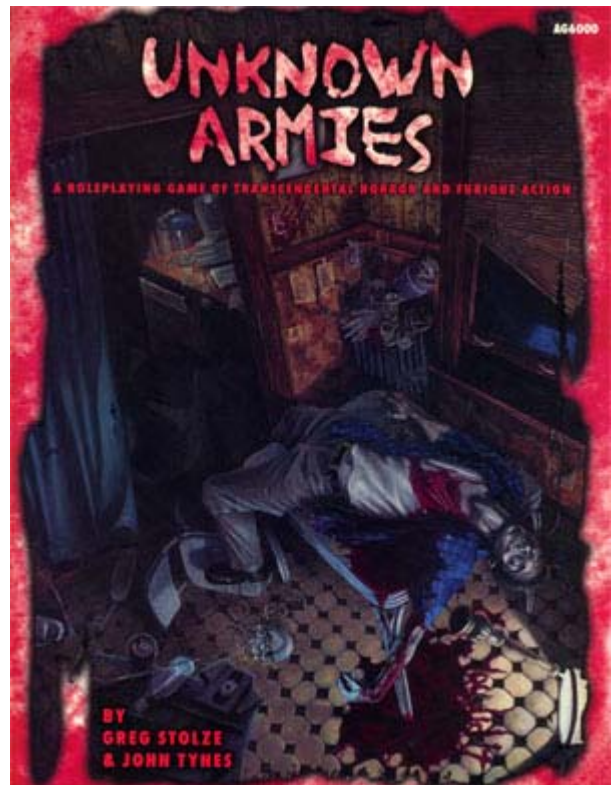


20 New Skills for **UNKNOWN ARMIES** Characters

by Chad Underkoffler

One of the strengths of the *Unknown Armies* roleplaying game is its rather abstract skills system. Characters may have nearly any skill they can imagine (with GM approval) and the game actually encourages creativity in this regard. A number of GMCs (Game Moderator Characters, what other games term NPCs) have such interesting and illuminating skills such as Beat You Senseless, Distracting Breast Implants, Make Gobs of Money, Weird Sexual Appeal Based on Being Perceived As A Challenge, Write Stirring Email Message, and Run in High Heels.

The Free Skills - - the skills that anybody in an average industrialized nation should have - - cover many of the role-playing basics: fighting, thinking, interacting, etc. The authors of *Unknown Armies* also provide a short list of other sample skills in the Character Creation chapter. But sometimes a player can get stuck when making up an *Unknown Armies* character, and while the examples given are pretty spiffy, one feels the need to look at more sample skills to help flesh out the character being detailed.



Below are 20 new skills for *Unknown Armies* characters, five for each of the Stats. Enjoy!

New Body Skills

Bounce Back Fast

This skill represents the ability to shake off some of the effects of being beaten silly. After being wounded in a combat, the character may roll against this skill. If successful, the GM may roll one die and add the amount to the PC's hidden Wound Point total. This skill only works once for each combat the character participates in, and is cumulative with First Aid attempts and other convalescence.

Crushing Blow

This skill represents getting in an exceptional hit in combat. If the attack roll is under the Crushing Blow level, add an additional die of damage. This is the same effect as the Hand-to-Hand Cherry of More Hurt. This skill is suited for big bruiser-types, and may not be higher than the level of the character's Struggle skill.

Charge!

This skill represents being able to physically plow through a knot of thugs in your way, a locked door, department store windows, a plasterboard wall, etc. The GM will adjudicate or veto all Charging attempts, and may choose to assess damage, if he feels it's warranted. This skill is suitable for running backs.

My Body is a Lethal Weapon

This skill represents hard fists, specialized martial arts strikes, or a dollop of just plain mean. If the character rolls an attack under his My Body is a Lethal Weapon level, he does an additional +3 damage. On a matched success, he does +6 damage. This skill is suited for martial artist-types, and may not be higher than the level of the character's Struggle skill.

My Grandma Hits Harder Than That!

This skill is for the real tough guys out there. If an opponent's successful attack roll is lower than the character's My Grandma Hits Harder Than That! skill, the GM may eliminate the higher of the two dice, so that the damage done is merely the lesser die roll, not the sum of the dice. This skill only affects hand-to-hand damage.

Example: Juan the GMC punches Vinny PC in the forehead, rolling a 25. This would normally be 7 points of damage (2 + 5 = 7). However, Juan's roll of 25 is under Vinny's My Grandma Hits Harder Than That! skill of 35%, so the 5 gets dropped, leaving only 2 points of damage for Vinny to take. He laughs in Juan's face! Next turn, Juan hits Jimmy, rolling a 40 against his Knuckle-Sandwich skill of 45. This is not below Vinny's MGHHTT! skill, and thus does it's full damage of 14 points. Who's laughing now, Vinny?

New Speed Skills

Evade Pursuit

This skill allows the character to lose pursuers through quick lane changes, ducking down alleys, making switchbacks, and general luck. It can be used for running on foot or driving a car.

Follow That Car!

This skill is used to follow another car, either surreptitiously or through twisty streets

and massive traffic.

I'm There!

This skill allows a character to appear anywhere he could normally reach, only with style. This skill is favored by action heroes using air ducts to escape, grim vigilantes who disappear into the shadows, and those villains who tend to appear right behind the heroes while they're talking. The skill roll represents how "cool" the appearance is. *Example:* Ed sees two of Vance Dugan's enforcers on lookout duty. Ed wants to use his I'm There! skill of 40% to pop out of the shadows behind and right between them so that he can bash their heads together and knock them out. He rolls a 46%, and fails: one of the thugs hears him sneaking up behind him and evades Ed's grab!

It's All in the Reflexes

If something happens that requires an immediate reaction (like a stumble on the edge of a precipice, a ladder tipping over, an object hurled at the character, etc.), a successful roll against It's All in the Reflexes allows the character to take an immediate action (grab the edge of the chasm, jump from the ladder, catch the knife in midair and throw it back). If the character has a lower initiative than the event, this immediate action takes the place of his normal action. If the player has already acted before the event, he gets to react, but the IAitR roll does not take up his next action. It's a freebie.

Example 1: Some thugs are chasing Henry and Nancy through the streets of Macon; as their tires squeal, the passengers of the two cars exchange shots. Henry is due to go fourth during a round of combat. Unfortunately, the convertible that he's riding in just took a bullet to the gas tank and is about to explode. Henry rolls against his It's All in the Reflexes skill to react somehow. He rolls and succeeds, and the two troubleshooters dive out of the Caddy just as it explodes into a blossom of fire.

Example 2: Jack is facing a powerful adept named Lo Pan. He throws his knife at Lo Pan, who uses his magick to snatch it right out of the air. "Good knife. Goodbye, Mr. Burton." The villain throws the knife back at Jack. Jack rolls against his IAitR skill, succeeds, grabs the knife out of the air and wings it back at Lo Pan. He rolls for his attack, gets an 01 (!) and buries his knife up to the hilt in the adept's forehead.

Take A Bullet

This is the skill that a bodyguard uses to interpose himself between a shooter and his target. If successful, the bodyguard takes the damage intended for the target. If failed, the target still takes the hit.

New Mind Skills

Connect the Dots

This skill allows the character to put many pieces of information together to get a possible solution to a puzzle or crime. It is especially useful for police, detectives, private eyes, and snoopy reporters.

Debunk

This is the skill of explaining away weird stuff into mundane stuff. "Of course that man didn't levitate that bar-stool! It was all done with mirrors and string, and, er, magnets!"

Been There, Done That

This skill is for those characters who know it all, have globetrotted for years, and have allies and foes all over the place. This is not the same as a high-level of General Education, however. Where General Education is very much "book-learning," Been There, Done That represents a more hands-on experience. While BT, DT couldn't directly help you with an Archeology exam on ancient Egypt, it could help you find a decent guide to the Valley of Kings on the streets of Cairo.

I Know This City Like the Back of My Hand

This skill represents knowledge of all the streets, alleyways, walkways, avenues, boulevards, lanes, sewer systems, and so forth in a major metropolitan city, as well as shortcuts, usual traffic flow, right-of-ways, current construction projects, and the best place to get a Belgian Waffle at 3 am.

Research

This is the skill of knowing how to find out where information is collected. A character could use their Research skill to locate a copy of a medieval treatise on astronomy, an adept's personal webpage, any publicly available information on a person, even how to do a background check. This skill is useful for scientists, detectives, and librarians.

New Soul Skills

Conversation

This skill reflects the dying art of having a reasonable discussion about art, politics, world events, religion, or anything else. A successful roll against this skill could serve in the place of a Charm or Lie roll; one skillful in conversation may also be able to get people to volunteer thoughts, ideas, or information they wouldn't normally.

Danger Sense

The character has a "sixth sense" that can warn him of danger. Every so often, he gets a weird tingling at the back of his neck . . . This is a type of danger sense, that can warn someone of sneak attacks, make him realize he's in the crosshairs of a gun, tell him to jump back instead of forward, etc. The information provided is always vague and usually expresses itself in the split-second immediately before the danger appears.

Favors

This skill represents the chance that someone owes the character a favor. This skill only effects people that the PC could reasonably know, and doesn't necessarily mean that they *must* do a favor for him. However, most average people wouldn't think twice about paying back a favor, so long as it didn't inconvenience them too

terribly.

Balance of Luck

This skill is much like Hunches, only it works after the fact. If the character flubs a roll against a skill, he can roll against Luck as a "second chance" to replace the failed roll. If successful, he will succeed at the formerly failed roll; however, he will then lose his next combat action or automatically fail his next non-combat roll in order to balance the karmic scales.

Example 1: Bob shoots (Guns 45%) at a tenebrae, and misses. He decides to use his Balance of Luck of 25% to try and hit it anyway, figuring that one good shot will kill it. He rolls against his Luck and gets a 23, which acts as if he rolled a 23 on his Guns skill, doing 23 points of damage. The bullet must have ricocheted off of one of the walls to hit the monster! This isn't enough to take it down, however, and it charges at Bob as he fumbles with his gun, which seems to have gotten jammed . . .

Example 2: Bob, having survived his encounter with the tenebrae, needs to break into an adept's sanctum. He rolls vs. his Breaking and Entering skill of 15%, and fails. He uses his Balanced of Luck again, and succeeds! The door opens with a low squeak, and Bob tiptoes in. Unfortunately, he's already failed his next roll: a Notice to hear the distant screams of his backup being atomized by the adept! Poor Bob!

Machines Like Me

The character has an uncanny knack for finding and fixing problems with any sort of machine. He can use this skill to find that elusive knock in an engine, cajole a dead battery into life, hot-wire a toaster oven, or figure out how to program a VCR correctly on the first try.

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