



# Adventurous Occupations: Computer Expert

for *GURPS*

by Paul Stefko

Since the creation of telecommunications networks, a secret war has been raging across phone lines, broadband cables, and now the ether of wireless communication. The soldiers on this new battlefield are experts at manipulating the security of computer systems, whether for good or ill.

This conflict has entered the public consciousness through movies like *WarGames* and *Hackers*. Even the otherwise over-the-top *Matrix* series included elements of real-life cyber-intrusion. Today's computer experts form the basis for the entire cyberpunk genre, with its glittering neon realms of virtual crime.

Below, we present several templates for creating characters that are at home in the glow of a display. These characters provide critical service to an adventuring group, stealing (or protecting) valuable data. At 75-100 points, these templates leave room for a great deal of personalization when creating PCs and NPCs.

## New Talent

The following talent is useful for computer experts on both sides of the line.

**Computer Genius:** Computer Hacking (if allowed in the campaign), Computer Operation, Computer Programming, Electronics Operations, Electronics Repair (Computers), Expert Skill (Computer Security).

*Reaction bonus:* computer professionals, hackers. *5 points/level.*

## Lenses

The following lens may be added to any of the templates below, but it is only appropriate in highly weird and highly conspiratorial campaigns.

**Seen Too Much (+15 points):** Your exposure to so much data has opened your mind to elements of reality beyond the experience of most. You are now privy to the world's secrets, and powerful forces want to see you silenced for this knowledge. Add Enemy (Illuminati; 6 or less) [-20], Illuminated [10], Racial Memory (Passive) [15], and Reawakened [10].

## *Security Expert*

*75 points*

A security expert is a professional skilled in analyzing a system or network of systems for

possible exploits and shoring up its defenses against them. He may have a permanent position with an organization (with appropriate Patron and/or Duty) or work freelance.

**Allies and Contacts:** The security expert often maintains contacts in corporations and law enforcement, allowing him to call on a wide network of resources and information. Rarely will any of these associates rate as Allies, however. They'll answer the expert's questions, but they won't fight his battles.

**Equipment:** Typically, a security expert will be provided appropriate equipment by his client or employer. Often, and especially among freelance troubleshooters, the expert also will have his own hardware, typically portable, which he uses to test systems and diagnose problems. At TL8, this is usually a high-end laptop computer (Complexity 3, p. B288) running standard operating and programming software (no bonus to skill). At TL9+, design a Small computer using the rules in Chapter 2 of *GURPS Ultra-Tech*.

**Attributes:** **ST** 10 [0]; **DX** 10 [0]; **IQ** 12 [40]; **HT** 10 [0].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Dmg 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 12 [0]; FP 10 [0].

**Advantages:** 25 points chosen from IQ+1 [20], Computer Genius [5/level], Contact (Business or Police) [varies], Favor [varies], Patron [varies], Security Clearance [5 or 10], or Wealth (Comfortable) [10].

**Disadvantages:** -15 points chosen from Addiction (Stimulants) [-10], Code of Honor (Professional) [-5], Duty (Nonhazardous) [varies], Honesty [-10\*], Insomniac [-10 or -15], or Workaholic [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Computer Operation-14 (E) IQ+2 [4]; Computer Programming-12 (H) IQ [4]; Expert Skill (Computer Security)-12 (H) IQ [4].

**Secondary Skills:** Pick *three* of Cryptography-11 (H) IQ-1 [2], Electronics Operations (Communications)-12 (A) IQ [2], Electronics Operations (Security)-12 (A) IQ [2], Electronics Operations (Surveillance)-12 (A) IQ [2], or Mathematics (Computer Science)-11 (H) IQ-1 [2].

**Background Skills:** 7 points chosen from Current Affairs (Science and Technology) and Games (Computer Games), both IQ/E; Administration and Electronics Repair (Computers)†, both IQ/A; or Intelligence Analysis, IQ/H.

\* Multiplied for self-control number; see page 120 of the *Basic Set*.

† Raised from Computer Operation default.

## Lenses

**Underground Ties (-15 points):** You work for a criminal organization. You may be an in-house security expert for organized crime, or you may have a legitimate job as cover, utilizing your employer's resources in criminal activities. You may be forced into this position through blackmail or threats. Add Duty (12 or less) or Duty (Involuntary; 9 or less) [-10], Patron (Fairly powerful organization; 9 or less; Provides equipment up to starting wealth, +50%) [15] and Secret (criminal) [-20].

## *Hacker*

## *75 points*

The hacker is a modern rogue. Instead of picking locks, grifting, or counterfeiting, he breaks encryption, steals passwords, and fools unsuspecting sysops.

**Allies and Contacts:** Most hackers maintain a network of like-minded peers for the purposes of trading tools and information. Some hackers organize into "guilds" that support each other on particular difficult tasks. A few hackers may have contacts in law enforcement that can tip them off if investigators get too close.

**Equipment:** The hacker will usually be operating from a high-end desktop computer (Complexity 4) running home-brewed software and tools collected from various underground sites. A more mobile and adventurous hacker may use a laptop like the security expert's above combined with a wireless modem, stealing access from various open networks in public spaces.

**Attributes:** **ST** 10 [0]; **DX** 10 [0]; **IQ** 13 [60]; **HT** 10 [0].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Dmg 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 11 [-10]; Per 13 [0]; FP 10 [0].

**Advantages:** 25 points chosen from IQ+1 [20], Ally (hacker) [varies], Alternate Identity [5 or 15/identity], Computer Genius [5/level], Contact (Police or Street) [varies], Favor [varies], or Single-Minded [5].

**Disadvantages:** -25 points chosen from Addiction (Stimulants) [-10], Enemy [varies], Insomniac [-10 or -15], Loner [-5\*], Odious Personal Habit [-5/level], Overweight *or* Skinny [-1 or -5], Unfit *or* Very Unfit [-5 or -15], or Wealth (Struggling or Poor) [-10 or -15].

**Primary Skills:** Computer Operation-14 (E) IQ+1 [2]; Computer Programming-14 (H) IQ+1 [8].

**Secondary Skills:** Pick *four* of Cryptography-12 (H) IQ-1 [2], -13 (A) IQ [2], Electronics Operations (Communications)-13 (A) IQ [2], Electronics Operations (Surveillance)-13 (A) IQ [2], Fast-Talk-13 (A) IQ [2], Mathematics (Computer Science)-12 (H) IQ-1 [2] or Scrounging-14 (E) Per+1 [2].

**Background Skills:** 7 points chosen from secondary skills or Current Affairs (Science and Technology), Games (Computer Games), and Savoir-Faire (Net), all IQ/E; Electronics Operations (Media), Electronics Operations (Security), Electronics Repair (Computers)†, Research, and Streetwise, all IQ/A; or Psychology (Human), IQ/H.

\* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† Raised from Computer Operation default.

## **Lenses**

**Got Caught (-28 points):** You have been convicted of cyber-crime and are currently serving probation. You are prohibited from using any electronic communication device and are monitored semi-regularly by a probation officer. This lens assumes that you have broken the terms of your probation. If the government learns of this, you will be sent to prison. Add Enemy (Probation officer; 6 or less) [-3], Secret (hacker) [-20], and Social Stigma (Criminal Record) [-5].

**White Hat (+7 points):** You have reformed and joined the "good side." You now work for a corporation or government agency as a security expert (see above). Add Patron (Fairly powerful organization; 9 or less) [10], Duty (Nonhazardous; 12 or less) [-5], and Expert Skill (Computer Security)-12 (H) IQ-1 [2].

## *Decker* *100 points*

The decker is a cinematic cyberpunk hacker. Armed with a neural interface jack, a high-end computer ("deck"), and a whole lot of attitude, the decker is the king of cyberspace.

On the downside, deckers are often embroiled in the depths of the criminal underworld, associated with the lowest of lowlifes. It is easy for a decker to break the wrong promises to the wrong people and find himself in serious trouble faster than he can boot up his OS.

This template assumes a cinematic TL9 cyberpunk-style campaign.

**Allies and Contacts:** For an Ally, the decker might choose an AI that runs off his deck, useful for covering his back on intrusion runs. The computer below could run a dedicated IQ 8 AI or a non-volitional IQ 6 AI simultaneously with his hacking suite and a dedicated suite for the AI.

**Equipment:** At TL9, his Signature Gear gives him a fast, high-capacity Small computer (Complexity 5, 10 TB, 0.5 lbs., 2B/20 hrs.) and a suite of Good-quality hacking software (+1 to Computer Hacking, not included in the template), and he still has plenty room for weapons, electronic lockpicks, or what have you.

**Attributes:** **ST** 10 [0]; **DX** 10 [0]; **IQ** 13 [60]; **HT** 10 [0].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Dmg 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 13 [0]; Per 13 [0]; FP 10 [0].

**Advantages:** Cable Jack (Sense, +80%) [9]; Computer Genius 1 [5]; Signature Gear 1 [1]; and 35 points chosen from IQ+1 [20], Ally (AI or human) [varies], Alternate Identity [5 or 15/identity], Chip Slots (4) [17/slot], Contact (Business, Police, or Street) [varies], Gadgeteer (Software only, -20%) [20], more Signature Gear [1/level], Single-Minded [5], or Zeroed [10].

**Disadvantages:** -35 points chosen from Addiction (Sensies) [-15], Addiction (Stimulants) [-10], Duty (Involuntary) [varies], Enemy [varies], Loner [-5\*], Social Stigma (Criminal Record or Second-Class Citizen) [-5], or Wealth (Struggling or Poor) [-10 or -15].

**Primary Skills:** Computer Hacking-13† (VH) IQ [4]; Computer Operation-15† (E) IQ+2 [2]; Computer Programming-14† (H) IQ+1 [4].

**Secondary Skills:** Pick *four* of Cryptography-12 (H) IQ-1 [2], Electronics Operations (Media)-14† (A) IQ+1 [2], Electronics Operations (Security)-14† (A) IQ+1 [2], Electronics Operations (Surveillance)-14† (A) IQ+1 [2], or Mathematics (Computer Science)-12 (H) IQ-1 [2].

**Background Skills:** 7 points chosen from Current Affairs (Science and Technology), IQ/E; Scrounging, Per/E; Electronics Repair (Computers)†, Research, and Streetwise, all IQ/A; or Computer Programming (AI)† and Psychology (AI), both IQ/H.

\* Multiplied for self-control number; see page 120.

- † Includes +1 from Computer Genius
- ‡ Raised from Computer Operation default.

## Lenses

**Under Your Skin (+4 points):** Instead of using a portable computer, you've had your deck (a genius Tiny computer) implanted inside your own body. You can deck wirelessly with a radio implant. Software tools may be purchased with starting wealth. Replace Signature Gear with Computer Implant [7] and Cable Jack with Implant Radio [7] (both found in Chapter 8 of *Ultra-Tech*).

Article publication date: June 8, 2007

---

101 *Pyramid* subscribers rated this article **3.55** on a scale of 1 to 5. Visit the [ratings page](#) for more info.

---

Copyright © 2007 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](mailto:webmaster@sjgames.com).



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