



### STAR FRONTIERS™ adventure game

A. Once a character has ceased to gain hit dice when progressing in level the constitution bonus (or penalty) ceases to be applied. The bonus specifically applies to hit dice, not to hit points.

Q. Will water-affecting spells (eg. **lower water**) affect water in a form other than liquid — fog or ice?

A. No. The very use of the word water means only the liquid form will be affected. Fog and ice must be dealt with through other spells.

Q. Why are swords the only weapons which can be intelligent and have the special abilities which go with that intelligence? (Advanced)

A. Magic swords are the only weapons in the Dungeon Masters Guide which have the special abilities and intelligence rules applied to them, with the option to apply these to magic scimitars and the like if the campaign has an Eastern/Arabic flavour.

This is simply a traditional part of the background upon which the game is based — nearly all heroes tend to use magical swords. Two examples should illustrate this, King Arthur has the sword Excalibur, and Elric uses/is used by Stormbringer.

Q. I read through the rulebook, and couldn't find anything about spaceships. Where are they, can't characters travel in space?

A. At the moment characters can travel in space, but have to use commercial spaceliners. The second part of the STAR FRONTIERS game system is currently being developed in America and will cover spaceship design, combat and role-playing in space. We are hoping to see the new rules this year.

### TOP SECRET™ game

Q. What are the effects of the thermite bomb given in the equipment list?

A. Thermite bombs do not explode but burn for 5 — 10 seconds, much like magnesium, temporarily blinding viewers and melting through one inch of plate metal or asbestos walling, thereby usually destroying the contents of a safe or other heavy container.



concluded that games could be broken down into five distinct categories: race, war, and so forth. The DUNGEONS & DRAGONS and other role-playing games do not fall into any of these categories — what we have witnessed in the last decade is quite literally the first major development in gaming for centuries.

One more aspect occurs to me. In every other game I know there is a set of rules, and these sets of rules tie the players into a certain pattern of actions. Moving a chess rook diagonally may sound a good idea but it is contrary to the rules, as is going anti-clockwise round a board of Monopoly (unless one of those cards tells you to do so). In role-playing games, almost the contrary is true. The rules do not force players into particular patterns of action — rather the players, by their actions, force the rules. In turn this means that no set of rules can be written which would cover all possible eventualities which the players may dictate through their characters. The game is determined by the players, and not vice

versa, and the massive rule books which the uninitiated believe to betoken an extremely complex game represent quite the opposite — they are reference books designed to cover some of the more common eventualities which might arise.

'What?!' shrieks the newcomer, 'You start off by telling us this game isn't really a game, then go on to say that it doesn't have much by the way of equipment, and then finally wind up by saying the rules do not cover all eventualities. What sort of game is this?'

Exactly my point. Exactly the point which the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game enthusiast welcomes and the one which tends to confuse those who haven't had the chance to experience the fun this can give. The game thrives on its lack of rules, its lack of equipment, the lack of any necessity to learn more than a few simple facts, its lack of competition, its indeterminate length, its free-for-all no-holds-barred style. Try it. You will enjoy it.

**Don Turnbull**

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## GAMMA WORLD®

Science Fantasy Game

**GWQ:** Where did you get all of those weird names for the GAMMA WORLD game monsters and mutants?

**GWA:** The nature of the GAMMA WORLD game setting necessitated the development of many new, modified creatures, all of which had to be called *something*. Physically or mentally altered badgers couldn't be called badgers (because they were no longer badgers), thus, new names had to be created to describe the new creatures. Further, it was decided that easily identifiable names would not have survived down through the centuries of the Dark Years. Off-the-wall, strange names were given to the creatures in keeping with the strange world in which they exist. The revision takes steps to make sense of the names of the creatures by adding another name to the old one.

**GWQ:** Some of the Cryptic Alliances are pretty strange. What is the best way to use them in the game?

**GWA:** The Cryptic Alliances were designed to be the perfect all-around tool for the GAMMA WORLD game referee. The Alliances are useful to start player characters because they give the referee a logical reason for giving new player characters various materials.

The Cryptic Alliances can also act as a catalyst for adventures; they may create conflict between alliances; assignments can be given by the leader of a character's particular alliance; or characters may desire to rise in their alliance, requiring them to do something of benefit to the collective whole.

One of the first things that a good referee should do is create several hidden bases for Cryptic Alliances. These bases are good starting points for new characters; it will give them a place of origin *and* a home base for exploration of the surrounding countryside.

## Gangbusters™

1920's Adventure Game

**GBQ:** How can player characters obtain a camera, and how much does one cost?

**GBA:** That is an omission from the price lists which should be filled in. Newspaper reporters can be issued cameras by their newspapers. These would be very expensive, large, bulky cameras and use the old-fashioned type

heavy photographic plates. Characters can purchase smaller lower quality cameras for prices ranging from \$50 to \$300, depending upon the circumstances of the purchase. Criminals, of course, can steal cameras.

**GBQ:** Some of my law enforcement characters have begun dragging in every seedy character they can find and using "persuasion" to obtain information. How can I limit the information they get?

**GBA:** Judges, consider that most average smalltime punks won't know anything very useful about the operations of bigtime gangsters. They may know, for example, where a warehouse or gambling joint is located, but won't know who runs it, and who gets the profits. Excessive use of violence by the police will result in political pressure to stop such practices as the mob uses its power at City Hall. Have the Police Commissioner or the Mayor call in some of these fellows and give them a stern warning. In extreme cases, the mob will hit back. A law officer's life is always on the line.

## STAR FRONTIERS™

Science Fiction Game

**SFQ:** The rules say that a gas mask fits over the wearer's face. How does this work for a Vrusk who breathes through many small nostrils in its underside? And how does it work for a Dralasite who breathes through his skin?

**SFA:** This description was written from a Human point of view. A Vrusk gas mask is a harness arrangement that straps to the underside of the body. The filter is a thin sheet of plastic material that covers the nostril area.

The Dralasite gas mask is better called a gas suit; it completely covers the Dralasite. Again, the thin sheet of plastic material filters the harmful gases. Because this limits the amount of oxygen reaching the Dralasite, they may only wear these suits for a short period of time before they become too hot. The Dralasite gas mask may be worn with other defensive suits.

**SFQ:** The Expanded Rulebook gives two different costs for the Standard Equipment Pack. Which is correct?

**SFA:** The 150 Cr cost given on the Equipment List is correct. The 250 Cr cost given under Expanded Game Characters is incorrect.

**SFQ:** Would it be balanced to create a new PSA Jack-of-All-Trades? If so, how would this PSA work?

**SFA:** Yes, you could create such a PSA, although the skills system currently lets a character learn many different skills. If you created such a PSA, It would best use the doubled Technological PSA Skill Costs for all skills the character wanted to learn. Remember, that this PSA is not playtested, and it might be necessary to make changes in it once a campaign is underway.

## TOP SECRET®

Espionage Game

**TSQ:** One of my players recently tried to attack an enemy agent with an object on the Additional HTH Weapons Table on page 33 of the 2nd edition rules. However, this is not projectile combat, nor is it to be found on any of the HTH tables. So where in the name of Bond am I to find the outcome of this action?

**TSA:** When the offensive fighter is using a weapon found on the chart on page 33, combat is resolved in much the same way as usual. Which HTH table is consulted will depend upon how the weapon is being used. Blows with a long, roughly cylindrical object such as a flashlight or an oar will be resolved on the Knife Fighting table if the object is 0-30 cm in length, and on the Swordplay table if it is over 30 cm in length, since they can be blocked in the same way that one would block a knife or sword thrust. Combat with billy club is resolved on the Untrained table, as are blows with square objects such as suitcases, gas masks, and telephones. (Very few agents are trained in HTH telephone combat.) Long, flexible items such as piano wire or chains can be used for strangling or whipping. When they are used to strangle, combat is resolved on the Untrained table by applying one of the "holds" (Hands on Throat). If the victim is surprised, consult Appendix One, under Assassination (Garrotes). When they are used to whip, treat as swordplay.

When a hit is scored, damage is determined as follows. The HWV of the object is added to the Offensive Fighter's HTH Weapon Value modifier on the Injury Modifiers table. This total is then added to the combat result. **TSQ:** Do the die rolls for the Poison table mean the number of points lost from the abilities, or the percent of points lost?

**TSA:** The die rolls made when a character is poisoned give the percentage of points lost from the indicated abilities.



# STAR FRONTIERS™

Science Fiction Game

**SFQ:** 1 kilogram is the mass given on the Equipment List for Tornadium D-19. Does this mean you get 1 kilogram of Tornadium for 50 Credits?

**SFA:** No. Tornadium D-19 should cost 50 Credits for 50 grams. This was unfortunately lost somewhere in the production of the game. The 1 kilogram mass a) helps restrict the amount of explosive a character would lug around, and b) assumes that some of that mass is taken up by careful packing of the explosive.

**SFQ:** Where can I get more ideas and information for new weapons? Where are the military weapons?

**SFA:** Most of the weapons we listed in the STAR FRONTIERS game are the standards of science fiction. There are guns and lasers, sonic weapons and electrical weapons. Other ideas for weapons may be found in science-fiction novels. Another good place to look for ideas is in science magazines. Pay attention to the latest breakthroughs and discoveries in physics and other fields. These can lead to ideas for weapons. For example, recent work in high-energy lasers has been towards an X-ray laser. This could be a very powerful STAR FRONTIERS game weapon.

Another really useful place to look is in today's military forces. There are many features and weapons being worked on today that can be used in a STAR FRONTIERS game campaign. These include laser rangefinders, automatic loading systems for heavy weapons, missiles guided by TV cameras, etc.

Remember, the weapons given in the game are not full scale military weapons. Such weapons would be much more deadly than those listed in the rules.

**SFQ:** Can I have a Human/Yazirian character (the father was Human and mother Yazirian)?

**SFA:** Forget it. The STAR FRONTIERS game is not a fantasy game. Cross-breeding and the like must follow the laws of genetics. Humans and Yazirians are more than different races, they are different species. Furthermore, they developed on different planets where the whole course of evolution is different. The body chemistries of the two races are different. It cannot be done.

**SFQ:** Can I have a character who has been so altered by radiation and genetics as to make him/her a "super-character"?

**SFA:** No. It is likely that in the future it could be possible to adjust a person, improving him/her by manipulating genes, etc. However, there are serious questions as to whether it will ever be done.

**SFQ:** Why do the rules for swimming only allow a character to swim for a short period of time before drowning when people have actually stayed in the water for 24 hours and not drowned?

**SFA:** The longest period of time spent swimming was actually 168 hours. However, this overlooks some things. In most cases of long duration swims, the person swimming had trained and prepared for a long period of time. He/she was also usually well-rested. Further, all the person was trying to do was swim; he/she did not get out of the water, hike cross-country, get into a firefight or get wounded six times. He/she swam until he/she collapsed, at which point someone else fished them out. The rules are not the absolute limits that a person could actually swim, but represent an average, given the conditions, the activity of the character, the preparation, etc.

## TOP SECRET®

Espionage Game

**TSQ:** Is an agent in any way trained by his/her bureau to perform his/her trade at a greater proficiency than agents of a different bureau?

**TSA:** In the TOP SECRET® game rulebook, there is no provision for agents of different bureaus to receive different training. The bureau in which the agent works is merely a matter of player choice. However, if you have access to copies of the January and July issues of DRAGON® Magazine (out of stock), the Rasmussen Files contain listings for various college courses that agents may take to acquire or improve certain abilities related to their specific bureau functions.

**TSQ:** If an assassin killed two arms bearers during the course of a mission, would he get a 100 point bureau bonus for each one?

**TSA:** The assassin would get a double bureau bonus only if the mission could not have succeeded without killing both arms bearers. Otherwise, agents will be gunning down local police for the purpose of gaining experience.

**TSQ:** If a character suffered from internal damage in any area except the head (there are already percentages for that), would he/she fall unconscious?

**TSA:** Internal damage resulting from weapon hits in locations usually considered non-lethal (hand, foot, arm, etc.) will not cause unconsciousness unless the character's Life Level drops to zero. If this occurs, the character is unconscious and will bleed to death in 5 minutes unless a trained person with a first aid kit gives immediate medical assistance.

Unconsciousness was included as a possible result of this type of wound in Issue #49 of DRAGON Magazine (also out of stock), where some optional rules for incapacitation due to damage were offered. These can be utilized if the Administrator wants to add extra touches of realism to his/her campaign.

Of course, in Hand-to-Hand combat, all damage applies toward unconsciousness rather than death (with the obvious exceptions of swordplay and knife fighting).

**TSQ:** Under "Fencing Purloined Goods," the rules say that characters may sell items to the Administrator. Does he/she pay full price or by the chart?


**TSA:** The price that the Agency is willing to pay for incidental stolen merchandise is entirely up to the Administrator. He must decide what the item is worth to the organization, and what it is worth to keep it out of the hands of the competition. Full price should never be paid for any item unless it has value unrelated to its physical worth (such as a politically sensitive document, a new weapon prototype, or incriminating evidence that could be used for blackmail, either by or against the agency). In such special circumstances, the price offered by the Administrator should slightly exceed what the agent could get selling the item elsewhere if at all possible. Note that this procedure only applies for merchandise acquired over and above normal mission requirements. An agent who is assigned to obtain a certain item and then tries to sell it to the highest bidder is, at the very least, a renegade and should be treated as such.

However, if the items in question do not have any particular value for espionage, chances are that the Administrator will not want to waste his time with them, and will send the agent to the Open or Black Market. **TSQ:** The Power rating of a 10-gauge shotgun is 7, 1 point more than the maximum allowed by the Gun Design Rules. How should this be treated when designing this type of weapon? What would the PWV modifier be?

**TSA:** Your powers of observation are excellent. The Power rating of this weapon is inconsistent with what is covered by the rules. Power ratings for the items on the Weapons Chart were determined by comparing the sizes of the projectiles fired by each. Upon further calculation, it has been determined that on this basis, the Power rating for the 10-gauge shotgun should be 8. This has little meaning for the game outside of comparison value with the rest of the listed weapons.

For the time being, treat all Power ratings of 7 and above as 6 for purposes of gun design. Therefore, the PWV modifier would be +40.

**TSQ:** In the Administrator File 001, "Operation Sprechenhaltestelle," there is a Quick Reference Code under Personnel Information (p. 21) and Human Targets. I have looked throughout the 001 File and the rulebook and cannot locate the Quick Reference Code Chart which tells me what each letter mean. Please tell me how to do this or where to find it.

**TSA:** The Quick Reference Code tells how each of the listed personnel is armed. The key to the code is in the TOP SECRET Espionage Role-playing game rulebook (2nd Edition) on pages 21-23 (Weapons Chart). The QRC letters are in the extreme left column, followed by the names and statistics of the weapons they represent. 



**GWQ:** I have a mutated bear character and my referee maintains that since it hasn't any armor its armor class is 10. I say it should be 5, just like a Dabber or a Jeget.

**GWA:** The armor class of a species is not just based on the thickness of their fur or hide. It is also a function of the species' speed and size. The 10 for no armor applies to human types that are walking around in their skin and little else. I agree with you that a bear type rates better than a 10. It is still up to your referee to determine the actual number. I would say it rates anywhere from 7 to 4 depending on how fast the creatures of your referee's world are. I would place it at a 4 in mine.



1920s Adventure Game

**GBQ:** I like the fistfight system in the game, but I don't get to use it very often. Everyone is always carrying guns. This often leads to losing a lot of player characters. What can I do?

**GBA:** There are several ways to decrease the lethality of your game:

1. Remind your law enforcers that a live criminal full of information is more valuable than a dead one. Of course, you have to have done your homework as judge and worked out what the captured criminal will know!
2. There are many situations where characters begin hostilities 10' or less away from one another. Have NPCs you are running attempt to disarm and fistfight in such situations. Your player characters will quickly see the advantages of this type of procedure.
3. You can always have your law enforcement agencies issue warnings to officers about the use of firearms in crowded public places or the public streets. As judge, you could assign a percent chance that missed shots hit innocent bystanders, resulting in legal actions against the officers who fired.

**GBQ:** I have been playing in the **GANGBUSTERS™** game module *Murder in Harmony* for weeks now and finally believe I know who the killer was. Tell me if it was Frankie Santotta? It must be him.

**GBA:** That module has received a great many good comments. I won't tell you if you are right or wrong, but that module is one of the best reasons why playing **GANGBUSTERS** game can be so much fun. There are few modules out right now that will make you work harder to solve your adventure.

# STAR FRONTIERS™

Science-Fiction Game

**SFQ:** Can I have a planet with green sky?

**SFA:** Yes, but it will be a very rare thing. The color of the sky around most planets that have atmosphere will be either blue like Earth or reddish. The color has less to do with the color of the planet's sun than with what is in the atmosphere. The light from the sun is defracted by things that hang in the atmosphere. On Earth, water and dust diffract the "white" light of the Sun and create a blue sky. This will be the case on most planets. If there is a lot of dust in the air, the sky will have reddish color, much like the sunset on Earth.

A green sky could happen if there were photosynthetic algae or microplants floating in the atmosphere. The plants would absorb some of the sunlight to grow, creating clouds of green haze.

This in turn could lead to other problems. The heat coming from the surface of the planet would be bounced back by the cloud layer. This would raise the temperature of the planet. This is called a "greenhouse effect." Venus is an example of this. Also, with the increase in heat, more water would evaporate into the air, so it would rain more often. Also, the algae or micro-plants might make breathing the air dangerous since these plants would be drawn into the lungs. On such a planet, a gas mask or filter would be necessary. Such a planet would not be a very pleasant place to live.

**SFQ:** Is it possible to have a world entirely covered with water or a planet that has no water?

**SFA:** Yes, it is; either extreme wouldn't be places very suitable for human life. An all water planet would probably be nothing but a misty globe with the atmosphere almost as full of water as the surface itself. A totally dry planet has no water necessary for human life or to help protect the planet from harmful radiation emitted by its sun. Under current theories, neither planet would be considered suitable for human life.

**SFQ:** I played in **STAR FRONTIERS™** game Referee's Screen Mini-Module and had the misfortune to have my character release the spores in the Medical Lab during a combat with Sathar. I say that opening that section of the ship to the vacuum of space should have cleared out the spores. My referee insists that that wouldn't be enough.

**SFA:** If your referee maintains that outer space will not kill the spores, that is the final answer. Remember that the ship was found floating in space with its systems shut down. This would support the resistance to the effects of outer space vacuum on the spores. There was a cure in the lab area for the disease but when the ships areas are hit with vacuum this could easily destroy the more delicate equipment on board.

## TOP SECRET®

Espionage Game

**TSQ:** A sniper fires at his target and misses. The target runs, but another character shoots and kills the target. Would the assassination be clean or ultraclean?

**TSA:** Because the assassination took more than one shot, it is considered a clean assassination, not an ultraclean. If both agents missions were to assassinate the target they would share the 300 experience points equally. If either agent were an assassin, that agent would gain an additional 100 point bonus. If either character were an NPC, the experience points would still have to be shared.

**TSQ:** Some of those Areas of Knowledge are pretty useless. Why would anyone want to have knowledge in things like Religion or Home Economics and play the game?

**TSA:** One of the most interesting concepts in the **TOP SECRET** game is the fact that all bureaus must have a large knowledge pool to draw from in working out assignments. All of the areas listed can play an important part in working out a mission. A mission could take an agent to the Vatican where knowledge of Religion is essential for the agent to get around. A good administrator will make sure that their game uses the skills of all the player characters.

**TSQ:** My player character likes to use a crossbow in his assassinations. I question the 6 phases to reload one. The newer models break and are ready to go in 3 phases or less. If I can prove to my administrator that this is true can the reload time be lessened?

**TSA:** The time given for that weapon didn't take into consideration any unusual designs. If you present proof there is no reason why the reload time can't be changed. Give some thought to the environment at the time of reloading. If there is a need to stay hidden or the agent is trying to do something else, these factors will be important in the reloading time. 🎯

for protection, and its body would take the damage in any case. If limbs are injured in a fall, the Dralasite can subsequently spend time withdrawing and regrowing the injured limbs, which will remove the penalties but not heal any of the damage.

**SFQ: How can I get money for my characters so that they can buy guns and ammo?**

SFA: Most characters earn their money by hiring themselves out as mercenaries for special missions. They are professional adventurers who are paid for succeeding in their assignments (i.e. adventures).

The employer pays them for an hourly or a daily rate for their services. The rate of pay for each mission is up to the referee because it depends on the character's skill and the nature of the mission.

**SFQ: May any character drive a vehicle?**

SFA: No. According to the rules, only a technician with the "Operating Machinery" skill may drive a vehicle. Remember that in a futuristic society transportation will probably be so sophisticated that people who can drive will be the exception instead of the rule. On a civilized planet there is no need to drive — you simply climb on a public transportation system and go where you please. Therefore, only technicians who work with those machines need to know how to drive vehicles. So if you plan to adventure on a planet without much technology, be sure to take along a driver!

Referees who feel this rule is too restrictive are free to modify it for their individual campaigns. For example, you might make a "house rule" that anyone can drive a ground car, but a technician is needed for any other vehicle.

## TOP SECRET®

Espionage Game

**TSQ: What is a wired probe mike?**

TSA: A wired probe mike is a microphone set into the end of a long, cylindrical metal probe. The shape of the probe allows the microphone to be inserted through cracks in interior walls or other small spaces to monitor conversations within.

**TSQ: What is the chance that an agent can physically get past barbed wire?**

**What kind of damage does barbed wire do to an agent who is caught in it?**

TSA: Agents attempting to get through an area obstructed by barbed wire must roll against Coordination to avoid entanglement. The Admin is free to modify or ignore this roll as desired, depending

upon the circumstances involved. (For example, if an agent is traveling in the dark and fails to check for anything unusual at the top of a wall before going over, the Admin may choose not to allow a Coordination roll, and rule instead that the agent has simply blundered into the wire.)

Agents who fail the Coordination roll are caught on the barbs (by skin, equipment, or clothing) and take 1 point of damage per 10' section of wire or part thereof involved. For example, an agent caught by a single strand of wire stretched along the top of a wall takes 1 point of damage. An agent trying to crawl between 2 strands of barbed wire (such as a fence in a cow pasture) is caught by 2 different pieces of wire and takes 2 points. An agent trapped in a coiled mass of barbed wire is considered to be caught by at least 3 individual strands, and so will take at least three points of damage.

No further movement is possible until the agent is free of the wire. Each successive turn the agent may try to work free by making a new Coordination roll, but the damage equal to the initial amount is inflicted for each turn that the agent tries to work loose (successful or not). The agent may at any time choose to tear free instead of working the caught clothing, or whatever, loose, but this will do damage equal to double the initial amount in addition to tearing clothing and/or damaging equipment (Admin's direction).

**TSQ: What is the damage for electrified barbed wire?**

TSA: Electrified barbed wire will do double the normal amount of damage on the first turn, and normal damage thereafter.

**TSQ: What are the rules for climbing?**

TSA: Roll against Coordination for every 10' climbed vertically. If successful, the agent has climbed the 10' without incident. If unsuccessful at any time, the agent falls from the height reached up to this point. (This presupposes that the agent is either climbing a surface that a normal person could climb, such as a fence or rough stone wall, or is using proper equipment to scale a more difficult surface. No agent will be able to climb a sheer glass wall unaided.)

**TSQ: How much do tear gas and mace grenades cost?**

TSA: Both tear gas and mace grenades cost \$12.00 apiece.

**TSQ: Are there carry-along magazines for regular rifles? If so, how much do they cost?**

TSA: Yes. Magazines for regular rifles cost the same as those for assault rifles. 🌐

We know you're out there. You've sent us letters full of in-depth game questions, complaints about defective TSR merchandise, and requests for information of all types. You want your answers quickly (or at least before the third World War). We would love to respond — but there's one problem. We don't know where you are. Some of you haven't given us your correct address; others didn't give us any address at all. The office crystal ball blew up last week, so we can't find you by scrying — and we've used up our *Commune* spell for the month. If you see your name listed below, please write to Penny Petticord, c/o TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, 53147 and let us know where your hideout is.

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Feel free to write in with your questions. We try to answer all of them, but when time pressures are heavy those with SASEs included come first. Make sure your correct return address is there — or your letter will find its way to "The Limbo File."

**DPQ:** If an aircraft armed only with a wing-mounted gun takes a forward fuselage critical hit which knocks out a deck gun, is the result a “no effect,” or must another critical hit result be rolled for?

**DPA:** The result is “no effect,” and no additional roll is needed.



Science Fantasy Game

**GWQ:** There are lots of differences in the revised version of the GAMMA WORLD® game rules. Is it necessary to use the second version or can the game master mix and match?

**GWA:** The rules should serve as guidelines and that is all. For instance, I like the old method for figuring out Ancient items, so that is what I use. I suggest that you pick up whatever pleases you the most.

**GWQ:** Several of the players in my game constantly role up characters and throw them away after getting a defect on the chart. I want them to at least try and play the characters. Can you tell me exactly what constitutes a hopeless character?

**GWA:** The problem of hopeless characters is common. Never force your players to role play a character that they do not like, but there are alternatives. Let them discard the characters they dislike — use them as NPCs yourself. When one or two of these NPCs do well it will encourage the regular players to give them a try before throwing them away. Also offer the chance to let players take two characters out on an adventure. One of these characters could be that supposedly hopeless character. Try to talk your players into trying them at least once. They might find they like the challenge of working around the defect.

**GWQ:** Concerning the mutation *Shorter*, how tall is the mutant to start?

**GWA:** When using any normal animal stock, take the average height of the beast to begin the process. With humanoids, begin at one meter and work down.

**GWQ:** My players want to constantly invent new weapons and have their characters take them into battle. Is there some sort of game balancing method that I can use to curtail the creation of hundreds of different weapons in my campaign?

**GWA:** Begin by determining if the characters are spending a great deal of time researching and experimenting with weapons or if they are adventuring. If they are adventuring then their chance of developing a new weapon is slim to none. Then determine how difficult it would be to make the weapons they want using their technological level. It could be possible to develop throwing stars that are just like little daggers if swords and armor are common in the area. It would not be possible in that same area to boost the power of a laser rifle. Developing a crossbow in a land that has never seen arrows is out of the question unless some old book from the Ancients is found or a crossbow is brought into the game environment. Unusual weapons can be fun in the game but they should be countered by unusual obstacles.



1920s Adventure Game

**GBQ:** Is there any way to adjust a character's hit point score after the character is rolled up?  
**GBA:** No, hit point scores are always determined

with the following formula:  $(Mu+Ag)/10.5$  (round all fractions up). Mu = Muscle score and Ag = Agility score. Of course, you must recalculate the hit point score each time the character's Muscle or Agility score changes (i.e. when those scores are improved by spending experience points.)

**GBQ:** What is Robert Jackson's legal skill score in module GB4?

**GBA:** Robert Jackson is the lawyer for the bad guys. His legal skill score is 85, so use that as his percentage chance of getting his client acquitted.

## STAR FRONTIERS™ Science-Fiction Game

**SFQ:** Can robots have skills?

**SFA:** Robots have programs — characters have skills. But there is no reason that a technician with the proper skills could not develop a program to duplicate the effects of a character skill if desired. Program level, price, and time required for development are subject to referee's discretion since they depend on the skill to be duplicated and the facilities available.

**SFQ:** Can a character be trained in skills by another person without using experience points?

**SFA:** No. Experience points are used up in training regardless of its source. Terms and cash price are sometimes negotiable since the referee may allow characters to barter goods or services for the training instead of cash, but the spending of experience points is not.

**SFQ:** On page 41, there is a program called Security Lock on the Robotic Design Cost Table. There is no such program described on page 47. Please explain.

**SFA:** The program wasn't defined in the text. For all practical purposes it functions precisely as the Computer Security program on page 46, except that it is specifically for robots. The intention is to prevent unauthorized persons from tampering with the robot's programming or circuitry, so a technician must defeat the Security lock program before a robot's mission or function can be altered.

**SFQ:** Can a damaged robot be repaired to bring its STA back to maximum? If so, how?

**SFA:** Yes. A successful repair job brings a robot back to normal functioning capacity in all respects, including full STA. Robots do not have to “heal” like characters do — they either work or they don't. A robot which has taken damage equal to or greater than its STA rating simply stops functioning until repaired, at which point it functions normally in all respects unless of course the referee rules otherwise for a specific case.

Now if a robot is repaired under less than perfect circumstances (such as “in the field” instead of a regular repair shop), there is a chance it will break down again of its own accord with further use regardless of whether it takes any more damage. There is a 10% chance of break-down per 20 hour period (cumulative) for field repairs made with a personal tool kit. A major, minor, or total repair (GM's option) may be required. Times required for repairs are listed on page 11 of the Expanded Rules.

**SFQ:** Can a parabattery or power generator recharge a power pack?

**SFA:** No. Powerpacks must be recharged at a weapons shop, hardware store, or fuel station — not in the field.

**SFQ:** Can infrared goggles see infrared beams or heat-sensitive security devices?  
**SFA:** Infrared goggles are keyed for the infrared

portion of the electromagnetic spectrum, so they can detect infrared beams. But heat-sensitive devices are made to detect heat, not radiate it — so infrared goggles will not pick those up.

**SFQ:** Can level 1 maintenance robots carry backpacks and equipment overland? If so, about how many kg?

**SFA:** A level 1 maintenance robot salvaged from a ship or installation could probably follow a group or individual carrying some equipment, but it would have to be reprogrammed for those by a technician with the proper skills first. A standard body robot can carry 150 kg at normal movement rate, or double that at half normal movement.

**SFQ:** If a level 1 maintenance robot is attacked and doesn't have restrain, self-defense, or attack/defense programs, can it still use a melee weapon to defend itself?

**SFA:** No. Without those programs, the robot is incapable of defending itself at all. It would be like taking a hammer to your toaster — the machine would allow you to destroy it without making any effort to fight back.

**SFQ:** How far can the maintenance robot travel on 10 SEUs on rocky or average ground?

**SFA:** It could cover approximately 10 km.

**SFQ:** Do VitaSalt pills work exactly the same as salt pills?

**SFA:** No. Salt pills contain only salt for maintaining a character's electrolyte balance, thus reducing the need for water. VitaSalt pills contain necessary vitamins and minerals in addition to salt, so they help supplement nutrition.

**SFQ:** Is there any limit to the number of new languages a polyvox can learn?

**SFA:** There is no limit, but a new tape must be used for every language to learn.

## TOP SECRET®

Espionage Game

**TSQ:** Can characters “hot wire” cars, planes, helicopters, submarines, and other vehicles? What is the chance of success?

**TSA:** Characters with an AOK score of 75 or more in either electrical engineering or the appropriate engineering specialty (i.e. aeronautical engineering for planes and helicopter or transportation engineering for ground or water vehicles) may attempt to start a vehicle by “hot wiring.” The chance of success is equal to the character's AOK score in the appropriate engineering field. Only one attempt may be made per minute.

**TSQ:** What is the minimum AOK needed to operate a vehicle?

**TSA:** Common vehicles such as cars, bicycles, etc., may be operated normally by a character. (Note that pivots, skids, high-speed driving and special maneuvers are not considered normal operation. See upcoming publications for more details.) For operating more unusual or complex vehicles such as planes, submarines, helicopters, snowmobiles, etc., use the character's AOK in the appropriate engineering field (as above) as the chance of success. The Admin may apply bonuses or penalties if desired. Failure means that the vehicle will crash.

**TSQ:** What is the chance that an agent could catch an object thrown at him by an opponent (such as a hunting knife)?

**TSA:** If the agent knows the object is coming, roll against coordination to catch it. No attempt may be made if the agent is unaware of the opportunity. Note that a character trying to catch a thrown weapon may not use the “running and dodging” bonus.



the character makes from illegal activities (as per racketeering). The character's income from his policeman's salary may *not* be counted toward criminal experience points.

Be aware, however, that your character is attempting something very dangerous by trying to walk on both sides of the law at once, and could find himself in some rather uncomfortable situations. In a well-run campaign, the game judge will use the character's unique position to create encounters. For example, the city where the character is operating doubtlessly already has an organized crime syndicate operating within its bounds. The syndicate also runs protection rackets and will hear of the character's activities when it sends representatives to threaten the same store owners who are paying off your character. The syndicate will not appreciate the competition from an independent, so your character will be confronted and forced either to stop his protection racket or join the organized crime syndicate. If he opts for the latter, the syndicate will then have a member on the police force and will expect to gain advantages from this. They will force the character to cover up their criminal activities, arrange for the escape of syndicate members from police custody, inform the organization of impending raids on their operations, misdirect investigations, and so forth.

As time goes on, it will become increasingly more difficult to keep the law enforcement agencies from finding out about your character's involvement with organized crime, especially if the F.B.I. is called in to investigate the incidents. If your character is caught by the police or F.B.I., your character will almost certainly go to prison for a very long time and will lose all law enforcement rank previously gained (the police will not protect a fellow officer involved with racketeering or organized crime). If your character fails to protect the syndicate's activities, they will take appropriate vengeance on your character for his failure. You will have to play extremely well to avoid being caught.

## **STAR FRONTIERS™** Science-Fiction Game

**SFQ:** What is a "deranged maintenance robot"? Does it have damage to its interior, exterior, or neither?

SFA: The robot might have become "deranged" from a malfunction caused by improper removal of a security lock or an unsuccessful attempt to alter its function or mission, which caused it to go "haywire." (See Malfunction Table on page 15.)

Alternatively, the robot could have become deranged because of damage to its programming, circuits, or memory at the referee's option.

**SFQ:** Can you attach a laser rifle, laser pistol, or any beam weapon to a parabat-

**tery or power generator to fire?**

SFA: A technician could conceivably juryrig a connection to drain power for a weapon from a parabattery or other power source temporarily, but weapons are not made to handle that kind of power input. After a turn or two, the "feedback" from the power source would certainly overload the circuits and damage the weapon beyond repair.

Such a desperate measure should be attempted only in a case of dire emergency.

**SFQ:** If an animal has 150 STA points (reduced to 90 through combat), can a tangler grenade hold it still? If so, could it still fight back?

Ability to break loose from tangler treads depends on the creature's current stamina rating. A creature of which its STA has been reduced from 150 to 90 through wounds will be held if it fails its avoidance roll just as a creature of which its STA was originally 90 would. As for fighting back, a creature held in a tangler grenade cannot use a ranged weapon at all. However, if you are foolish enough to close with it before knocking it out, there is no reason it could not try to hit you back in melee combat — which would probably entangle you in the treads as well.

**SFQ:** Can you fire a pistol with shock gloves on?

SFA: Yes, provided you turn the gloves off first.

**SFQ:** My character captured a maintenance robot, and I would like to know what it can or can't do.

SFA: It can't do anything except perform the functions for which it was programmed until a technician successfully alters its mission and functions. At that point, you have a device with all the intelligence of a large toaster-oven, but it can move and carry things. You will have to negotiate what it can be programmed to do with your referee, but do try not to give it functions which require making decisions or responding to changing circumstances.

## **TOP SECRET®** Espionage Game

**TSQ:** If you suffer a permanent loss, can it be made up by using experience points to restore the trait to normal?

TSA: Permanent blindness or deafness cannot be cured with experience points, but character traits that are permanently reduced by damage can be raised by spending experience just as any other trait can. Such losses are called "permanent" because they will not repair themselves with time or healing the way other damage will; but they can be rebuilt, just like the strength in a damaged limb can be rebuilt with physical therapy.

**TSQ:** Does the Charm score reflect the character's looks?

TSA: Looks are part of it, but the Charm score is a measure of how favorably other

people will react to the character, so it covers much more than just appearance. A given individual could be rather homely but still have more charm than an attractive person due to a good sense of humor, elegant manner, good taste, and so forth. Looks aren't everything — your actions are part of your overall charm, too.

**TSQ:** Why does a 5th-level agent get less experience than a 1st-level agent for the same job?

TSA: Experience values for jobs decrease as agent level increases. A 1st-level agent is very "green." When he accomplishes a mission successfully, he is awarded a large amount of experience because he is considered to have "learned" a great deal. But by the time the agent is 5th-level, he has carried out that same type of mission many times. Theoretically, he does not learn as much from doing it anymore, so it is worth less experience. The 5th level agent gets paid more for the mission than does the 1st-level agent, though, because the employers know that he is experienced and can do it right.

A character can go from first level to second level after only a few missions, but it takes longer to make the next level jump, and longer still to make the next. With each new level the agent's personal trait scores will improve, so the character fights more effectively. In short, it becomes easier to accomplish missions, so you have to accomplish more of them to get the same reward.

**TSQ:** If a character had martial arts skill and used a knife to attack someone, which table should be used?

TSA: Knife fighting. The player must choose whether to attack with the knife or to throw it away and use martial arts — you can't do both at once. A character wishing to use a weapon in HTH combat is limited to attacking on the table corresponding to that weapon. For example, a character attacking with a knife *must* use the Knife Fighting Table, regardless of whether or not he is capable of using other types of combat.

**TSQ:** In Untrained Combat, could an agent make a blow and hold in the same phase?

TSA: Yes, but that takes both allowable actions for the phase, so the agent could not use any defenses.

**TSQ:** Why weren't heavy weapons (such as rocket launchers) included in the rules?

TSA: Those are military weapons. Most secret agents don't carry rocket launchers around in their pockets — at least not if they care about being subtle. Even rifles are hard to explain to the local authorities, let alone rockets! Remember: this is not a military role-playing game, but rather one of spies and espionage that emphasizes action on a personal level. A few heavy weapons may be included in future products as the need arises, but their usefulness for espionage is limited.

