



INTRODUCTION

ABBREVIATIONS

This book uses the following abbreviations to refer to other *HERO System* books:

6E1: *The HERO System 6th Edition, Volume I: Character Creation*

6E2: *The HERO System 6th Edition, Volume II: Combat And Adventuring*

APG: *The HERO System Advanced Player's Guide*

With a few exceptions, there's one thing that all game campaigns feature, regardless of genre, setting, time period, or character type: combat. Fights and battles are exciting and fun, so it's natural that they'd appear in most roleplaying campaigns. And while lots of games feature fights with guns, bows, and other Ranged attacks, Hand-To-Hand Combat is an element of nearly every genre and adventure.

HERO System Martial Arts is your complete guide to martial arts and other forms of hand-to-hand combat in the *HERO System*. It covers all aspects of the martial arts — the styles, the maneuvers, and the Martial Arts genre itself.

Chapter One, *The Way Of The Warrior*, describes dozens of martial arts styles from around the world and throughout history, and shows you how to buy them for your character. It also lists special abilities appropriate to each style so you can expand beyond the basic Martial Maneuvers to improve and better define your character.

Chapter Two, *Martial Maneuvers*, describes how you can create your own Martial Maneuvers from scratch, and discusses other ways to buy martial arts and advanced fighting abilities for your character. It also includes rules for buying Advantages for Martial Maneuvers.

Chapter Three, *The Secrets Of The Masters*, describes over 200 special martial arts abilities characters can buy. With these powers at your disposal, you can easily re-create any "special technique" you've seen in martial arts movies, or that legend attributes to the greatest masters of a particular fighting style.

Chapter Four, *Training For Perfection*, covers martial artist character creation. It includes archetypes and Templates for characters who commonly appear in Martial Arts stories, and special rules for Skills and other game elements that martial artists often buy.

Chapter Five, *Martial Arts Genre By Genre*, showcases how martial arts feature into various genres of adventure gaming, such as Superheroes, Fantasy, and Pulp. It includes a dozen genre-specific fictional martial arts and eight sample characters.

Chapter Six, *Blood And Steel*, examines martial arts combat. It includes advanced rules and information for various Combat and Martial Maneuvers, a comprehensive list of martial arts weapons and equipment, and other useful information.

Chapter Seven, *Ninja Hero*, covers Martial Arts as a genre. It reviews each of the five major subgenres of Martial Arts — Realistic, Cinematic, Wuxia, Video Game, and Anime — and discusses how to create characters and campaigns for each type.

Lastly, *HERO System Martial Arts* concludes with an Appendix containing a glossary of martial arts terms, lists of names for Asian characters, and a comprehensive bibliography and filmography.

So practice your Fists of Fury maneuver and prepare your most secret techniques — it's time for action-packed martial arts combat with *HERO System Martial Arts*!

"LET MORTAL COMBAT BEGIN!"

- SHANG TZUNG, *MORTAL KOMBAT*

GUN FU

Usable with Clubs Weapons Group; Clubs Weapon Element is Free

Maneuver	Points	OCV	DCV	Notes
Block	4	+2	+2	Block, Abort
Dodge	4	—	+5	Dodge All Attacks, Abort
Smash/Thrust	4	+0	+2	Weapon +2 DC Strike
Takeaway	5	+0	+0	Grab Weapon, +10 STR to take weapon away

Usable with Pistols Weapons Group; Pistols Weapon Element is Free

Rng Maneuvers	Points	OCV	DCV	Rng	Damage/Effect
Accurate Shot	4	+2	-2	+2	Weapon Strike
Basic Shot	4	+0	+0	+2	Weapon +2 DC Strike
Defensive Shot	3	-1	+2	+0	Weapon Strike
Distance Shot	5	+0	-2	+6	Weapon Strike, +1 Segment
Diving Shot	3	+0	+2	+1	Weapon Strike, Half Move Required, You Fall
Far Shot	5	+1	-1	+4	Weapon Strike
Leg Shot	3	+0	-1	+0	Weapon +2 DC Strike, Throw
Offensive Shot	4	-1	-1	+0	Weapon +4 DC Strike
Quick Shot	4	+1	+0	+0	Weapon +2 DC Strike
Ranged Disarm	4	+0	+0	+0	Disarm, +15 STR to roll
Trained Shot	4	+2	+0	+0	Weapon Strike

Skills

Combat Skill Levels
 Demolitions*
 Fast Draw
 KS: Zen Riflery
 PS: Gunsmith
 PS: Create Ammunition
 TF: Parachuting
 WF: Pole Arms (for Bayonet)
 WF: Small Arms*
 WF: other modern weapons
 Weaponsmith

Elements

Weapons +1 Use Art with Bayonet
 Barehanded +1 Use Takeaway maneuver

Gun Fu

This fighting style is best referred to as “the art of the gun.” Some practitioners call it Zen Riflery (a joking reference to Kyujutsu/Kyudo, *a.k.a.* “Zen archery”) or Woojutsu. It’s a modern-day refinement on several more or less extinct Japanese arts, including Jukenjutsu (the art of the bayonet), Hojutsu (the art of the arquebus), and Kajutsu (the art of firearms and explosives, also known as Kayakujutsu and Teppojutsu).

Zen Riflery cannot take the *Style Distinctive* Feature.

The “Club” referred to above is the gun itself, used as a hand-to-hand weapon. In some cases this can damage the gun. Practitioners can also learn special techniques for using the bayonet on a rifle (they may also study true Jukenjutsu if they wish; see page 38).

Hit Locations: The Smash/Thrust uses a 2d6+1 Hit Location roll. All other offensive maneuvers use a 3d6 Hit Location roll.

Special Abilities: Gun Fu practitioners have developed a wide variety of abilities to simulate their skill with firearms. See *Dark Champions* for numerous examples.

“THE GUN KATA TREATS THE GUN AS A TOTAL WEAPON, EACH FLUID POSITION REPRESENTING A MAXIMUM KILL ZONE, INFLECTING MAXIMUM DAMAGE ON THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF OPPONENTS WHILE KEEPING THE DEFENDER CLEAR OF THE STATISTICALLY TRADITIONAL TRAJECTORIES OF RETURN FIRE.”

– DUPONT EXPLAINS THE GUN KATA IN *EQUILIBRIUM*



MARTIAL ARTIST

CHARACTER ARCHETYPES

Martial artists in movies, comics, and popular literature often fall into one or more of several character “archetypes.” Working from an archetype helps many players get a handle on a character (particularly a beginning character) and establish a basic personality from which to further develop a PC. Some of these archetypes are described below. Note that not all archetypes are necessarily appropriate for all genres — a realistic modern-day action campaign probably won’t feature any Alien Martial Artists, and a Samurai who has the right to cut down any peasants who offend him definitely won’t work in campaigns not set in feudal Japan.

THE ALIEN MARTIAL ARTIST

This martial artist is from another planet. He practices an form of martial arts from his own world, one he typically considers superior to native Earth fighting styles. He usually has special abilities deriving from his alien physiognomy or high technology. Oftentimes, he’s come to Earth to test his martial prowess against humanity’s best fighters.

THE AMERICAN FROM THE ORIENT

This archetype is a Westerner who’s spent extensive time in the Orient — so much time that he’s an expert on Oriental culture and customs, including martial arts.

Usually the American From The Orient actually grew up in an Oriental country — his parents were diplomats, international businessmen, military personnel, or something similar. While they were too busy to pay much attention to him, he learned martial arts from a servant, wandered into a new section of the city and was befriended by a martial arts master who taught him to fight, was seduced by an evil cult that taught him to be an assassin and from whose clutches he later escaped, or the like. Alternately, he might have traveled to Asia as a young adult, been taken in by the wonders of the Orient, and stayed there for years before returning to the West.

In either event, the character’s lifestyle and philosophies are typically Eastern rather than Western: he furnishes his home in an Asian style; he collects Oriental art and weapons; he lives by the tenets of Zen Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, or some other Eastern religion — and, of course, he practices Oriental fighting techniques.

He may mix in a few distinctive Americanisms, but it’s clear where most of his sympathies lie.

An interesting variant on this archetype is the American From Chinatown, who’s spent a great deal of time learning about Asian (usually Chinese) culture in his home city’s Chinatown. He’s often an expert on Oriental organized crime, and acts as a sort of “guardian of Chinatown.”

THE AVENGER

This character has been wronged in the past and now his life is a continuing quest for vengeance. Often the campaign centers around clashes between this hero (and his friends) and the group or clan who wronged him in the past, though this isn’t a good approach to take if the other characters don’t want always to fight this one hero’s Hunted.

Any other character archetype can become The Avenger for a single storyline. All it takes is a nasty or treacherous attack aimed at someone the PC loves....

The Avenger character tends to have martial arts skills including brutal, devastating maneuvers. He may have many weapons-related abilities. He may have a Psychological Complication such as *Code of Vengeance* (see the *Complications* section later in this chapter).

A variation on the Avenger is the *Maimed Avenger*, who has a Physical Complication (usually a missing limb or eye) for which he wishes to exact vengeance.

THE BRICK MARTIAL ARTIST

This character is a martial artist with comic book-level Strength. He may have gained his super-strength after learning a martial arts style, or a teammate may have taught him martial arts after he gained his powers so he could vary his usual “I smash puny enemy!” fighting style. The most common styles for Brick Martial Artists to use are Boxing and Wrestling, but other are not unheard of (such as *Brick Tricks* on page 79).



COMBAT AND MARTIAL MANEUVERS

This section supplements Chapter Three of 6E2, which discusses Combat and Martial Maneuvers. These rules apply to Martial Arts campaigns, and in other types of campaigns at the GM's discretion.

See also APG 166-71 for expanded rules for some Combat/Martial Maneuvers, most of which are appropriate (if not tailor-made for) Martial Arts campaigns.

General Rules

A character cannot Link two or more Martial Maneuvers together.

A character cannot Push his Martial Maneuvers. However, he can Push the STR that he uses when attacking with them.

PARTIAL MANEUVERS

Some Martial Maneuvers have more than one element or "aspect," such as Block-Grab or Block-Throw. In most cases it's not necessary for a character to use all aspects of a Maneuver — he can use only those aspects he wants to. For example, a Reversal allows a character to Escape a Grab, and then Grab the person who Grabbed him. A character with Reversal doesn't have to perform the Grab if he doesn't want to; he can simply Escape, and then end the Maneuver at that point. Another good example is the Joint Lock/Throw, which involves Grabbing the target's limb and bending it to force the target to the ground. A character doesn't have to use either the "NND" or the "Throw" aspects of this Maneuver if he prefers not to. (Of course, an attack or Maneuver which "Must Follow" a particular Maneuver or which is a "Response" to a Maneuver cannot be used on its own.)

However, sometimes one element acts as a "prerequisite" for another, or the definition of the Maneuver dictates that all elements have to be used. For example, with Choke Hold, a character cannot use the "NND" element without first using the "Grab" element. Similarly, most Throw-based Maneuvers do their damage in whole or in part by slamming the target to the ground, so not using the Target Falls element makes the Maneuver meaningless.

Thus, you have to look at the Maneuver from the perspective of special effects, common sense, and dramatic sense. In light of that, the GM could allow a character to use only part of a Maneuver if he wanted — but even so, that should be the exception, not the rule. Maneuvers with multiple elements are packaged together specifically because they're meant to be used together; a character who doesn't want to do those things together should purchase two Maneuvers that each do one of the things the "combo" Maneuver does all at once. The GM has the final say regarding whether an element has to be used in a Maneuver.

MARTIAL MANEUVERS THAT IMPROVE STANDARD MANEUVERS

Many Martial Maneuvers — such as Defensive Strike, Martial Strike, Offensive Strike, Martial Dodge, Martial Block, and Martial Grab — are essentially just "improved" versions of Standard Combat Maneuvers. They either provide an OCV bonus, a DCV bonus, a damage bonus, and/or some other enhanced ability (such as the extra Grabbing STR from a Martial Grab). They function identically to the regular Combat Maneuvers of similar name, but with different modifiers. See the descriptions of the relevant Standard Combat Maneuvers for more information.

USING STANDARD MANEUVERS

Players of martial artist characters sometimes forget that their characters can still use the Standard and Optional Combat Maneuvers from Chapter Three of 6E2. Any PC who forgets or turns up his nose at the Standard and Optional Combat Maneuvers unnecessarily limits himself. Most beginning martial artist characters won't start the game with Martial Maneuvers of every type... so a martial artist without Martial Grab should still use the standard Grab, one without the Martial Disarm can still use the standard Disarm, one without the Martial Dodge can still utilize the standard Dodge, and so on. Combat Skill Levels with a Martial Arts style don't apply to Standard Maneuvers, but 8-point CSLs with All HTH Combat do.



MARTIAL ARTS SUBGENRES

The genre of Martial Arts action — *Ninja Hero*, in other words — can be divided into five broad subgenres, each progressively more fantastic than the last, and with a corresponding boost in levels of power. The subgenres also make excellent campaign types. Before creating a Martial Arts campaign, the GM should make it clear to his players exactly which subgenre he intends to emulate.

A “Martial Arts campaign” means a gaming campaign emphasizing the presence and use of martial arts styles and techniques. Many campaigns have characters who know and use martial arts, but fighting skills aren’t central to the plot or setting. In a martial arts campaign, all aspects of the martial arts — such as the styles known to the characters, the training they endure, special techniques known only by rumor, and rivalries between martial artists of different schools — provide the focus for the game.

This section describes the five subgenres in ascending order of power and “cinematic” qualities. Each is named after the popular media it’s most associated with, or which best represents it. The subgenres are:

- Realistic (or Real World) Martial Arts
- Cinematic Martial Arts
- Wuxia Martial Arts
- Video Game Martial Arts
- Anime Martial Arts

Of course, these campaign types are not absolutes. Many Martial Arts campaigns and stories feature a lot of crossover between them, especially the last three on the list.

REALISTIC MARTIAL ARTS

The Realistic Martial Arts subgenre involves stories set in the “real world.” Unlike the more “cinematic” subgenres, it’s fairly straightforward. The martial arts styles known by the characters are usually common ones (such as Karate or Kung Fu), and there are almost no “special techniques,” and definitely no fantastic powers that allow characters to perform superhuman stunts.

In a Realistic Martial Arts story, the martial arts known by the characters tend to be secondary to the action presented. Examples of a Realistic Martial Arts campaigns include games set in feudal Japan where the characters are all samurai, a campaign where the characters are all French Musketeers, or a “kickboxing cops” game that mixes a generous dose of Martial Arts combat into a Dark Champions sort of milieu. In all of these settings, all the characters almost certainly know some sort of martial art (Kenjutsu, Fencing, and probably Karate, respectively), but their adventures focus on matters other than their art, and they don’t have any special abilities or semi-mystical fighting techniques. In fact, their art is more of a means to an end, a tool that lets them accomplish certain tasks in the course of an adventure.

REALISTIC MARTIAL ARTS CHARACTERS

In a Realistic Martial Arts campaign, characters are normal humans, built either as Competent Normals (100 Total Points, including 30 points’ worth of Matching Complications) or as Standard Heroes (175 Total Points, including 50 points’ worth of Matching Complications). Characters are automatically subject to Normal Characteristic Maxima, but can carry normal weapons and wear normal armor without paying points for them. Extra Damage Classes may not be allowed, and in most cases characters cannot take any of the special martial arts-oriented abilities described in Chapter Three.

CINEMATIC MARTIAL ARTS

The Cinematic Martial Arts subgenre features action-adventure stories with extensive use of martial arts styles and combat. It includes the movies of Bruce Lee, Chuck Norris, Jackie Chan, Jean Claude van Damme, Steven Seagal, and an endless parade of cheaply made Taiwanese “chop-socky” films.

What sets Cinematic Martial Arts apart from Realistic Martial Arts is two things. First, martial arts are almost always the focus of this sort of story. That means there’s an emphasis on the styles and techniques used by each character, to