



What to Do With Your GURPS Third Edition Books

by Sean M. Punch

With *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition* on the horizon, many dedicated Third Edition gamers are no doubt wondering, "What do I do with all these Third Edition books?" We've made every effort to ensure that you can continue to use your Third Edition books with Fourth Edition -- where possible. But the reality of a new edition is that it *isn't* possible to keep everything 100% compatible . . . if it were, it wouldn't be much of a new edition!

Compatibility varies from topic to topic, but in general:

- *Characters.* Most Third Edition advantages, disadvantages, and skills are still around in Fourth Edition, and the rules for using them haven't changed much. A handful of traits have different names, and some have changed more -- to distinguish them from or *combine* them with similar abilities, or to balance their point costs better. But unless you insist that every last name and point cost line up, you can use the occasional NPC or creature from a Third Edition book in Fourth Edition without too much work.
- *Combat.* Changes to the combat system -- primarily aimed at streamlining it -- mean many small incompatibilities between Third Edition and Fourth Edition weapons, warriors, combat abilities, etc. in play. Most of these are easily glossed over by the skilled GM, but they're not truly ignorable.
- *Magic.* The magic system has changed some, but all of the changes are in the rules for *casting* spells. Individual spells have basically the same statistics as their Third Edition equivalents, and you can use Third Edition spells in Fourth Edition without negative consequences -- although a few Fourth Edition spell descriptions are worded differently to take advantage of new game concepts.
- *Psionics and super-powers.* We've switched to a completely new system for psi and super abilities in Fourth Edition -- one that has little in common with its Third Edition predecessor. The *Basic Set* provides you with sufficient information to convert . . . but you *do* have to convert, and the conversion isn't always 1-to-1.
- *Vehicles.* Vehicles have changed . . . a lot. Top speed, hit points, loaded weight,

and a lot of other important quantities mean the same thing in Fourth Edition as in Third Edition, but many other stats don't line up well. You might have to go with your best guess until we release *Vehicles* for Fourth Edition. Fortunately, the *Basic Set* includes a generous list of sample vehicles, which should be enough for vehicles-light games.

- *Weapons and armor.* Low-tech equipment hasn't changed much. We've tweaked a few numbers, but not enough to upset game balance if you want to use the occasional Third Edition item. High-tech weapons have changed more -- mostly in ways that simplify use. In many cases, you can look up the new stats for the item in the *Basic Set*. This isn't an option for specialized or world-specific equipment, though; once again, you might have to go with your best guess.

So what does all this mean for specific Third Edition books? We've split the entire Third Edition library into a few general categories below, and provided notes on what Fourth Edition implies for each class of books.

Core Rules

Basic Set, Fourth Edition completely replaces *Basic Set, Third Edition*, *Compendium I*, and *Compendium II*. We'll be releasing *Update* to help Third Edition players get used to Fourth Edition . . . but realistically, there are too many rules in these books to offer a full conversion guide. It took us two years of full-time work to revise everything, after all!

Rulebooks

Books that contain major expansions to the core rules are also genuinely out of date. This is an unavoidable consequence of a new edition! The *spells* in *Magic* and *Grimoire* are fine . . . mostly . . . but the *magic rules* aren't entirely the same. The character abilities described in *Martial Arts* and *Religion* work slightly differently, too -- although the *Basic Set* provides enough information to get by until the necessary Fourth Edition books are available. *Psionics* and *Supers* are largely obsolete; you can create psis and supers using Fourth Edition, but they won't look much like their Third Edition counterparts. And supplements on designing equipment (like *Mecha*, *Robots*, and *Vehicles*) just aren't compatible at all.

Sourcebooks

Sourcebooks *might* be fine . . . it all depends on the subject matter. The advice in "genre books" remains as good as ever. Books of spells and magic items mostly work as written, too. Catalogs of equipment (marked * on the list below) are somewhat obsolete -- especially those that focus on high-TL equipment. Books of character and racial templates

(†) are *very* obsolete, because they're all about precise point costs. Collections of creatures and NPCs (§) are a special case: if you just want stats that work -- more or less -- it's perfectly safe to use Third Edition stats and ignore the fine print. But to get "legal" Fourth Edition characters, you are going to have to wait for *Update* and do the adaptation yourself.

- *Aliens*†
- *Atomic Horror*
- *Best Of Pyramid 1*
- *Best Of Pyramid 2*
- *Bestiary*§
- *Bio-Tech**†
- *Blood Types*†
- *Cliffhangers*
- *Cops*
- *Covert Ops*
- *Creatures of the Night*§
- *Cyberpunk**†
- *Dinosaurs*§
- *Espionage*
- *Faerie*†
- *Fantasy Bestiary*§
- *Fantasy Folk*†
- *High-Tech**
- *Horror*
- *Illuminati*
- *Low-Tech**
- *Magic Items 1-3*
- *Modern Firepower**
- *Monsters*§
- *Rogues*†
- *Shapeshifters*†
- *Space*
- *Space Bestiary*§
- *Special Ops*
- *Spirits*†
- *Steampunk* (and *Screampunk*)
- *Steam-Tech**
- *Supporting Cast*§
- *Swashbucklers*
- *Time Travel* (and *Timeline*)
- *Ultra-Tech**
- *Ultra-Tech 2**

- *Undead*†
- *Villains*§
- *Warehouse 23**
- *Warriors*†
- *Who's Who 1-2*§
- *Wizards*†

* Contains rules or statistics for technology and artifacts that differ in Fourth Edition.

† Contains templates or character abilities that use different costs or rules in Fourth Edition.

§ Contains creatures or NPCs that work in Fourth Edition *if* precise point costs are unimportant.

Worldbooks

Worldbooks published for Third Edition are mostly fine for Fourth Edition! Background material requires no adaptation at all, and there are sufficiently few NPCs and creatures in most worldbooks that you can use them "as is" by keeping the same abilities and ignoring point costs (but if you want 100% compatible character sheets, be prepared to put in extra time!). Weapons and vehicles need conversion, but Fourth Edition offers ready-made equivalents in many cases. Only extremely tech-heavy worldbooks (*) and those chock-full of templates or new character abilities (†) are likely to be a problem.

- *Age of Napoleon*
- *Alpha Centauri*
- *Alternate Earths*
- *Alternate Earths 2*
- *Arabian Nights*
- *Atlantis*
- *Autoduel**
- *Aztecs*
- *Black Ops*†
- *Blue Planet*
- *Bunnies & Burrows*†
- *Cabal*†
- *Callahan's Crosstime Saloon*
- *Camelot*
- *Castle Falkenstein* (and *The Ottoman Empire*)
- *Celtic Myth*
- *China*
- *Conan*
- *Cthulhupunk*

- *Cyberworld**
- *Deadlands: Weird West* (including *Hexes†* and *Varmints*)
- *Discworld Roleplaying Game‡*
- *Egypt*
- *Fantasy* (and *Tredroy*)
- *Fantasy II*
- *Goblins*
- *Greece*
- *Hellboy Sourcebook and Roleplaying Game‡*
- *Horseclans*
- *Humanx*
- *Ice Age*
- *Imperial Rome*
- *In Nomine†*
- *International Super Teams†* (and *Mixed Doubles†*, *Super Scum†*, and *Supertemps†*)
- *IOU*
- *Japan*
- *Lensman*
- *Mage: The Ascension†*
- *Mars*
- *Middle Ages 1*
- *Myth†*
- *New Sun*
- *Ogre**
- *Old West*
- *Places Of Mystery*
- *Planet Krishna*
- *Planet of Adventure*
- *Prisoner*
- *Reign of Steel**
- *Riverworld*
- *Robin Hood*
- *Russia*
- *Space Atlas 1-4*
- *Technomancer†*
- *Terradyne*
- *Transhuman Space*†‡* (including *Broken Dreams*, *Deep Beyond*, *Fifth Wave*, *High Frontier**, *In The Well*, *Personnel Files†*, *Spacecraft of the Solar System**, and *Under Pressure*)
- *Traveller** (including *Alien Races 1-4†*, *Behind the Claw*, *Bounty Hunters†*, *Far Trader*, *First In*, *Ground Forces**, *Humaniti†*, *Modular Cutter**, *Planetary Survey 1-6*, *Rim of Fire*, *Star Mercs*, *Starports*, and *Starships**)

- *Uplift*†
- *Vampire Companion*†
- *Vampire: The Masquerade*†
- *Vikings*
- *Voodoo*†
- *War Against the Chtorr*
- *Werewolf: The Apocalypse*†
- *Wild Cards*† (and *Aces Abroad*†)
- *Witch World*
- *WWII**‡ (including *All the King's Men*, *Dogfaces*, *Frozen Hell*, *Grim Legions*, *Hand of Steel*, *Iron Cross*, *Return to Honor*, and *Weird War II*)
- *Y2K*

* Contains large numbers of vehicles, robots, or other equipment that requires extensive adaptation.

† Contains new character abilities or significant numbers of character templates.

‡ Self-contained! You can play this game "as is" without *any* edition of the *Basic Set*.

Adventures

Adventures are a lot like worldbooks: the plots and settings are as good in Fourth Edition as they were in Third Edition, but you may wish to update NPCs and creatures to Fourth Edition, and replace specific items of equipment with their Fourth Edition equivalents.

- *Beyond Thunder River*
- *Bili the Axe: Up Harzburk*
- *Chaos in Kansas*
- *Conan and the Queen of the Black Coast*
- *Cyberpunk Adventures*
- *Deathwish*
- *Fantasy Adventures*
- *Flight 13*
- *For Love of Mother-Not*
- *Harkwood*
- *Martial Arts Adventures*
- *Moon of Blood*
- *Operation Endgame*
- *Orbital Decay*
- *Orcslayer*
- *Scarlet Pimpernel*
- *School of Hard Knocks*
- *Space Adventures*

- *Stardemon*
- *Supers Adventures*
- *The Old Stone Fort*
- *The Wyrmslayer*
- *Time Travel Adventures*
- *Unnight*
- *Zombietown U.S.A.*

Article publication date: June 18, 2004

361 *Pyramid* subscribers rated this article **3.42** on a scale of 1 to 5. Visit the [ratings page](#) for more info.

Copyright © 2004 by [Steve Jackson Games](#). All rights reserved. Pyramid subscribers are permitted to read this article online, or download it and print out a single hardcopy for personal use. Copying this text to any other online system or BBS, or making more than one hardcopy, is *strictly prohibited*. So please don't. And if you encounter copies of this article elsewhere on the web, please report it to webmaster@sjgames.com.



[Home](#) - [Subscribe!](#) - [Current Issue](#) - [Playtesting](#) - [Chat](#) - [Advertising](#) - [Index of Advertisers](#) - [Feedback](#)