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INTRODUCTION

Adventures in roleplaying game campaigns often involve travel across dangerous territory, fights in exotic locales, quests to destroy evil artifacts of great power, and other activities that take a character far from home. But ultimately a character needs a home — a place of safety and refuge that he can return to between adventures, that he can defend from enemies and invaders, and where he can store all his stuff. In *HERO System* terms, a character's home, be it a castle, a space station, a secret headquarters, a nice little condo over on the west side, or something else, is referred to as a *Base*.

The Ultimate Base, the latest book in Hero Games's *Ultimate* series, looks at the subject of Bases — everything from the most primitive caves and hill-forts to superheroes' gadget-filled headquarters and the gigantic starbases of Science Fiction. It discusses how to build them with the *HERO System* rules (including some new, optional rules where appropriate), and how to use them in your gaming adventures.

In this book, a "Base" (capital B) refers to something built using the *HERO System* Base construction rules presented here and in the *HERO System 6th Edition.* A "base" (lower-case b) refers to any building, facility, or installation that functions as a base, independent of whether it was built using the Base construction rules or is intended for use in a game setting at all.

As an Ultimate series book, *The Ultimate Base* focuses primarily on rules. It doesn't include any campaign information or genre review — but it's got comprehensive *HERO System* rules for all sorts of Bases. Both players and GMs will find a lot inside its covers to interest them. As always, it's up to the GM to decide which of the new rules he wants to use in the campaign. Not all of the optional rules in this book are required for all campaigns. Characters in some games may not use or pay much attention to Bases at all, while in others they're such a crucial part of the campaign (or a specific adventure) that the rules in this book take on particular importance. While most campaigns benefit from having more thorough Base rules in play, not all games require this level of detail; each GM should decide for himself whether he needs advanced Base rules.

Chapter One, *Building A Better Base,* reviews general Base creation rules — rules that apply to all Bases, or to more than one type of Base. It includes, among other things, an expanded Base Size Table and other rules regarding Base Characteristics. It also discusses general considerations you should keep in mind when designing a Base; your Base won't be much fun to live in if there are no bedrooms or bathrooms!

Chapters Two, Three, and Four provide information and special rules pertaining to Bases in Fantasy games, modern-day games, and Science Fiction games, respectively. Each chapter includes several example Bases complete with maps.

Chapter Five, *Furnishings And Firepower,* discusses equipment for Bases. It provides dozens of pre-built examples of weapons, defenses, sensors, and other equipment characters can install in Bases. It should save you a lot of time during the Base creation process.

Chapter Six, *Siege Perilous,* covers how Bases function in adventures and combat situations. Whether your characters' Base is under attack, or they're using its resources to help them succeed on one of their missions, this chapter tells you what a Base can do and how to resolve what happens.

Chapter Seven, *Homeowner Heroes,* describes how characters and Bases interact. It covers not only how characters buy a Base but other ways in which the character creation process affects (or is affected by) a Base.

Chapter Eight, *Kingdoms,* takes the concept of a "Base" to a whole new level. It provides a new subset of *HERO System* rules for creating and playing "Kingdoms" — nations, realms, cities, organizations, empires, and similar entities. Using it you can create Kingdoms as "characters" and pit them against one another in geopolitical conflict and negotiation, ally with another Kingdom to go to war against a third, spy on your rivals, establish trade networks, and so on. The rules allow for seamless integration of Player Characters and Kingdom characters so that you can determine the effect of your characters' actions on your Kingdoms, and vice-versa.

So get ready to fend off (or conduct) sieges, construct (or infiltrate) impregnable fortresses, cope with the hazards of a master villain's secret headquarters, and meddle in the affairs of nations — it's time for expanded *HERO System* fun with *The Ultimate Base!*

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

While game considerations (like how much BODY and PD/ED your Base should have, what sort of weapons are built into it, and so on) are likely to be the first thing you consider when creating a Base, they're not the *only* factors that should influence Base design.

The Planning Stage

There are several considerations when planning and mapping a Base that you might want to think about before spending a single Character Point.

First, decide precisely *what* sort of Base you want to map. While this may seem self-evident, asking the question is crucial and skipping this stage may lead to a major stumble that will cost you time and effort later. Take the average villain Base. Is this the villain's lair? His temporary hideout? His workshop? Each one's likely to include specific features or details the others might not want or need.

Second, consider the Base's location. Why are you choosing this location? Base builders don't usually just plunk their shiny new building down anywhere that it will fit; they select a specific location for a specific reason (even if that reason's "it's the only possible place it will fit"). What features of the location lend themselves to the placement of a Base, and how can you best exploit them in your design? Does any aspect of the location (like its distance from the city) indicate that certain features are necessary (a high-speed transport system)?

Third, understand what level of detail is required for the Base's map. Each level of detail requires its own approach and has its own advantages and disadvantages as well. If the map's going to be generalized (with just the basics like room size and placement, doors, and a rough marker for distance), that requires a lot less work than one showing each room of the Base including the furniture and other interesting features (cush as steps, open areas, and chandeliers).

Fourth, determine what features are necessary for the map. This is another step where having specific ideas about your location helps. For example, using the villain Base concept mentioned above, you can ask yourself some questions that dictate how the map evolves. The temporary hideout needs some sort of living quarters for example (at least basic accommodations), and may need to account for concealing the fact that someone's in residence. The workshop may or may not contain a place for the villain to stay for any length of time, depending on where it's located, how difficult it is to access, and whether the work being performed there requires long, intensive periods of effort. A subterranean lair under the residence of the villain's secret identity doesn't need accommodations, but it requires some sort of secret/concealed access to the upper, public, levels and some sort of means by which equipment can be brought in and out. Henry Ford built his first "Horseless Carriage," the Quadricycle, in a shed in his backyard... but had to knock down a section of the wall to get it out because the final product was too wide to get out the existing door. Learn from his mistake!

Fifth, if you're the GM designing a Base as part of an adventure, how do you expect the Base to figure into the characters' activities? Is it a threat?

BUILDING A CASTLE
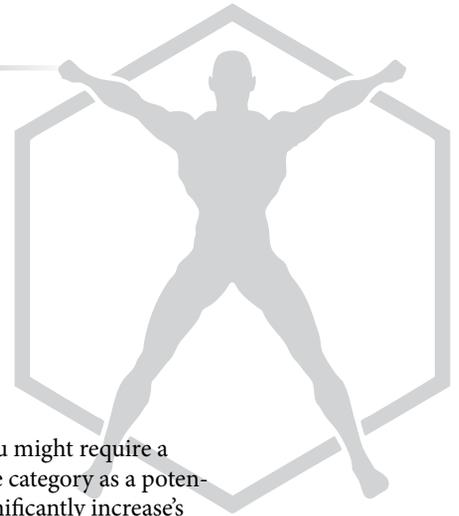
N ow that you know what the parts of a castle are and how they're used, you can create them using the *HERO System*'s Base rules. This section of Chapter Two provides two sets of guidelines for *HERO System* castle creation: a simple set of rules for campaigns that don't need a lot of detail; and an optional, much more detailed, system for in-depth castle creation. The "advanced" system treats many castle components as distinct parts with specific rules for how much BODY and defense they have, and their other attributes.

CASTLE CHARACTERISTICS

SIZE

For both basic and advanced castle creation, since a castle is a building with usable interior space, you should buy a castle's Size based on its volume (unless the GM prefers otherwise). For concentric castles, castles with large baileys, and the like, the GM may allow you to determine the volume of just the actual buildings and treat the "open" areas as the Base's grounds.

BODY

For basic castle creation, determine the BODY of a castle based on the materials and size of its strongest component — typically either the curtain walls, or the walls of the donjon. The Wall Table on page 55 provides suggested guidelines for different types and thicknesses of material, such as wood or stone. That tells you how easy it is to break a hole in, or destroy, the sturdiest part of the castle. The GM can then use logic, common sense, and dramatic sense to determine how much damage it takes to destroy lesser parts of the castle.

In the event that the castle's made of two different types of material — such as a stone donjon with a wooden palisade — buy the BODY based on the *weakest* material, then represent the stronger materials by buying more BODY with the *Partial Coverage* Limitation (see page 31).

Depending on the size and nature of the castle, you may want to increase its overall BODY beyond what's dictated by its walls or other major components. For example, you might require a minimum of 1 BODY per Size category as a potential guideline. Even if that significantly increase's the castle's BODY, the GM can use the rules on 6E2 172-73 to determine how easy it is to break a hole in a castle wall.

In the advanced castle creation system, you don't buy BODY as a single Characteristic — you consider the BODY of each major component of a castle individually. Then you can add them up to determine the Base's overall BODY if you want to (though that generally isn't necessary, since knowing the components' BODY means you can determine the effects of an attack on a component alone, rather than generalizing it as damage to the overall castle).

With the GM's permission, a castle built with the basic rules can buy its BODY with the *Partial Coverage* Limitation at a -¼ value to represent the fact that the bailey (courtyard) isn't enclosed, thus leaving it vulnerable to attacks from the air (or arced missile weapons, such as rocks thrown by catapults or trebuchets).

PHYSICAL DEFENSE, ENERGY DEFENSE

Physical Defense and Energy Defense work just like BODY. For the basic castle system, use the defense of the material that most of the castle's built of (typically stone); if there are many different materials buy the least protected as a baseline, then buy more with the *Partial Coverage* Limitation to represent other parts of the castle. For the advanced castle-building system you buy the defense of different parts of the castle individually, rather than as two Characteristics that apply to the overall Base.

With the GM's permission, a castle built with the basic rules can buy its PD and ED with the *Partial Coverage* Limitation at a -¼ value to represent the fact that the bailey (courtyard) isn't enclosed, thus leaving it vulnerable to attacks from the air (or arced missile weapons, such as rocks thrown by catapults or trebuchets).

LOCATION

Location is bought for either basic or advanced castles according to the standard rules. The GM may also require the *Restricted Accessibility* Perk (page 26).

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EXAMPLE MODERN BASES

H ere are a few example Bases for use in your modern-day campaigns, ranging from the "gritty" and "realistic" to the fantastic Bases of superteams and world-conquering supervillains.

JUSTICE SQUADRON MANSION

Description: Superteam "halls of justice," villains' secret headquarters, and mad scientists' hidden laboratories are staples of the Superheroes genre (and in slightly different forms of other types of fantastic adventure fiction, such as Pulp stories). Not every superhero needs a Base, but some — such as Batman's renowned Batcave — are absolutely essential as refuges, storehouses, and places where the hero can perform research, build gadgets, or devise new spells.

As an example of a superhero team's Base, here's the Justice Squadron Mansion, headquarters for the Champions Universe superteam. The Justice Squadron is a decades-old, world-famous superteam; smaller or less well-established teams may not have as large, elaborate, or well-equipped Bases.

The Justice Squadron headquarters is located in a mansion in the Brooklyn Heights area of New York City. The building was a 14-story hotel in the 1920s, but was converted to the Squadron's use in the early Seventies; each floor of the Mansion fills the space of what were two stories in the hotel, to allow for the necessary high ceilings in some areas. Although the nearby buildings look perfectly ordinary, for the sake of civilian safety most of them are actually a part of the JS headquarters — they're connected to the Mansion itself via underground walkways, tunnels, and conduits. (Those are not written up as part of this Base description, but are included in the Size purchased for the Base.)

The Mansion is seven stories tall and still looks, on the outside, like a carefully-maintained, elegant 1920s-era building. Inside it's a different story, with the most modern of decor and high-tech furnishings and facilities suitable to one of the world's leading superhero teams.

The exterior and interior walls look like they're made of ordinary materials, but are actually constructed of a super-tech composite that's far more durable than brick, wood, and plaster.

Compared to other superhero teams, the Justice Squadron has very few human employees — just some accounting, public relations, and legal personnel, for the most part. The other "employees" are all robots built by Digitak years ago, and since maintained and improved by Electron and Blink. The robots look mostly human, but are obviously robotic.

For more information about the Justice Squadron and its members, see Chapter Four of *Champions Universe: News Of The World.*

MANSION SECURITY

The Justice Squadron takes the security of its headquarters and "home" seriously, particularly because parts of the base are accessible to the public. First, the walls, doors, and windows are strengthened and reinforced, as discussed above. Second, access to most parts of the building, including passing through any door regarded as "main" or "primary," requires both an authorized electronic keycard *and* properly responding to a voiceprint authorization system; both the lock and the system are state of the art and very difficult to bypass or negate. Third, all non-private parts of the Mansion, and the streets surrounding it, are covered by closed-circuit TV security cameras with IR and UV capability; security personnel in the Security Wing on the Fifth Floor can monitor sixteen of the cameras at a time.

LEONDARIS STATION

Description: Leondaris Station, also known as Leondaris High Port, is a commercial station in deep space. Privately owned and beholden to no government, it occupies an enviable location at the intersection of two primary spacelanes in a border region between two large interstellar powers (the Terran Hegemony and the Orion Empire). Though it's not the safest of locales, Leondaris has become important enough to both legitimate and illegitimate traders that its safety is assured... more or less.

Leondaris began life as a fairly large nickel-iron asteroid. The builders, a consortium of investors with some governmental support, towed the asteroid into a stable position at the intersection of two spacelanes (at the time relatively minor ones, but the owners guessed, correctly, that they'd become much more important in time). They they began carving it into the desired shape with cutting lasers. The detritus from the shaping was broken down into raw ore in processing plants built in the asteroid's heart, then used to build much of the framework for the station.

During the early stages of construction, a large "cave," known as "the Maw," was dug out of one side of the asteroid so ships would have a sheltered place to dock. By the time the upper parts of the station — the Crowns, Dome, and Ring — were largely complete, the Maw had opened up too much to provide much protection for docked ships, so the shaping of the lower half of the asteroid began. The result was the creation of the Docks, the Deck, and the Bays — the places where visiting space vessels "tie up" to the station and store cargo that's being transferred to another ship.

Layout

Due to the way it was constructed and the necessity of organizing specific station functions in an appropriate (and hopefully profitable) manner, Leondaris consists of a number of sections that become more prestigious (and expensive) the higher one goes. At the very top of the station is *the Crowns,* a cluster of buildings built on the asteroid's surface. The views are spectacular, the furnishings so lavish one often forgets that one is in a space station, and the expenses astronomical. Nothing on a deep space commercial station is exactly cheap, but rents and the cost of goods in the Crowns are so high that only the ultra-wealthy can afford to live here. And more than a few do; the station's location outside the jurisdiction and taxation power of any government is *very* attractive to certain individuals.

Immediately below the Crowns is *the Dome,* the large chunk of asteroidal rock that forms the main body of the station. The Dome is divided into two areas: Topside and Ringside. *Topside* is the very top of the Dome, just below the Crowns, and is only a little less expensive. Topside has been the center of the High Port's command and control structures and systems since the station's earliest days. Today much of it has been transformed into a park-like environment of growing trees and lush plants centered around *the Campus* — the area where the Project Coordinator/Port Coordinator/General Coordinator (the title changes depending on the timeframe) works, resides, and makes the decisions about the High Port's daily functioning.

Ringside is below Topside. It includes most of the station's stores and commercial facilities in a series of floors (see the Commercial Ring map for a typical example of the central, core area of one of floors; residential areas spread out around this ring). Ringside is a sort of "middle class" area, with features improving and expenses increasing the higher up one goes.
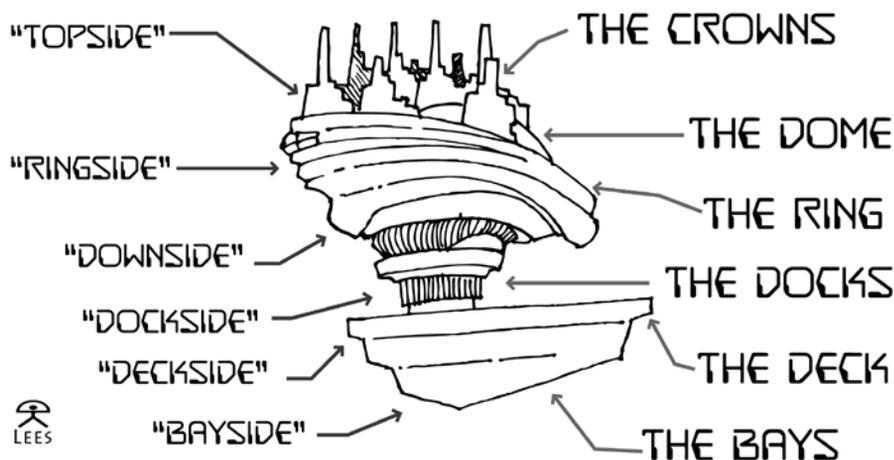
BASE EQUIPMENT RULES

Bases need all sorts of systems and equipment to make them function properly. This chapter describes, and provides dozens of examples for, other types of Base equipment: weapons, defenses, sensors, computers, and more. Using this chapter, you can quickly outfit a Base with all sorts of things to improve its performance and make it more fun in game play. If you don't like a system as it's presented, modifying it to suit yourself is an easy matter.

Any Base equipment must be self-powered; that is, it must normally cost no END, be bought to 0 END, use Charges, or have an Endurance Reserve. It's possible to have a single large Endurance Reserve for an entire Base; this would simulate the power plant or batteries possessed by many Bases. See *Power System,* page 175, for more discussion. For purposes of determining the END usage of Constant Powers and the like, assume all Bases have SPD 3.

BASE DESIGN AND FOCUS

Most equipment in a Base is built with the *Focus* Limitation (plus *Immobile,* as usual for Base equipment; see page 30). If the Focus is Inaccessible, that means it's not only difficult to move, but difficult to disable — just shutting it off at one point on the Base isn't necessarily going to stop it from functioning throughout the Base, because the Base has backup systems or some other method of maintaining that system even if a particular part of the Base gets damaged or disabled. It takes 1 Turn of effort to disable/break such a system throughout the Base. Typically the Base's PD/ED protects the system, but this may depend on special effects, the type of attack used, and so forth.

An Accessible system also probably isn't easy to move (though it may be, depending upon the nature of technology in the setting). However, it's easy to deprive the Base (and its occupants) of the use of that system, whether by reprogramming it, damaging it, or some other method. Depending on special effects and the circumstances, the system may or may not be protected by the Base's PD/ED (typically it's not). For example, a radio console may be easy to remove or destroy when you're inside the building (making it Accessible), but would still get the benefit of the Base's PD/ED against attacks from outside the building.

Unless the GM prefers otherwise, Base equipment uses the standard rules for Durability on 6E1 378 to determine whether a particular attack stops a Focus from functioning. At the GM's option, characters may define a particular system as Unbreakable, with the special effect being not that it's totally undamageable, but that it's so diffused throughout the Base, has so many backup systems, or is otherwise so protected that only massive amounts of damage to the Base as a whole can destroy or disable it.

Base systems built without Focus are usually so diffuse (as described above), or so intrinsically a part of the Base, that they don't qualify for the Limitation — characters cannot normally destroy or disable them without doing the same to the entire Base. But don't forget the special effects involved; even without a *Focus* Limitation on a system, an invader or crazed resident may be able to damage or disable a system by attacking its access panels, causing it to overload, or the like.

Characters can apply the 5-point doubling rule (6E2 181) to Base equipment.

USE OF BASE EQUIPMENT

Since Bases don't have DEX or SPD and don't get to take Actions, Base equipment can only be used by the occupants of the Base, not the Base itself. However, "occupants" could include a Computer built into the Base and programmed to use the equipment (see page 182).

For example, a Base's cannons, radio, and artificial gravity field are all meaningless to it — they can only be used by the people in the Base. This is a natural and automatic function of Base equipment; it doesn't require the *Usable On Others* Advantage, even if the equipment could be used by multiple characters at once.

For some types of equipment, the Base's designer, perhaps with help from the GM, needs to decide whether only one occupant can use a piece of equipment at any given time, or multiple characters can use it (or, more appropriately in some situations, take advantage of the benefits it provides). For most types of equipment, the answer is fairly obvious based on common sense — if a Base only has a single radio, then only one