling (instead of the usual +5 given by the advantage). Those who open themselves up completely or who lack the control necessary to only channel communications should apply the following limitation.

New Special Limitation

Open Mind: You are not automatically considered wary of possession attempts while channeling. This means that you do not receive the +1 to your possession defense (see *The Attack Sequence*, p. 28). The value of this limitation varies: you only receive this bonus when *expressly* wary, -10%; you never receive this bonus, -20%; and you *cannot* use possession defenses against those you channel, -50%.

Leech

see *Powers*, p. 96

Some possessors are able to hijack other entities' possessions. They generally use the rules for *Multiple Possessors* (p. 28), but another more potent option uses Leech with the following limitation.

New Special Limitation

Steal Possession: You can hijack others' possessions. You must target the host – not the possessor. Rather than stealing HP, you appropriate MCP already inflicted against that host. -50%.

*Demon: What an excellent day
for an exorcism.*

*Father Damien Karras: You would
like that?*

Demon: Intensely.

*Father Damien Karras: But wouldn't
that drive you out of Regan?*

Demon: It would bring us together.

– *The Exorcist*

Licensed Exorcist

1 point

This perk allows you to ignore the -4 penalty for using Exorcism without having Blessed or Power Investiture. It especially suits necromancers and sorcerers who regularly deal with spirits without the trappings or sanction of any religion. This originally appeared in *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 9: Summoners*, p. 5.

Magic Resistance

see p. B67

Subtract your Magic Resistance level from the skill of anyone attempting to possess you with *magical* abilities, including spells, rituals, or Possession (Magical, -10%). Furthermore, add it to your own skill when defending against or attempting to break free from a possession. This applies to all attack rolls, Quick Contests, and MCP rolls.

Mind Control

see p. B68

You can use the rules from this article to replace the Contest for Mind Control. These rules are highly optional, and players should check with their GM before assuming they apply.

Mind Probe and Mind Reading

see p. B69

Like Mind Control, both Mind Probe and Mind Reading can use the mechanics from this article, except Mind Block replaces Mental Strength for defense rolls. Additionally, there are a few other rule adjustments:

- When using Mind Probe, the prober rolls against the higher of IQ or Interrogation.
- Only the modifiers for the particular advantage used apply to attack rolls.

As with Mind Control, these rules are highly optional, and players should check with their GM before assuming they apply.

Mind Shield

see p. B70

Add your Mind Shield level to the higher of your Trained Will or skill when determining your possession defense score (see p. 28).

Neutralize

see *Powers*, p.97

Neutralize is appropriate for high-powered exorcists who can instantly cast out possessors. *Interruption* from *GURPS Psionic Powers*, p. 16, is particularly appropriate for this. Others can cast out every instance of possession in a host; this is a form of the Cosmic enhancement worth +50%.

Because limitations can lower the cost of Neutralize to as little as 10 points, the GM may wish to require an Unusual Background worth at least 30 points in campaigns using these rules.

Possession

see p. B75

This is the core advantage for possessing others. If used, the rules in this article replace those presented in *Basic Set* and should *not* coexist alongside them.

New Special Enhancement

Transformative: You grant certain physical traits to your host while possessing him. Add these traits to your host's template after a successful possession. Determine which traits you add when you take this enhancement. The price of this enhancement varies; it costs +1% per point of trait bestowed on the host during possession.

Possession Resistance

see p. B46

You may buy Damage Resistance with Limited, Possession Only for -80%. Subtract the advantage's level from any MCP rolls.

The GM should limit this trait to three or four levels. This serves as an alternative to Resistant to Possession (p. 31); only one of these traits may be taken.

Col. O'Neill: Now, it's not a demon. It's demonesque I'll grant you, but it's just a big, ugly creature.

Daniel Jackson: Who's inhabited by a Goa'uld that gives it great strength, intelligence and the ability to regenerate.

– **Stargate SG-1 #3.8**

Puppet

see p. B78

Puppets automatically fail all active defense rolls against your possession attacks. This opens the possibility for other possessors to interfere with your ability to possess your puppet by using sacrificial defenses to block your possession attacks. Your ability to possess your puppet takes longer with these rules. You may take the following enhancement to ignore these limitations.

New Special Enhancement

Automatic Possession: You do not need to make a possession attack against your puppet or accrue Mental Control Points against your puppet in order to possess him. Instead, you instantly and irresistibly possess your puppet whenever you meet the requirements for your Possession ability. +50%.

Resistant to Possession

see p. B80

“All forms of Possession” counts as Occasional, while Possession with a specific source or power is Rare in most settings. Add your bonus to skill when determining your possession defense score (see p. 28).

The GM should decide whether to use this or Possession Resistance (p. 30) as a defense against possession. Possession Resistance is cheaper and does not provide complete protection against possession, whereas Resistant is pricier and can grant total immunity. Which is more appropriate varies from setting to setting.

True Faith

see p. B94

True Faith is very definite in its outcome, unless the subject is trapped. At the GM's option, the following feature transforms True Faith into a more dramatic struggle of Wills.

New Special Limitation

Rebuking: Any time you use True Faith, you must roll a Quick Contest of your Trained Will vs. your subject's Will. Add any levels of Power Investiture to your roll, but subtract the range to your subject in yards. If you tie or win, your subject cannot advance, but if you lose, your subject is unaffected. If you combine this limitation with Turning (*Powers*, p. 84),

winning the Contest forces your subject to retreat one yard; failure allows him to advance one yard toward you. -20%.

DISADVANTAGES

Some disadvantages require expansion or further definition.

Combat Paralysis and Post-Combat Shakes

see p. B127 and B150

Possession counts as combat for the purposes of Combat Paralysis and Post-Combat Shakes.

Magic Susceptibility

see p. B143

Add your Magic Susceptibility level to the possession attack rolls of anyone who uses magical possession against you. Subtract the level of this disadvantage from your own skill when attempting to stop or escape a possession. This applies to all attack rolls, Quick Contests, and rolls to determine Mental Control Points.

Split Personality

see p. B156

Just like Possession's Quick Contest, the self-control roll for this disadvantage is an instant, all-or-nothing roll that can be replaced by these rules. This represents different personalities struggling for control of your body. Use the following feature to represent this.

New Special Enhancement

Legion: Your personalities can be treated as attempting to possess your body. Whenever a self-control roll would normally occur, a suppressed personality attempts to seize control using the rules presented here. This takes the place of the control roll. +0%.

Susceptible to Possession

see p. B158

Susceptible to Possession is an Occasional condition. Subtract your level from your skill when making a possession defense.

Vulnerability

see p. B161

Possession is a Rare category for the sake of determining the cost of Vulnerability to Possession, and it multiplies the number of Mental Control Points you incur.

SKILLS

Many skills may prove useful during a possession – most as complimentary skills – but some take on additional uses with these rules.

Dreaming

see p. B188

A sleeping or dreaming host can use Dreaming for possession attacks or defenses.

Mind Block

see p. B210

This is the go-to skill for defending against Mind Probe and Mind Reading. It grants a training bonus to Will similar to Mental Strength, but only for the purpose of opposing information-gathering attempts.

Religious Ritual

see p. B217

Many religions have complex rituals associated with exorcisms. They may or may not increase the effectiveness of an exorcism, but if they do, Religious Ritual provides a complimentary skill bonus to Exorcism and is often employed using extra time (p. B345).

Symbol Drawing

see p. B224

Symbol Drawing can support a variety of traditions' exorcism rituals. Such Symbol Drawing rolls often employ extra time (p. B345).

Theology

see p. B1226

A strong grasp of Theology can assist in battles against demonic or spirit possessors. At the GM's option, this may be used to resist Feints.

TECHNIQUES

A few techniques are useful for those who regularly engage in possessions. Counterattack (*Martial Arts*, p. 70) and Feint (*Martial Arts*, p. 73) both reduce an opponent's defenses. The following new techniques especially pertain to possessions as well.

Power Skills

Power skills can replace the Possession technique with a Will/Hard skill by the same name – the GM may wish to do this anyway. It should default to IQ-8 or Will-6 and function in exactly the same way. It grants a training bonus to Will when making attacks that follows the same progression as Mental Strength (see *Training Bonus Table*, p. 27), and any techniques discussed in this section default to this skill rather than the technique. This is an optional application of *Skills for Everyone* (*Powers*, p. 162).

Eavesdropping

Hard

Default: Possession-4.

Prerequisite: Possession; cannot exceed Possession-3.

You can perceive the surface thoughts of your opponent as though you were using Mind Reading (p. B69) against him. You must take a Concentrate maneuver, spend 3 MCP, and *win* a Quick Contest of IQ vs. the higher of your opponent's Trained Will or Mind Block. Win or lose, the effects are identical to those of Mind Reading.

Enervation

Average

Default: Possession-3.

Prerequisite: Possession; cannot exceed Possession technique.

You must already be engaged in a possession to use this technique. Roll against Enervation to hit; your opponent defends normally. If you hit, you must spend MCP to set the upper boundary for fatigue, but Mental Control Points spent on Enervation count double for this purpose. After spending MCP, roll a Quick Contest of your Trained Will against the better of your opponent's Trained HT or Trained Will. If you *win*, you inflict the lesser of your margin of success or *twice* the MCP spent as fatigue damage.

COMPLIMENTARY SKILLS

A variety of skills can serve as *Complimentary Skills* (*GURPS Action 2: Exploits*, p. 5, or *GURPS Social Engineering*, p. 21) to possession and exorcism rolls.

An appropriate specialization of Animal Handling or Psychology help a possessor break a host's mind, while appropriate specializations of Expert Skill (e.g., Demonology, Pneumatology, Psionics, etc.), Hidden Lore, or Occultism-2 can serve a similar purpose for exorcising entities. Technological possessors benefit from Brainwashing or Computer Hacking, and more mystical ones utilize Hypnotism or Hypnotic Hands (*GURPS Martial Arts*, p. 61). Religious Ritual and Theology often compliment religious exorcisms. Magical exorcisms often rely on a foundation of Ritual Magic or Thaumatology. Symbol Drawing compliment either religious or sorcerous exorcisms.

Pulling Your Weight

Movies often pit multiple exorcists against a powerful possessor. The best way to handle this is by using the highest Will plus 1/5 the total of the other Will scores (round up).

Feint

Hard

Default: Exorcism, Meditation-2, Mental Strength, Possession, or Trained Will.

Prerequisite: Possession; cannot exceed prerequisite skill+4.

Feints represent lulls in the mental assault to draw a host into false confidence, mixing up types of attacks or tactics, etc. This technique replaces any attack or defense skill for the purpose of making or resisting feints. Beats (*Martial Arts*, pp. 100-101) based on ST don't make sense, but ruses (*Martial Arts*, p. 101) are certainly fitting.

Inquisition

Hard

Default: Eavesdropping-2.

Prerequisite: Eavesdropping; cannot exceed Eavesdropping technique.

You can dig into your opponent's mind and root out specific knowledge he possesses as though you are using Mind Probe (p. B69). You must take a Concentrate maneuver, spend 3 MCP, and *win* a Quick Contest of IQ or Interrogation vs. the higher of his Trained Will or Mind Block. Win or lose, the effects are identical to those of Mind Probe.

Mental Contact

Hard

Default: Possession-4.

Prerequisite: Possession; cannot exceed Possession technique.

You may take a Concentrate maneuver, spend 3 MCP, and roll against Mental Contact to convey a short message directly to your host's mind. This is completely nonvocal and cannot be heard by anyone else. The message may be spoken words, images, emotions, etc., but they do not hamper the host in any way – they merely communicate information.

Possession

Hard

Default: IQ-6 or Will; cannot exceed controlling attribute/characteristic.

This technique allows you to buy off the -6 penalty to IQ when making possession attacks.

Stagger

Average

Default: Possession.

Prerequisite: Possession; cannot exceed Possession technique.

Often employed to create an opening, this technique allows you to stun your opponent. You must be engaged in a possession attempt and win a Quick Contest of Stagger vs. the high-est of your opponent's Trained Will, IQ, or Mental Strength.

If you win, your opponent must roll against IQ. On a failure, he's mentally stunned. This is an attack.

UNDER THE HOOD: ABILITIES AS TECHNIQUES

Several of the techniques presented here are all examples of *Using Abilities at Default* (*Powers*, p. 173-174).

Eavesdropping (p. 32): This is Mind Reading (Accessibility, Target of Possession only, -35%; Universal, +50%) [35] (-4).

Inquisition (above): This is Mind Probe (Accessibility, Target of Possession only, -35%; Universal, +50%) [23] (-2).

Mental Contact (above): This is Telecommunication (Tele-send; Accessibility, Target of Possession only, -35%; Maximum Duration, 10 seconds, -75%; Universal, +50%) [12] (-4*).

Steal Possession (below): This is Leech 6 (Accelerated Healing, +25%; Follow-Up, +0%; Steal Possession, -50%) [25] (-4*).

Terrorize (below): This is Terror (Accessibility, Target of Possession only, -35%; Active, +0%) [20] (-4*).

* These include an additional -2 for being of a different ability type than Possession.

Steal Possession

Hard

Default: Possession-4.

Prerequisite: Possession; cannot exceed Possession technique.

Make a possession attack against someone else's host normally. If you succeed in inflicting MCP, reduce the possessor's hold on the host by the amount rolled, and increase your own grip by as much.

Terrorize

Hard

Default: Mental Contact-4.

Prerequisite: Mental Contact; cannot exceed Mental Contact technique.

You can truly terrify your potential host. Take a Concentrate maneuver, spend 3 MCP, and roll a Quick Contest of Trained Will. You may substitute Intimidation or Kiai, and your opponent may substitute Mental Strength. If you *win*, your opponent rolls 3d plus your margin of victory and looks up the effect on the *Fright Check Table* (p. B360).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Timothy Ponce lives in Orlando where he makes a living as a pharmacy technician. An avid science-fiction reader, he began roleplaying in high school when some friends roped him into their futuristic game. Since then, gaming has been a large part of his life, often vying for time with skydiving, his other favorite pastime. He could not have written this article without the patience and support of Julia. He would also like to give thanks to the *Pyramid* Write Club, but the first rule of Write Club is "we do not talk about Write Club."

RANDOM THOUGHT TABLE

A DIFFERENT SIDE OF DICE

BY STEVEN MARSH, *PYRAMID* EDITOR

I had my mind blown a couple of years ago when I discovered nontransitive dice – six-siders where the average of each side is 3.5 (like regular dice), but whose values are radically different. The version I saw had three dice with the following properties (which I’m calling Alpha, Beta, and Gamma for my own purposes):

Standard Die	1	2	3	4	5	6
Alpha	3	3	3	3	3	6
Beta	2	2	2	5	5	5
Gamma	1	4	4	4	4	4

Because they’re *nontransitive*, if you roll the Alpha die against Beta, Alpha wins (that is, Alpha rolls the higher number) more often; Beta tends to beat Gamma. *However*, Gamma beats Alpha. Even stranger, if you double the number of dice, the odds change enough so that the result is *reversed*; two Gamma dice beat two Beta dice, etc. There are numerous articles out there that go into more detail on this, but my “gateway” was boingboing.net/2013/03/15/weird-probabilities-of-non-tra.html.

Of course, seeing a new and strange type of die, I immediately wondered, “Can I use them for *GURPS*?” The answer is . . . maybe.

What’s in a Name?

Throughout this article, we use “nontransitive dice” to refer to three specific dice. Since we’re not really relying on the dice’s nontransitive properties, it’s probably a bit of a misnomer to call them nontransitive dice. However, it feels better to call them that than to call the dice oddball or non-traditional dice. Besides, once you get a set of nontransitive dice, you’ll probably love their nontransitive properties . . .

ONLY THE ODDBALLS

None of the dice particularly lend themselves to exclusive use. This table displays the probability distributions of

throwing three of each type (compared to three standard dice), to show what I mean.

Three of Each Dice

Roll	Standard 3d	Alpha	Beta	Gamma
3	0.5%	–	–	0.5%
4	1.4%	–	–	–
5	2.8%	–	–	–
6	4.6%	–	12.5%	6.9%
7	6.9%	–	–	–
8	9.7%	–	–	–
9	11.6%	57.9%	37.5%	34.7%
10	12.5%	–	–	–
11	12.5%	–	–	–
12	11.6%	34.7%	37.5%	57.9%
13	9.7%	–	–	–
14	6.9%	–	–	–
15	4.6%	6.9%	12.5%	–
16	2.8%	–	–	–
17	1.4%	–	–	–
18	0.5%	0.5%	–	–

Obviously, none of the alternatives are upholding a bell curve on their own. As far as preserving the foundation of *GURPS*, the Beta dice are probably the most interesting. There, the *only* results possible are 6, 9, 12, and 15, with the 9 and 12 being three times more likely than the 6 or 15. There are no critical results with the Beta dice (unless your effective skill is *really* good or bad). A set of three Beta dice would be interesting for self-control rolls.

The Alpha and Gamma dice are a bit crazier as far as staying true to *GURPS*. The majority of rolls on three Alpha dice are 9s (a success for most average-level skills), but that’s also the *lowest* roll possible; conversely, three Gamma dice has a majority of its rolls as 12 (which may or may not be a success), but that’s the *highest* roll possible. Any hero who’s reasonably competent would likely welcome three Gamma dice!

The existence of only four possible results is a deal-breaker for most *GURPS* games (but see pp. 35 and 36 for ideas).

So, how does it look if we replace *one* of those dice with a straight six-sider? That results in a bit smoother of a curve, but one that's still pretty recognizable, as show here:

Two Nontransitive Dice, One Standard Die

Roll	Standard 3d	Alpha	Beta	Gamma
3	0.5%	–	–	0.5%
4	1.4%	–	–	0.5%
5	2.8%	–	4.2%	0.5%
6	4.6%	–	4.2%	5.1%
7	6.9%	11.6%	4.2%	5.1%
8	9.7%	11.6%	12.5%	5.1%
9	11.6%	11.6%	12.5%	16.2%
10	12.5%	16.2%	12.5%	16.2%
11	12.5%	16.2%	12.5%	16.2%
12	11.6%	16.2%	12.5%	11.6%
13	9.7%	5.1%	12.5%	11.6%
14	6.9%	5.1%	4.2%	11.6%
15	4.6%	5.1%	4.2%	–
16	2.8%	0.5%	4.2%	–
17	1.4%	0.5%	–	–
18	0.5%	0.5%	–	–

Unsurprisingly, that seems to be a smoother version of the extreme results that the first table gave us. More importantly, this actually results in a *curve*; that is, every number within a range is represented (6-18 with Alpha dice, 5-16 with Beta dice, and 3-14 for Gamma dice).

Finally, what if we *start* with our standard three six-siders, but replace one of those with a nontransitive die?

Two Standard Dice, One Nontransitive Die

Roll	Standard 3d	Alpha	Beta	Gamma
3	0.5%	–	–	0.5%
4	1.4%	–	1.4%	0.9%
5	2.8%	2.3%	2.8%	1.4%
6	4.6%	4.6%	4.2%	4.2%
7	6.9%	6.9%	6.9%	6.9%
8	9.7%	9.7%	9.7%	9.7%
9	11.6%	12.5%	12.5%	11.6%
10	12.5%	15.3%	12.5%	13.4%
11	12.5%	13.4%	12.5%	15.3%
12	11.6%	11.6%	12.5%	12.5%
13	9.7%	9.7%	9.7%	9.7%
14	6.9%	6.9%	6.9%	6.9%
15	4.6%	4.2%	4.2%	4.6%
16	2.8%	1.4%	2.8%	2.3%
17	1.4%	0.9%	1.4%	–
18	0.5%	0.5%	–	–

Again, we've got an actual curve – this one a bit more gradual than the original (5-18 for Alpha, 4-17 for Beta, and 3-16 for Gamma dice). In particular, note that the roll with the Beta die is very close to a standard *GURPS* roll, primarily missing the extreme critical results of a *GURPS* roll.

Now that we've tinkered with these dice for a bit, what can we do with them? Here are some ideas. (Find more on p. 36.)

MOOKS AND MASTERMINDS

Changing dice can be a way to alter the flavor of adversaries. For example, giving a mook two Alpha dice and one regular six-sider results in a foe who has a *very* slightly easier time of rolling a 10 or less (50.9% chance instead of the usual 50% for three standard dice), but who has *absolutely no chance* of rolling a critical success. Or, conversely, a bad guy who's rolling two Gamma dice and one standard has practically no chance at a critical failure (unless he's doing something crazy like rolling unskilled at a terrible penalty).

DICE WITH DESTINY

Perhaps the most intriguing possibilities are to put non-standard dice in the hands of the players. How this happens is limited by your group's imagination. As noted before, it's probably unwise to swap out all three dice for nontransitive dice in most cases, but the GM might want to allow them to replace one or two dice in limited circumstances.

From Good to Worse . . .

The players might be forced to swap dice as their situation gets better or worse. As noted previously, swapping in two eliminates most possibilities of critical failures, while replacing two dice with Alphas eliminates critical successes. Maybe the GM will allow players to roll two Gammas if they're inspired or under some magical effect, and require them to roll two Alphas when they're fatigued or harried.

Options, Options

For the GM who doesn't want to allow character points to be used to buy successes or critical successes (in the style of *GURPS Power-Ups 5: Impulse Buys*), a milder possibility might allow players to spend points to exchange their dice. For example, if the result of a critical failure is too catastrophic to contemplate, then swapping to two Gammas makes a lot of sense. It should be noted that, typically, the effects of transitive dice are relatively modest; in almost all cases, it's not worth spending a full character point. However, it might work to draw from a different pool for this purpose, such as Impulse Points (*Impulse Buys*, p. 18) or Action Points (from *The Last Gasp* in *Pyramid* #3/44: *Alternate GURPS II*). The GM might allow someone to pay points from this alternate pool to swap out up to three dice; if the effective skill is 12 or better, buying three Gamma dice is the same thing as a success!

Alternatively, the GM might allow for the inverse, bestowing points on players in return for inflicting them with non-transitive dice. This might be a player option ("I'm taking a rest; I'll take two Alphas this roll and gain back an Action Point") or a GM infliction ("You've got Unluckiness, right? Here; enjoy these dice.").

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Steven Marsh is a freelance writer and editor. He has contributed to roleplaying game releases from Green Ronin, West End Games, White Wolf, Hogshead Publishing, and others. He has been editing *Pyramid* for over 10 years; during that time, he has won four Origins awards. He lives in Indiana with his wife, Nikola Vrtis, and their son.

ODDS AND ENDS

MORE DICE SIDES

In addition to the usage suggestions given in *A Different Side of Dice* (pp. 34-35), here are a few more.

This One Goes Up to Nine (or Twelve): Three Beta dice allow four results: 6, 9, 12, and 15, with the two middle results three times more likely than the extreme results. In a way, it's the addition of a dice roll to the nonrolling system of *This One Goes to 11* (the Random Thought Table from *Pyramid* #3/65: *Alternate GURPS III*).

Fun Is in the Bag! The GM might allow (or require) players to draw from a sack containing nontransitive dice, or roll randomly to replace one of their standard dice: **1-2** – Alpha; **3-4** – Beta; **5-6** – Gamma.

The Price of Dice?

The dice values used in *A Different Side of Dice* were from an article by James Grime, as detailed in singingbanana.com/dice/article.htm.

James Grime also has devised an unusual set of five dice that are similarly transitive. However, they aren't well-suited for our purposes because the average of the sides doesn't equal a standard six-sider. Even so, anyone who wants to buy a set of these cool dice can do so at mathsgear.co.uk/collections/frontpage/products/non-transitive-grime-dice.

I haven't found a set of dice that are numbered like the ones I experimented with for this article – I mocked up my own set with some blank dice and a label maker – but for curious gamers, it seems like it's not prohibitively expensive to get custom dice created; an online search for "custom dice" should generate a number of potential leads.

*Our inventions
mirror our secret
wishes.*

– Lawrence
Durrell

ABOUT THE COVER

For the cover of this issue, we faced a dilemma: How do we get a picture that conveys the possibilities, potential, and . . . well, "everything that's cool" about *GURPS*? *Pyramid* Editor Steven Marsh came up with the idea of reaching *into* a *GURPS* book, and that vision was brought to life by artist Brandon Moore, who we convinced to slip this project in between his efforts at creating the visual elements for the forthcoming revamped *Car Wars*.

Looking at a couple of rough sketches, Steven realized that it was a bit challenging to communicate the idea that the portrayed *GURPS* player is reaching *into* the book; at the wrong angle (and given the mind's tendency to assume that illustrations make some semblance of real-world sense), it looks more like the holder is resting her arm in the valley of the book's interior. Fortunately, Brandon was more than up to the task.

If last month's gorgeous cover from *Pyramid* #3/82: *Magical Creations* was a more literal interpretation of its contents, then this one is a more *thematic* look at its contents. Do you, Gentle Reader, have a preference? Or is it like so much great art: "I don't know, but I know what I like"? See p. 4 for more information on how to contact us with your thoughts and opinions!

Below is a preliminary sketch of the cover. A text-free version of the finished artwork is on p. 37. For other visual delights from Brandon, visit his virtual realm at artofbrandonmoore.com.





ABOUT *GURPS*

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

New supplements and adventures. *GURPS* continues to grow – see what’s new at gurps.sjgames.com.

Warehouse 23. Our online store offers *GURPS* adventures, play aids, and support in PDF form . . . digital copies of our books, plus exclusive material available only on Warehouse 23! Just head over to warehouse23.com.

Internet. Visit us on the World Wide Web at sjgames.com for errata, updates, Q&A, and much more.

To discuss *GURPS* with our staff and your fellow gamers, visit our forums at forums.sjgames.com. The Pyramid web page is pyramid.sjgames.com.

Bibliographies. Many of our books have extensive bibliographies, and we’re putting them online – with links to let you buy the resources that interest you! Go to each book’s web page and look for the “Bibliography” link.

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

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

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