



BEFORE COMBAT

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WHERE'S THE INTRODUCTION?

See 6E1 (*Volume 1: Character Creation*) for the introduction to *The HERO System 6th Edition*.

Most of Volume II of *The HERO System 6th Edition* provides rules for running combats and similar encounters.

Combat ranges from throwing a punch, to drawing and shooting a pistol, to casting a lightning bolt spell. *The HERO System* breaks combat down into several steps. The rules explain each step thoroughly, with examples to illustrate how you might conduct actual game combats.

The HERO System covers all types of combat with a set of simple rules. As you gain experience with these rules, there are optional rules you can use to make your combats more “realistic” and exciting. Add in optional rules when you feel more comfortable with the game and can deal with the added complexity. For the most part, the optional rules are better for Heroic games than Superheroic games.

COMBAT AND NONCOMBAT TIME

In the *HERO System* there are two types of time: combat and noncombat.

Combat time is very precise, measured second by second, with exact actions and results. Because so much can happen in only a few seconds of combat time, there are extensive rules for playing it out. It may take a couple of hours (real time) to play out a combat that’s just a few seconds or a couple of minutes (game time) long. As you become more familiar with the rules and rhythm of the game, the combats you run will typically take less time.

Noncombat time, on the other hand, isn’t as exact. This is when the GM sets the scene for the players, tells them what’s happening to their characters, and begins (or advances) the plot of the session’s adventure. Hours, days, or weeks of game time can pass in a few minutes of real time as the GM describes what’s happening. This tremendous variation in time is similar to what happens in movies and novels. In a novel, weeks may pass in one paragraph or sentence, or a whole chapter may describe a scene that lasts for a minute.

Think of a game session as the telling of a story with the help of the players. First, the GM describes where the characters are, either dealing with each one individually or starting with the group as a whole. As he describes the setting, the characters will probably want to do things. For example, the GM says, “Reynolds, you hear the high-pitched whine of a laser pistol shot. It sounds like it’s right around the corner.” The player, acting out the part of Reynolds, describes what he does in response: “I’ll run around the corner to see what’s happening.” The GM shouldn’t worry about exactly how far it is to the corner, or how long it takes Reynolds to get there, because this is still noncombat time. What’s important to the adventure is that Reynolds gets to the corner, looks around, and sees an assassin shooting the ambassador.

Unless it looks like there’s going to be a fight (or some other sequence you need to detail precisely, like a car chase), you don’t have to be exact about things like time or distance. It’s not really important to know exactly how long it takes Reynolds to eat his breakfast, drive to work, or talk to his boss. The GM starts the adventure by telling the characters their current locations and activities. After that, the adventure may include some investigation, conversation between the players and NPCs, or perhaps some mood-setting emotional scenes. All this happens in noncombat time.

Often the event that marks the change from noncombat to combat time is when the GM has the PCs make Perception Rolls to spot their enemies (or vice-versa).

SENSES IN THE HERO SYSTEM

Characters are constantly perceiving — seeing, hearing, and smelling the world around them. In some games, they may even have exotic Senses such as “x-ray vision” or the ability to detect magic. Here’s how they use those Senses.

Perception Rolls

Characters aren’t always aware of everything going on around them, especially during combat. Whenever something’s obvious, the GM tells the character about it (“You see a ’67 Chevy in front of you”). But he may require characters to make *Perception Rolls* (PER Rolls) to notice something inobvious, or to notice something during a combat or crisis situation. Every character’s base PER Roll equals 9 plus his Intelligence divided by 5:

$$\text{Perception Roll} = (9 + (\text{INT}/5)) \text{ or less}$$

For example, a character with INT 14 has a PER Roll of $(9 + (14/5) =) 12$ or less.

To make a PER Roll, the character should roll this number or less on 3d6. The GM should apply modifiers to this roll depending on the circumstances (see below).

THE RANGE OF SENSES

Many Senses can perceive things at a distance — in other words, they work at Range. For example, characters can see and hear things far away.

The *HERO System* rules don’t establish any specific outer limit or boundary for a Ranged Sense. However, the Range Modifier (6E2 38) applies to all PER Rolls. In effect, this restricts the Range of a Sense significantly. However, the GM should also establish any other limits that seem appropriate based on common sense, dramatic sense, and considerations of game balance. For example, even if a character on Earth rolls a 3 on his Sight Group PER Roll, he can’t see what’s happening on Mars. As a guideline, when the Range Modifier reaches the point where it reduces a character’s PER Roll to 0 or below, beyond the outer limit of that Range Modifier category things are too blurry, indistinct, or obscured for the character to perceive, even if he rolls a 3.

TARGETING AND NONTARGETING SENSES

Of course, not all Senses are equal — a normal human can learn a lot more about someone by looking at him than by smelling him. To reflect this difference, the *HERO System* divides all Senses into two categories: Targeting and Nontargeting.

A *Targeting Sense* is a Sense a character can use to determine the exact location of a target. For normal humans, Sight is the only Targeting Sense.

A *Nontargeting Sense* is one with which the character can, at best, sense the general location of a target. For normal humans, Hearing and Smell are Nontargeting Senses. Taste and Touch

both have no range, so characters can’t use them to locate targets at all (to use these Senses, the character would already have to have found his opponent).

LACK OF SENSES IN COMBAT

In combat, a character must normally use a Targeting Sense to detect his target. If he can do so, there’s no change in his OCV or DCV, and combat proceeds normally.

However, characters can’t always perceive their opponents with Targeting Senses. For example, a character may have been blinded by a Flash, or his opponent could be Invisible. When a character cannot perceive his opponent with any Targeting Sense, he suffers modifiers to his OCV and DCV:

- In **HTH Combat**, the character is at $\frac{1}{2}$ OCV and $\frac{1}{2}$ DCV. This applies both to when he makes attacks in HTH Combat, and is attacked in HTH Combat.
- In **Ranged Combat**, the character is at 0 OCV and $\frac{1}{2}$ DCV. This applies both to when he makes attacks in Ranged Combat, and is attacked in Ranged Combat.

If a character can make a PER Roll with a Nontargeting Sense (a Half Phase Action) to perceive a particular target, then against that target only he is at -1 DCV, $\frac{1}{2}$ OCV when attacked or attacking in HTH Combat, and full DCV, $\frac{1}{2}$ OCV when attacked from or attacking at Range. Against all other targets he is affected by the standard “lack of Targeting Sense” modifiers described above. The benefits of making this roll last until the beginning of the character’s next Phase; if he wants them to continue, he has to use another Half Phase Action and succeed with another PER Roll.

Example: *Orion, under attack by the supervillain team Eurostar, has been Flashed, and therefore can’t see. He’d normally be $\frac{1}{2}$ DCV, $\frac{1}{2}$ OCV in HTH Combat and $\frac{1}{2}$ DCV, 0 OCV at Range — a sitting duck. However, he makes his Hearing PER Roll against Durak. He’s now only -1 DCV, $\frac{1}{2}$ OCV in HTH Combat and full DCV, $\frac{1}{2}$ OCV at Range against Durak only. He’s still at $\frac{1}{2}$ OCV and DCV in HTH and $\frac{1}{2}$ DCV, 0 OCV at Range against all other opponents.*

MOVING WHILE BLIND

The *HERO System* rules have no specific penalties or restrictions for moving while a character is blinded (*i.e.*, unable to perceive his surroundings with a Targeting Sense). The GM may impose any penalty he considers appropriate. A character could usually eliminate the penalty by moving slowly (2m per Phase as a Full Phase Action) — that way he can feel his way safely past anything he might trip over or bump into. If a character runs into a sufficiently large object, he may take Move Through damage based solely on his velocity (see *Collisions*, 6E2 72).



Sense Groups

The *HERO System* divides Senses into seven Sense Groups: Hearing, Mental, Radio, Sight, Smell/Taste, Touch, and Unusual. The Senses with which a character is born, or that he later naturally develops, are considered Inherent. Other Senses, such as Infrared Perception bought as OAF Night-vision Goggles, are only Persistent (at best).

Although normal Senses, those which all humans possess, are not exactly “Powers” *per se*, they have a Character Point value so a character can sell them back to represent blindness, deafness, or similar conditions. See 6E1 209.

THE SIMULATED SENSE GROUP RULE

Characters in *HERO System* games often have unusual Senses bought using the *Enhanced Senses Power* (6E1 209). Many of these Senses (primarily those belonging to the Unusual Sense Group) are subject to the *Simulated Sense Rule*.

The Simulated Sense Rule is this: if one of a character’s Senses is based on or “mimics” one of the standard Senses, that Sense is affected by Sense-Affecting Powers that affect the mimicked Sense’s Sense Group *and* by any Sense-Affecting Powers that specifically target that Sense. It receives the Sense Modifiers (like Sense and Targeting) associated with that Sense Group for free. The rules usually refer to this as “assigning” a Sense to a particular Sense Group.

Example: *Infrared Perception bought to represent a character’s ability to see heat patterns is assigned to the Sight Sense Group — it “simulates” Sight. If the character’s Sight Group Senses are Flashed, that Flash affects his Infrared Perception. On the other hand, his Infrared Perception automatically gains several Sense Modifiers (Discriminatory, Range, Sense, and Targeting) for free, because all Sight Group Senses have those Modifiers.*

This rule typically applies to the members of the Unusual Sense Group, Sense-like Talents, and so forth. For example, Spatial Awareness and many forms of Detect have the special effect of being “super-sensitive” or “super-powerful” versions of one of the standard Senses. Spatial Awareness could be a form of Sight powerful enough to see right through most objects. It would be affected by a Flash versus the Sight Group, or by a Flash versus Spatial Awareness specifically.

If a Sense is not defined as “belonging to” one of the standard Sense Groups, it can only be affected by Sense-Affecting Powers individually. For example, Combat Sense and Danger Sense both “stand alone” — they don’t simulate any Sense Group, so only Sense-Affecting Powers specifically designed to affect them (such as with Darkness versus Combat Sense, Invisibility to Danger Sense, and so forth) work against them.

Because of the Simulated Sense Rule, characters cannot use Sense-Affecting Powers on the Unusual Sense Group as a whole. They must affect its Senses individually, or whatever Sense Group an Unusual Sense belongs to as a whole.

THE HEARING SENSE GROUP

The Hearing Sense Group includes Normal Hearing (which every character possesses unless he sells it back) and any other Enhanced Senses based primarily upon hearing. Active Sonar and Ultrasonic Perception are almost always bought as part of the Hearing Sense Group.

The Hearing Sense Group provides the following Sense Modifiers: Discriminatory, Range, Sense. The Discriminatory effect provided by the Hearing Group is not the full Discriminatory obtained by buying that Sense Modifier, but rather an effect of somewhat cruder degree. For example, a character can tell a bird’s song from a trumpet solo, but might not be able to tell two different types of bird songs apart. Characters can make Normal Hearing (or the entire Hearing Sense Group) fully Discriminatory by paying the usual cost. Although Normal Hearing has Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), the Hearing Sense Group does not provide this Sense Modifier to other Senses assigned to the group.

Normal Hearing is worth 25 Character Points. Lack of hearing in one ear (a 15-point Physical Complication [Frequently, Slightly Impairing]) means Hearing PER Rolls are at -3.

THE MENTAL SENSE GROUP

The Mental Sense Group includes Mental Awareness, Mind Scan, and any other Enhanced Senses based primarily upon mental powers. To a limited extent, Telepathy (which acts as both “mental hearing” and a “mental voice”) and Mind Link (a more limited form of Telepathy) are also a part of this Sense Group for purposes of applying Sense-Affecting Powers. No character has any Mental Group Senses normally.

The Mental Sense Group provides the following Sense Modifiers: Range. Mental Awareness functions as a Sense, but the Mental Sense Group does not provide this Sense Modifier to other Senses assigned to the group.

Mental Awareness allows a character to perceive the user and target of Mental Powers, which are normally not perceivable (except to those two characters). Mental Awareness is not a 360-Degree Sense, Discriminatory, or a Targeting Sense. Discriminatory Mental Awareness would allow the character to determine (with a successful PER Roll) the specific Mental Power being used, the level of power (*i.e.*, Active Points, plus or minus 10%), and whether the power is being used grossly or subtly. Analyze with Mental Awareness allows the character to know the exact Active Points in the Power, and any Advantages bought for it.

THE RADIO SENSE GROUP

The Radio Sense Group includes Radio Perception and any other Enhanced Senses based primarily on radio. No character has any Radio Group Senses normally. High Range Radio Perception, Radar, and Radio Perception/Transmission are almost always bought as part of the Radio Sense Group.

The Radio Sense Group provides the following Sense Modifiers: Range, Sense. Radio Perception has Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), but the Radio Sense Group does not provide this Sense Modifier to other Senses assigned to the group. However, many of them buy it separately — HRRP, Radio Perception, and Radio Perception/Transmission all have it. Radar does not have it, but is a Targeting Sense.

THE SIGHT SENSE GROUP

The Sight Sense Group is the most important Sense Group and the one most often affected by Sense-Affecting Powers. It includes Normal Sight (which every character possesses unless he sells it back), Nightvision, and any Enhanced Senses based primarily on sight. Infrared Perception and Ultraviolet Perception are almost always bought as part of the Sight Sense Group.

The Sight Sense Group provides the following Sense Modifiers: Discriminatory, Range, Sense, Targeting. The Discriminatory effect provided by the Sight Group is not the full Discriminatory obtained by buying that Sense Modifier, but rather an effect of somewhat cruder degree. For example, a character can tell two people apart based on their visual appearance, but cannot always determine a person's ethnicity or religion through Sight. Characters can make Normal Sight (or the entire Sight Sense Group) fully Discriminatory by paying the usual cost.

Normal Sight is worth 35 Character Points. Blindness has severe effects on a character. Not only can he not make Sight PER Rolls, but his CV may be reduced (see 6E2 7). A character who's blind in one eye (and thus lacks depth perception) suffers no penalties in HTH Combat but is at ½ OCV in Ranged Combat (in most campaigns this is a Frequently, Greatly Impairing Physical Complication worth 20 points).

THE SMELL/TASTE SENSE GROUP

The Smell/Taste Sense Group includes Normal Smell and Normal Taste (which every character possesses unless he sells them back) and any Enhanced Senses based primarily on smell or taste.

The Smell/Taste Sense Group provides the following Sense Modifiers: Discriminatory, Range (Smell only), Sense. The Discriminatory effect provided by the Smell/Taste Group is not the full Discriminatory obtained by buying that Sense Modifier, but rather an effect of somewhat cruder degree.

For example, a character can tell a steak from a potato by smell or taste, but can't necessarily identify every ingredient in either dish. Characters can make Normal Smell or Normal Taste (or the entire Smell/Taste Sense Group) fully Discriminatory by paying the usual cost.

Although Normal Smell has Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), the Smell/Taste Sense Group does not provide this Sense Modifier to other Senses assigned to the group. Normal Smell works at Range, and provides this effect to other Smell-based Senses; Normal Taste and Taste-based Senses do not have Range.

Normal Smell and Normal Taste are each worth 5 Character Points.

THE TOUCH SENSE GROUP

The Touch Sense Group includes Normal Touch (which every character possesses unless he sells it back) and any Enhanced Senses based primarily on touch.

The Touch Sense Group provides the following Sense Modifiers: Discriminatory, Sense. The Discriminatory effect provided by the Touch Group is not the full Discriminatory obtained by buying that Sense Modifier, but rather an effect of somewhat cruder degree. For example, a character can tell a dollar bill from a piece of ordinary paper of the same size, but cannot tell a \$1 bill from a \$5 bill. Characters can make Normal Touch (or the entire Touch Sense Group) fully Discriminatory by paying the usual cost.

Normal Touch has Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), but the Touch Sense Group does not provide this Sense Modifier to other Senses assigned to the group. Normal Touch is not a Targeting Sense, but touching a target would allow the character to make a PER Roll with Normal Touch (a Nontargeting Sense) to reduce the standard penalty for not perceiving the target with a Targeting Sense.

Characters generally cannot make themselves Invisible to Touch; this is more or less the same thing as Desolidification and should be bought using that Power. Characters can, however, Flash the Touch Sense Group (with effects indicated below) or create Images that affect it (see 6E1 237-38).

Normal Touch is worth 10 Character Points. A lack of Normal Touch (whether permanent or as the result of a Sense-Affecting Power) generally imposes penalties of -3 (or more) on DEX-Based Skills, OCV in HTH Combat (and even some Ranged combat, if the character has to, for example, shoot weapons), and any other activities requiring dexterous action. Lack of Touch does *not* render a character immune to pain or reduce the degree of damage he takes from attacks. He still takes full damage — he just doesn't feel it. Thus, the character may think he's perfectly uninjured and healthy, when in fact he's about to collapse due to system shock (STUN damage) or has suffered a life-threatening wound (BODY damage). However, at the GM's discretion, characters who lack Touch may receive bonuses to rolls to resist pain.