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INTRODUCTION

The *HERO System,* the award-winning role-playing game rules set that got its start as Champions in 1981, is renowned for its flexibility, customizability, and wealth of detail. Instead of forcing players and GMs to create characters based on a limited conception of how a game should work, or requiring them to pick abilities from a finite list, the *HERO System* lets you design anything you want for your character and campaign, however you want it. However, HERO's strengths come at the price of some complexity. The *HERO System* has a lot of rules, terms, and information — and sometimes that makes it seem daunting to newcomers. Most gamers who give it a try soon discover that its internal consistency makes it much easier to learn than they thought, but there's still an initial learning curve.

To make the learning process easier, Hero Games presents the **Basic Rulebook.** The "BR" is a set of easily-learned "core" rules that can get you up and running in a *HERO System* game quickly.

What's The Difference?

BR differs from the full *HERO System* rules in just one major respect: the amount of details, options, alternatives, and minor/special rules available. The core mechanics of the two systems — how you make an Attack Roll or a Skill Roll, how characters take damage, and so forth — are identical. But where the *HERO System* might include ten paragraphs and four special Power Modifiers to explain a particular Power and provide ways for gamers to customize it, BR probably only has a couple of paragraphs. It leaves out a lot of the detail and options of the full *HERO System.* The intent is to pare the *HERO System* down to its most necessary rules — that way you can easily learn them before diving into the more complex, but much richer, rules of the full system.

If you have a question about any element of the BR rules, the best place to look for the answer is the *HERO System 6th Edition* rulebook. It contains hundreds of pages of additional information, rules, explanation, examples, and options that BR does not. As you explore more and more of the rules, you'll gradually learn the full *HERO System* and discover that it's even more fun than BR.

Where Can I Get Some Help?

If the *HERO System 6th Edition* doesn't have the answers you seek, there are two other resources you can turn to for help. The first is the message boards at the Hero Games website:

www.herogames.com

The boards have hundreds of registered fans, many of whom post every day. They're one of the friendliest, most enthusiastic communities in gaming, and if you ask a question they'll answer it quickly.

Second, you can contact *HERO System* Line Developer Steven S. Long directly by e-mail at info@herogames.com. Steve is glad to answer questions from the fans about Hero's rules or products.

What Else Is Out There?

Hero Games and the *HERO System* have been around for nearly 30 years, so there are lots of resources you can use with the BR. There are tens of thousands of pages' worth of *HERO System* materials published by Hero Games for the various editions of the *HERO System,* and they're all easy to adapt to the BR rules.

Buying books isn't the only way to get into the game (though it's one we hope you'll try eventually!). In addition to all the things you'll find on the Free Stuff page at www.herogames.com, there are hundreds (if not thousands) of fan-created websites containing *HERO System* characters, campaign settings, house rules, and just about anything else you can think of.

UPGRADING TO THE FULL *HERO SYSTEM*

After you've worked with the BR for a while, you'll probably find yourself wanting to go beyond it — to expand the range of Skills, Powers, Advantages, Limitations, Combat Maneuvers, and other game elements available to you. If that's the case, you should consider upgrading to the full *HERO System 6th Edition* rules. They come in two books, Volume I: Character Creation and Volume II: Combat And Adventuring.

Because the BR rules are the same as the *HERO System* rules — just minimized and simplified — upgrading is easy. All you have to do is start adding elements from the full rulebook to your characters as you need them. For example, if you want to create a character who's highly resistant to damage, you could pick up the *6th Edition* rulebook, learn about the Power *Damage Reduction,* and buy it for your character.

Sidebars throughout this book list some of the *HERO System* elements the BR lacks, to give you an idea of what you'll find in the *6th Edition* rulebook.

BASIC RULES AND CONCEPTS

Before you proceed to the meat of the BR rules, you should familiarize yourself with some of the basic concepts of the game. The text below also includes a short summary of the rules that you can refer to during the game.

GAME BASICS

DICE

BR uses six-sided dice (d6) to resolve combat, the use of Skills, and similar situations. The number before the "d6" notation indicates how many dice to roll; for example, 12d6 means 12 dice; 2d6+1 means roll two dice and add one point to the total.

Most dice-rolling in BR requires you to roll 3d6 and get a result equal to or less than some number. This is written in the text by a minus sign (-) following the number. Thus, a Skill which your character can perform successfully on an 11 or less roll is written 11-.

Whenever you attempt any 3d6 roll — whether an Attack Roll, Skill Roll, Characteristic Roll, Perception Roll, or other roll — a result of 3 (three ones) always hits or succeeds; a result of 18 (three sixes) always misses or fails.

CALCULATIONS AND ROUNDING

In the *HERO System,* you use Character Points (see BR 14) to purchase all of your character's abilities and powers. Sometimes this requires calculations involving division or multiplication. When calculating the cost of something using multiplication or division, always round off to the next whole number in favor of the Player Character. Numbers from .1 to .4 round down; numbers from .6 to .9 round up; and .5 rounds up or down depending upon what's best for the character. If a calculation involves two or more separate parts, round at each separate step of the calculation. Regardless of the rounding rules, the minimum cost of anything is 1 point.

GAME SCALE AND MOVEMENT

Movement in the *HERO System,* and other things involving distance, are measured in meters, abbreviated "m." For example, a flying character might buy Flight 20m, meaning he can fly up to 20 meters as a Full Move.

CHARACTER CREATION

The heart of the *HERO System* is its rules for character creation. Using them, you can create any type of character, power, gadget, or ability you want, subject to the GM's campaign restrictions.

You build *HERO System* characters with Character Points (BR 14). A character purchases everything he can do, from his ability to lift heavy objects to his ability to use magic or superpowers, with Character Points.

Your GM will tell you how many points you have to build your character with — the more points he gives you, the more powerful your character is. You can spend most of your Character Points without any requirements, but you only get to spend some of them if you take a matching value of *Complications* for your character. Complications are disadvantages, hindrances, and difficulties that affect a character and thus help you to define who he is and properly simulate the concept you have in mind for him. For example, your character might be Hunted by an old enemy, or adhere to a Code Of Honor, or be missing one eye.

Beyond the number of Character Points available to you, the *HERO System* doesn't impose any restrictions on how you spend them. There's no rule that says you have to spend a certain percentage of a character's points on Skills, or that you can only spend 10 points on a particular Characteristic. In the *HERO System,* you have the freedom to design your character the way you want it — and the responsibility to create a fair, fun, and reasonable character that accompanies that freedom.

There are five things a character can buy with Character Points: Characteristics, Skills, Perks, Talents, and Powers.

CHARACTERISTICS (BR 17)

All *HERO System* characters have seventeen Characteristics (such as Strength, Intelligence, and Speed), which represent basic physical, mental, and combat capabilities common to most characters. An average human has Characteristics of about 5-10.

Several Characteristics have Characteristic Rolls equal to **9 + (Characteristic/5)** or less. For example, a character with a DEX of 20 has a DEX Roll of 13- (9 + (20/5) = 13). When the GM asks you to make a Characteristic Roll (such as a DEX Roll to walk along a narrow beam), you roll 3d6 like normal. The more you make (or fail) the roll by, the greater your degree of success (or failure). The GM imposes negative modifiers on the Characteristic Roll when you attempt particularly difficult feats, making it harder to succeed.

CHARACTER POINTS

The *HERO System* allows you to create precisely the types of characters you want to play. You construct your character with Character Points, which you use to "purchase" abilities and attributes for him.

At the start of the campaign, you receive a specified number of Character Points from the GM to create your character with — the Total Points indicated in the text below. That's the total amount of Character Points you build your character with; to get more the character has to earn Experience Points.

Most of the Character Points the GM gives you are "free" — you get them without any requirements or restrictions. However, to get some of them you have to select a matching value of *Complications*. Complications (see BR 78) are disadvantages, hindrances, flaws, and difficulties that affect a character, such as being afraid of fire or having a secret identity. They allow you to develop your character's background, provide ways for the GM to work him into adventures ("plot hooks"), and give the character a chance to show what it means to be a hero by overcoming personal obstacles.

Each Complication described in Chapter One of BR has a Character Point value depending on its severity. You select Complications for your character that you want the GM to include in the game. The total Character Points' worth of Complications you choose should equal the Matching Complications amount listed in the text for your type of campaign. You can take fewer points' worth of Complications if you want, but every 1 Character Point by which you don't meet the Matching Complications amount reduces your character's Total Points by 1. (You can select more Complications than are required if you want them for your character, but they don't provide you with extra Character Points to spend on your character.)

Example: *Jason's a player in a Champions campaign — a game of superheroes and crimefighting action! He's going to create a character he calls Defender, a powered-armor wearing paragon of justice and crusader against evil. Jason's GM decides to use the Standard Superheroic character type guidelines. That means Jason receives 400 Character Points he can spend to create Defender. But the Matching Complications amount for the campaign is 75 Character Points. If he prefers, Jason can pick only 50 Character Points' worth of Complications. That's perfectly all right, but since he's 25 points below the Matching Complications amount, he only has (400 - 25 =) 375 Character Points to spend to create Defender.*

Superheroic And Heroic Characters

The amount of Character Points you design a character with defines how powerful and competent he is. Campaigns fall into two categories, defined by the number of Character Points you build characters with, and what characters can do with them: Superheroic and Heroic.

SUPERHEROIC CAMPAIGNS

In a Superheroic campaign, characters are built on 400 Total Points (and have to select 75 Character Points' worth of Matching Complications). Superheroic campaigns feature extremely powerful characters. They can buy Powers or anything else they want (subject to the GM's permission, of course). However, they typically pay Character Points for everything they want to have or be able to do, including mundane equipment like cameras, handguns, and radios. They don't get any abilities or equipment "for free" (but see *What Not To Spend Points On,* below).

Typical Superheroic campaigns include campaigns where the Player Characters are comic book superheroes, really high-powered Fantasy adventurers, anime-style martial artists, or demi-gods.

CHARACTER ABILITY GUIDELINES TABLE

This table provides guidelines regarding the building of Heroic and Superheroic characters: the range of their Characteristics, SPDs, CVs, and DCs in their main attacks; the typical range of Active Points in powers and similar abilities; the overall amount of Character Points spent on Skills (and the average rolls for Skills); and typical ranges for Normal Defenses and Resistant Defenses.

Character Type	Char	SPD	CV	DC	Active Points	Skill Points	Skill Roll	Def/rDef
Heroic	10-20	2-4	3-7	3-8	15-50	30-75	8-13-	6-10/3-5
Superheroic	10-40	3-10	7-13	6-14	40-80	25-80	11-15-	20-25/12-18

POWERS

CAUTION SIGNS AND STOP SIGNS

Each Power's point cost serves to balance it against the other Powers. But some Powers may be extremely effective in certain circumstances. They're marked with a ⚠.

Additionally, some Powers can alter a GM's storyline substantially. These are marked with a 🛑. The GM should carefully consider the impact of these Powers before permitting them in a scenario.

Powers are, typically, abilities far beyond those of mortal men — for example, flying or firing energy bolts. They represent the superpowers of a superhero, the spells of a sorcerer, or the abilities of an alien. You can also use Powers to simulate a wide variety of abilities and skills common to characters from many genres of fiction, but which don't fit the standard definition of "superpowers" (such as the ability to run faster than most people or punch harder than normal).

Equipment, particularly weapons, is often built using Powers. For example, a sword is a Hand-To-Hand Killing Attack with the *Focus* Limitation.

The rules for each Power define the basic structure of an ability built with that Power. For example, when a character buys a Blast, the rules define the amount of damage the attack does, how to perform the Attack Roll, and the maximum Range of the power.

You can create most characters' abilities by purchasing the appropriate Power. However, if an ability requires more than a Power by itself, you can apply Advantages (BR 62) and Limitations (BR 67) to improve or restrict the Power.

BUYING POWERS

Characters purchase Powers by paying the Character Point cost listed under each Power. These are the same Character Points used to buy Characteristics and Skills. The minimum cost for any Power, even one with Limitations, is 1 Character Point.

POWER VERSUS POWER

As you read this section, keep in mind the distinction between a Power (capital P) and a power (lower-case p). A Power is a game element listed in this section of the book, such as Blast, Desolidification, or Resistant Protection. A power is an ability a character possesses, usually a superhuman one such as a villain's superpower or a wizard's spell. You use Powers to build powers.

SPECIAL EFFECTS

One of the most important things to remember when you use the *HERO System,* particularly for creating superpowers, spells, and other abilities, is the concept of *special effects.*

The *HERO System* explains Powers in game terms: a certain number of Character Points buys so many dice of Blast; 30 points of Resistant Protection always provides 20 points of defense; and so forth. But the Power descriptions don't explain what Powers look like, or what they're made of. For example, the text of Blast just describes it as a way to inflict damage at Range. It doesn't mention whether the beam is made of fire, lightning, magic, "pulson particles," rubber bullets, plasma, or something else. A Power's descriptions simply explains what it does in rules terms. It's up to you to provide the exact definition for what the power is and what it looks like — in other words, you decide what its *special effect* is.

If you read through the BR, you won't find any specific rules for things like "fire blasts" or "lightning bolts" or "magic." Fire, lightning, and magic are all special effects, and the *HERO System* rules let you pick the special effect you want. So, if you want your character to have the power to project a lightning bolt, you might spend 40 Character Points to buy him a Blast 8d6, then label that Blast "Lightning Bolt." Later on, if you design a character who's a fire elemental, you might want him to have the power to shoot a blast of fire at his enemies. You could spend 40 Character Points on a Blast 8d6 and call it "Fire Blast." Both characters have a Blast 8d6, but for one character the special effect is "lightning," while for the other the special effect is "fire."

The accompanying sidebar has a list of some special effects. But that's just a few of the dozens of possibilities. There's no "master list" of special effects because there are no restrictions on the concept other than your own imagination.

THE EFFECT OF SPECIAL EFFECTS

The special effects of a Power define exactly how it works, what it looks like, and any other incidental effects associated with it. Sometimes a Power receives minor benefits and drawbacks because of its special effects. These minor modifiers don't change the cost of the Power. However, if the special effect provides a major benefit you have to pay Character Points for that to buy an Advantage (BR 62). If the special effect significantly restricts an ability, you can save Character Points by taking a Limitation (BR 67) for it. In the *HERO System,* you have to pay Character Points for things that help your character, but you save points if something hinders your character — in short, you get what you pay for.

For example, a character with Fire powers can help keep his friends warm if they're trapped in a freezer. While the character could buy this (as a form of Life Support), the effect is so minor the GM should allow him to do it without paying Character Points for it — it's just an "indirect benefit" of his chosen special effect. Only if this effect becomes useful in the game on a frequent basis, or the character tries to exploit it in combat, should the GM make him pay points for it (or make him use his Power Skill, if he has it, to achieve the desired effect). Once the benefits or drawbacks of the Power become significant, the cost of the Power should reflect them.

Another example of a special effect is Flight, defined as a spell which leaves a glowing trail of light as the character flies through the air. The trail helps the character because it shows his friends