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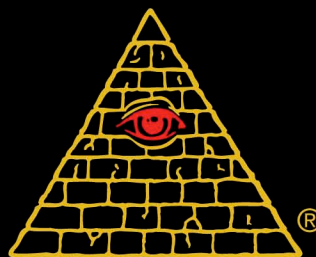
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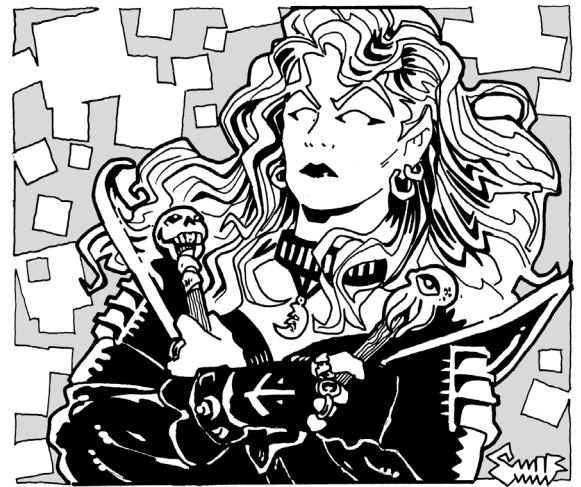
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# BASIC SET

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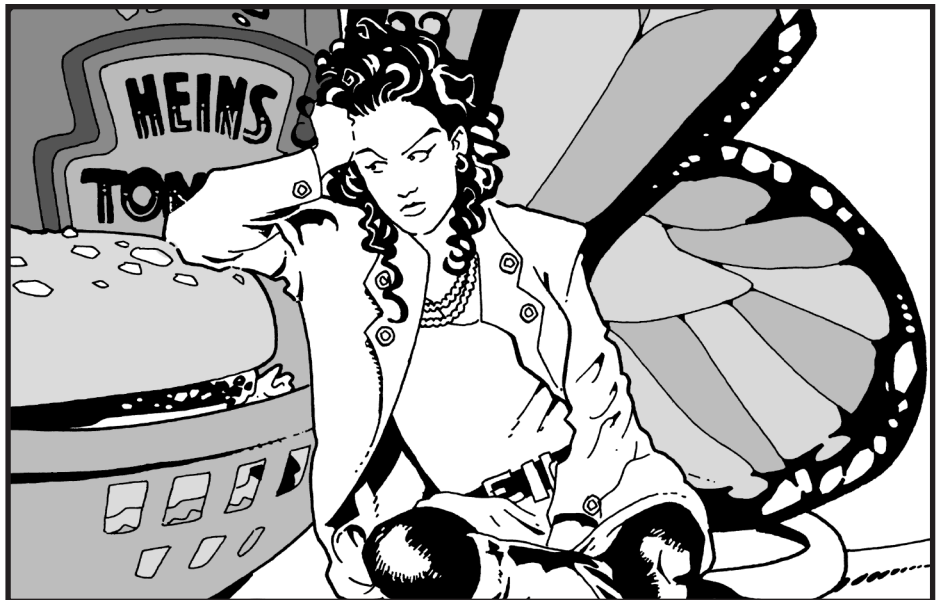
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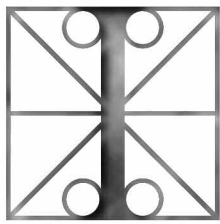
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# INTRODUCTION

**GURPS** stands for “Generic Universal RolePlaying System.” The name was originally a joke . . . a code-word to describe the game while we looked for a “real” name. Years went by – literally! – as the game developed. We never found a better name. **GURPS** may sound strange, but it really fits.

“*Generic.*” Some people like quick, fast-moving games, where the referee makes lots of decisions to keep things moving. Others want ultimate detail, with rules for every contingency. Most of us fall somewhere in between. **GURPS** starts with simple rules, and – especially in the combat system – builds up to as much *optional* detail as you like. But it’s still the same game. You may all use it differently, but your campaigns will all be compatible.

“*Universal.*” The basic rule system emphasizes realism. Therefore, it can fit any situation – fantasy or historical, past, present or future. I’ve always thought it was silly for game companies to publish one set of rules for fantasy, another one for Old West, another one for science fiction and another one for super-powers. **GURPS** is *one* set of rules that’s comprehensive enough to let you use *any* background. There are world-books and supplements that “fine-tune” the generic system for any game-world you want. But they *are* still compatible. If you want to take your Wild West gunslinger and your WWII commando and go fortune-hunting in Renaissance Italy . . . go for it!

“*RolePlaying.*” This is not just a hack-and-slash game. The rules are written to make true roleplaying possible – and, in fact, to encourage it. **GURPS** is a game in which you take on the persona of another character – and pretend, for a little while, to *be* that character.

“*System.*” It really is. Most other RPGs are *not* “systems” – they started out as a simple set of rules, and then were patched and modified, ad infinitum. That makes them hard to play. **GURPS** is a unified whole. We’ve gone to a great deal of effort to make sure that it all works together, and it all *works*. **GURPS** will let you create any character you can imagine, and do anything you can think of . . . and it all makes sense.



I’ve wanted to do this game for a long, long time. Several years ago, I designed my first fantasy roleplaying system.\* It was good, but it had flaws. For one thing, like other RPGs, it “grew” from a simple set of rules, and had many inconsistencies. And, though it had the potential to be a universal system, it was never developed past the basic “fantasy” game-world. When the publisher went out of business, the game went out of print. I was disappointed . . . but it motivated me to start on a new and better system.

I’ve never tried to design in a vacuum; every game builds on the ones that came before. We learn from our successes – and from the successes of others. I think the best games are those that are simple, clear and easy to read, and I’ve tried hard to make **GURPS** “friendly.” One important influence was Hero Games’ *Champions*, for the flexibility of its character-creation system. Another was Flying Buffalo’s *Tunnels & Trolls*, for its appeal to solitaire gamers. Finally, M.A.R. Barker’s *Empire of the Petal Throne* is noteworthy for the detail and richness of its alien game world.

But there’s more to **GURPS** than trying to repeat past success. The failures of earlier game systems are important, too. In **GURPS**, I’ve tried to achieve several things I think earlier designs missed.

\**The Fantasy Trip* (Metagaming), comprising several products released from 1977 to 1980.

## How to Learn GURPS

Most of you have some experience with roleplaying games already. You should find **GURPS** easy to pick up. But if this is your first RPG, you’ll have a little more to learn. Relax; if you got this far, you’ll be fine.

Don’t be alarmed by the thickness of the book. There’s a lot of material here – 250,000 words, more or less – but we’ve done our best to make it easy to use. Both the Table of Contents and the Index are as detailed as we could manage.

Several features have been designed specifically to make the rules easier to learn. These include:

The *Quick-Start* section (p. 9). This is a one-page description of the basic **GURPS** game mechanics.

The *Glossary* (p. 250). This is a listing of definitions of the terms used in the game, along with page references.

“*All In A Night’s Work*,” the introductory solo adventure, which starts on p. 218. This adventure is designed for one player (no Game Master is needed). You can play it as one of the pre-generated characters (pp. 214-217), even if you don’t yet know the rules. It’s written to help you learn as you go; it can also be used by an experienced GM to teach the game to friends.

Here’s a good way to learn **GURPS**: Start by skimming through this book, just to get the flavor of the game. Don’t worry about the details yet.

Then read the *Quick-Start* section to understand the basic game mechanics. After that, read through the *Characters* section, just to get an idea of the different things characters can do.

Then play *All In A Night’s Work*. Any time something is unclear, use the *Glossary* or *Index* to find the rule sections you need.

Then try creating your own character, and play again. Try to design a 100-point character that can best survive the adventure.

Finally, read the rest of the rules in detail, including Chapter 21, *Game Mastering*. Now you can be the GM and run a few of your friends through the solo adventure . . . either one at a time, or all cooperating at once to play the thief! You’ll find that you already know enough to get along, and you’ll learn fast. These rules were designed to fade into the background and let you play the way *you* want to.

Now you’re ready to invent your own adventures – see Chapter 23. You can do whatever you want . . . that’s the whole point of the system.

Have fun!

## Materials Needed for Play

The *GURPS Basic Set* is a 256-page book; its major sections, after the introductory material, are *Characters*, *Adventuring*, *Game Mastering* and *Charts and Tables*, plus the adventure.

Also included is a 16-page perforated section in the back of the book. It is intended to be removed from the book. First is the “Instant Characters” play aid, a reference for you to use in creating characters. Also supplied are two blank character sheets.

There is a two-sided 11”x17” map with a hex grid (you’ll have to tape two pages together to form the map). One side of the completed map represents a building interior; the other side shows an outdoor area. Each hex on the map is a yard across. Blank hex paper is also provided in two sizes.

Three forms for the GM to use are also provided. They are explained in more detail in the chapter on *Game Mastering*.

### You will also need:

Photocopies of the Character Record Sheet, and the other planning and record sheets, for player use. Make as many copies as you need (for your own use only – not for resale) before you start to play. Likewise, you may copy the various charts and tables, and the *Random Characters* section, for your own use.

Three six-sided dice.

Pencils and scratch paper.

Removable tape – to hold the maps down on the table (optional).

The GM will need his maps, notes, etc., for the adventure you’re going to play.

## About the Author

Steve Jackson has been playing games for entirely too many years, and designing professionally since 1977. His other game design credits include *Ogre* and *G.E.V.*, the award-winning *Illuminati*, the best-selling *Car Wars* and many others. He has served as secretary of the Game Manufacturers Association, and is the youngest person ever inducted into the Origins “Hall of Fame.”

He is the founder of Steve Jackson Games, in Austin, Texas.

Steve is an active member of the Science Fiction Writers of America. He is also an active science fiction *fan*, and wastes a great deal of time writing for various zines and attending (or helping to run) conventions.

When he’s not at a game or science fiction convention, his hobbies include BBSing, beekeeping, gardening (especially water lilies) and tropical fish.

First and foremost, of course, is the *flexibility* of a “universal” system. Others have tried this, but have fallen into the twin traps of watered-down combat (where a lightning bolt is just like a .45 pistol) or incompatibility (where players have to learn so many alternate rules for each new game that they might as well be learning a new game, and characters don’t easily cross over). I think that *GURPS* presents a single, unified system that allows for great diversity without losing its coherence. This Third Edition includes several complete sections (*Magic*, *Psionics*, *Modern and Futuristic Weapons* and more) that were originally parts of separate worldbooks. They seemed important enough to bring into the Basic Set – so here they are.



Second, and almost as important, is *organization*. Any realistic RPG has a lot of detail. After all, *life* has a lot of detail! So RPGs should be well-organized. But few are. Every gamer has had the experience of hunting frantically through one book after another, looking for a rule . . . and not finding it. *GURPS* is extensively cross-referenced, with Table of Contents, Index and a Glossary of terms used in the game. I hope this helps.

Third is *ease of play*. In *GURPS*, most of the detailed calculations are done before you start play . . . they are entered on the character sheet, and saved until you need them. Once play actually begins, it should not be complex. I’ve tried to make *GURPS* as fast-moving yet realistic as possible. It’s up to you to decide whether I succeeded.

Most roleplaying systems depend for their success on a continual flow of “official” supplements and adventures. *GURPS* is different. True, we’ve released a lot of material already, and we plan to do much more; a totally universal system offers great leeway, and we’ve got a supplement list as long as your arm. See the next page for details.

But *GURPS* is designed to be as compatible as possible with supplements written for *different* games. The reason? Simple. Suppose that you’re a *GURPS* player. You’re at the hobby shop, and you see a really interesting supplement package. But it’s by another publisher, for another game.

So what?

The *GURPS* system breaks everything down into plain English and simple numbers. Distances are given in feet and miles, rather than arbitrary units; times are given in minutes and seconds. That’s what makes it generic. That also makes it easy to translate. If you see an interesting supplement for another game, go right ahead and get it. You can use it as a sourcebook for *GURPS*.

Likewise, if you really insist on playing another game once in a while (sigh) . . . you can still use your *GURPS* adventures. As long as that other game uses units that you can translate into feet, minutes and other plain-English terms, you can use your *GURPS* adventures in that system.

To be honest, we hope *GURPS* will become the “standard” roleplaying system. But we don’t expect to do that by driving everyone else out of the market, or even by forcing them to conform to us. Instead, *we* are conforming to *them* – by producing a system that will work with *any* clearly-written adventure.

At any rate, here it is. I’m satisfied that *GURPS* is the most realistic, flexible and “universal” system ever developed. It was five years in the making, and this Third Edition is the product of another two years of development and player comment after the initial release. I hope you like it.

– Steve Jackson



# MORE FOR GURPS

This book is all you need to play *GURPS* . . . everything else is optional. But if you'd like more detail about a particular background, we've got almost everything you could possibly dream of.

We currently have over 160 different *GURPS* "worldbooks," "sourcebooks," and adventure collections available, full of backgrounds, gadgets, and character-creation rules for various genres.

## System Expansions

*GURPS Compendium I* covers hundreds of new advantages, disadvantages, skills, and other character-creation options that have been added to the system since 1986. And *GURPS Compendium II* offers optional rules for everything from bad weather to combat to physical feats, a complete mass-combat system, advice for Game Masters, and more. *GURPS Vehicles* gives players the ability to duplicate any conveyance imaginable, from a rowboat to a space station.

## Fantasy

*GURPS Magic* and *GURPS Grimoire* expand on the magic system presented in this book, with hundreds of new spells and rules for potions and other new ways to do magic. Other fantasy sourcebooks include *GURPS Magic Items 1*, *Magic Items 2*, and *Magic Items 3*, as well as *Fantasy Bestiary*, *Faerie*, *Shapeshifters*, and *GURPS Low-Tech*.

## Science Fiction

*GURPS Ultra-Tech* and *Ultra-Tech 2* are the sourcebooks for science-fiction gadgets, from near future to near-magical. *GURPS Space* depicts the future, with rules for starships and aliens. Other sourcebooks include *GURPS Robots* and *Psionics*. *GURPS Bio-Tech* explores human upgrades and modifications, and *GURPS Mars* features the latest scientific data plus three different campaign worlds.

## Traveller

One of the grandest old roleplaying games of them all is enjoying new life with *GURPS*! *GURPS Traveller* is all you need to get started, but we also have a number of sourcebooks, Planetary Surveys, and Deck Plans.

## Time Travel and Historical

*GURPS Time Travel* is designed to support either a parallel-worlds campaign or actual adventures through history. *Steampunk* is a complete sourcebook of steam-powered roleplaying in an alternate Industrial Age, while *Cliffhangers* captures all the action of 1930s pulp adventures.

Historical worldbooks can be used as part of a *Time Travel* campaign or on their own. Our background books include *Age of Napoleon*, *Arabian Nights*, *Celtic Myth*, *Imperial Rome*, *Japan*, *Middle Ages I*, *Old West*, and *Vikings*.

## Modern Day: Horror, Spies, Strangeness, and Reality

*GURPS Illuminati* describes the world as it might be today if every conspiracy theory and tabloid story were true. *Horror*, *Undead*, *Spirits*, *Cabal*, *Monsters*, *Blood Types*, and *Creatures of the Night* bring your worst nightmares to life. Other "strange" worldbooks include *Warehouse 23* (a collection of strange items from all over), *Black Ops* (modern-day secret agents taking on the forces of darkness), *Y2K* (millennial madness), and *IOU* (Illuminati University, a light-hearted inter-dimensional nexus and seat of learning), as well as a *GURPS* version of our angels-and-demons *In Nomine* roleplaying game.

And if you're looking for modern-day adventures taken right off the front page of the newspaper, check out *Cops*, *Covert Ops*, *High-Tech*, *Modern Firepower*, *Special Ops*, and *SWAT*.

## Game Conversions

There are licensed *GURPS* versions of some of the most amazing game worlds devised, including *GURPS Blue Planet*, *Castle Falkenstein*, *Deadlands*, *Mage: The Ascension*, and *Vampire: The Masquerade*.

## "Powered by GURPS"

While most of our sourcebooks are supplements for *GURPS* – they require the *GURPS Basic Set* to play – some are complete roleplaying games in and of themselves. We call those games "Powered by *GURPS*."

*GURPS WWII* is a complete line covering all the aspects of Mankind's Greatest Conflict. The *Discworld RPG* is a complete *GURPS*-based game set in Terry Pratchett's world – and there's a companion volume, *GURPS Discworld Also*. The *Hellboy Sourcebook and Roleplaying Game* brings everyone's favorite Big Red Guy and the rest of his friends (and enemies) to life.

*Transhuman Space* is a near-future science-fiction gameworld as alien as any galaxy-spanning space opera. Advances in genetics, bio-tech, nanotech, computing, and more make the early days of the 22nd century an exciting time. The *Transhuman Space* line has nearly a dozen supplements, covering all the regions of the solar system, and life from the most glittering space station to the darkest Third World slum.

## And More . . .

The *GURPS* system is still growing. Lots of other material, including adventures, character books, and maps, is available . . . and there's more every month! We'll send you a free catalog if you send us a 9"×12" self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE). Other ways to keep in touch with us include . . .

## *GURPS on the Web*

Steve Jackson Games is one of the leaders in online game support. It starts with *Pyramid*, our weekly online magazine. Although it is dedicated to covering the best in gaming from all sources, nearly every issue includes some material for *GURPS* – adventures, backgrounds, designer's notes, and more. *Pyramid* subscribers also have access to message boards, a chat room, and playtest files of upcoming releases. You can get a free look at *Pyramid* by pointing your browser at [www.sjgames.com/pyramid/](http://www.sjgames.com/pyramid/).

Our website ([www.sjgames.com](http://www.sjgames.com)) has the latest news from the company, announcements of our coming releases, a web page for every book we've ever published (many with sample art and actual book pages!), and complete errata listings at [www.sjgames.com/errata/](http://www.sjgames.com/errata/).

## Conventions

We also support game conventions. If you're running a con, or if you'd like to be a *GURPS* GM, drop us a line. We provide support material and prizes for convention tournaments.

## Comments and Questions

We do everything we can to support the *GURPS* system and help its players. Feel free to write us, or talk to us at conventions. We value your comments; we'll take them into account on future releases and revisions. We'll do our best to answer any questions you have about the game; the email address to use is [gurps@sjgames.com](mailto:gurps@sjgames.com).

# WHAT IS ROLEPLAYING?

A roleplaying game is a game in which each player takes the part of a “character,” participating in a fictional adventure. The nature of the adventure is set by a referee, called the Game Master (GM, for short). The GM determines the background and plays the part of the other people the characters meet during their adventure.

No gameboard is necessary for a roleplaying game (though some systems, including *GURPS*, include optional “boardgame” rules for combat situations). Instead, the game is played *verbally*. The GM describes the situation, and tells the players what their characters see and hear. The players then describe what they are doing to meet the challenge. The GM describes the results of these actions . . . and so on. Depending on the situation, the GM may determine what happens arbitrarily (for the best possible story), or by referring to specific game rules (to decide what is realistically possible), or by rolling dice (to give an interesting random result).

Part of the object of a roleplaying game is to have each player meet the situation as the *character* would. A roleplaying game can let a player take the part of a stern Japanese samurai, a medieval jester, a wise priest, a stowaway gutter kid on her first star-trip . . . or absolutely anyone else. In a given situation, all those characters would react differently. And that’s what roleplaying is about!

Thus, good roleplaying teaches cooperation among the players, and broadens their viewpoints. But it’s not purely educational. It’s also one of the most creative possible entertainments. The major difference between roleplaying and other types of entertainment is this: Most entertainment is passive. The audience just sits and watches, without taking part in the creative process.

But in roleplaying, the “audience” joins in the creation. While the GM is the chief storyteller, the players are responsible for creating their own characters. And if they want something to happen in the story, they *make* it happen, because they’re in the story.

So, while other types of media are mass-produced to please the widest possible audience, each roleplaying adventure is an individual gem, crafted by the people who take part in it. The GM (or the original adventure author) provides the raw material . . . but the final polish comes from the players themselves.

The other important thing about roleplaying is this: It doesn’t have to be competitive. In most roleplaying situations, the party will succeed or fail as a group, depending on how well they cooperate. And, just as in real life, the most important rewards of good roleplaying come in *character development*. The more successfully a player portrays his character (as judged by the GM) the more that character will gain in ability.

A roleplaying adventure may have a fixed objective . . . save the Princess, find the treasure, stop the invasion. Or it may be open-ended, as the characters move from one escapade to the next. It’s all up to the GM and the players. A roleplaying “campaign” can be open-ended, lasting for years, as characters (and players) come and go.

When it’s all said and done, the GM and the players will have created a story . . . the story of how the characters met, learned to work together, encountered a challenge, and (we hope) triumphed!

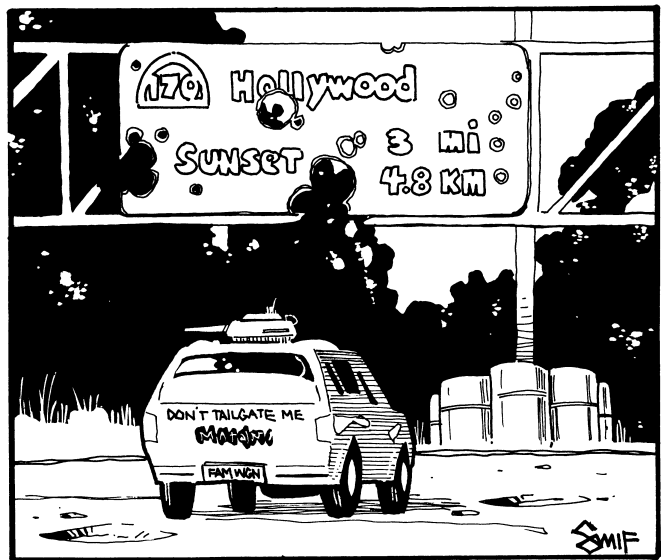
## metric conversions

All *GURPS* books use the old imperial units of measurement, rather than metric, because most of our readers are Americans who use the old system. But not all! Every year, more and more people in the rest of the world start *GURPS* campaigns. And outside the U.S., people think in metric.

Our authorized French, Spanish, Portuguese, etc., translations use metric units. But many people want the English versions. And we can’t afford to do two editions of everything. So . . . here’s a conversion table.

Note that there are two conversion columns. The first column is an approximation, easy to do in your head, and plenty good enough for gaming. The second column is the *real* metric equivalent, just in case you ever need to be exact.

Imperial	Game Metric	Real Metric
1 foot (ft.)	30 cm	30.48 cm
1 yard (yd.)	1 meter	.914 meters
1 mile (mi.)	1.5 km	1.609 km
1 inch (in.)	2.5 cm	2.54 cm
1 pound (lb.)	1/2 kg	.453 kg
1 ton	1 metric ton	.907 metric tons
1 gallon (gal.)	4 liters	3.785 liters
1 quart (qt.)	1 liter	.946 liters
1 ounce (oz.)	30 grams	31.103 grams
1 cubic inch (ci)	16 cu. cm	16.387 cu. cm
1 cubic yard (cy)	.75 cubic m	.765 cubic m



*Temperature:* When dealing with changes in temperature, one Fahrenheit degree is 5/9 the size of a degree Celsius. So a change of 45° F is equal to a change of 25° C. To convert actual thermometer readings, subtract 32 from the Fahrenheit temperature and multiply the result by 5/9. So 95° F is 5/9 of (95-32), or 5/9 of 63, or 35° C.

# QUICK START

## Read this first!

This section is a one-page guide to the whole *GURPS* game system. Although the *Basic Set* is over 250 pages long, most of it is detail, “color,” and special cases. The game system is actually *easy*.

*GURPS* is designed to be “friendly,” both for the player and the Game Master. A glossary of important terms is on p. 250. The rule-book includes a lot of detail, but it’s indexed and cross-referenced to make things easy to find. And all the detail is optional – use it only when it makes the game more fun.

There are only three basic “game mechanics” in *GURPS*. Learn these and you can start to play. (A good beginning is the solo adventure, *All In A Night’s Work*, on p. 218. It will teach you the game as you go along.)

The three basic rules are:

(1) *Success Rolls*. A “success roll” is a die roll made when you need to “test” one of your skills or abilities. For instance, you might test, or *roll against*, your Strength to stop a heavy door from closing, or against your Naturalist skill to identify a strange animal by hearing its cry.

The only dice used in this game are six-sided ones. Roll 3 dice for a success roll. If your roll is *less than* or *equal to* the skill or ability you are testing, you succeeded. Otherwise, you failed. For example, if you are rolling against Strength, and your ST level is 12, a roll of 12 or less succeeds.

Sometimes you will have *modifiers* to a roll. For instance, if you were trying to stop a *very heavy* door from closing, you might have to roll against Strength at a -2 (or ST-2, for short). In that case, with a Strength of 12, you would need to roll a 10 or less to succeed. Rolling a 10 or less is harder than rolling a 12 or less, just as stopping a heavy door is harder than stopping an ordinary one.

For an especially easy task, you would get a *bonus* to your attempt. You might roll “Animal Handling+4” to make friends with a very friendly dog. If your skill was 12, a roll of 16 or less would succeed. Making a roll of 16 or less is easier than making the base skill roll of 12 or less, because a friendly dog is easy to deal with.

For details on success rolls, see p. 86.

(2) *Reaction Rolls*. A “reaction roll” is a roll made by the Game Master (or GM) to determine how his non-player characters (NPCs) react to the player characters. This roll is always optional; the GM may predetermine reactions. But (at least some of the time) it’s more fun to let the dice control the reactions.

To check reactions, the GM rolls 3 dice and consults the *Reaction Table* (pp. 204-205). The higher his roll, the better the NPCs will react, and the better treatment they will give the players.

Many player characters have *reaction modifiers* that add to (or subtract from) the reaction roll. If you have a +2 reaction due to your good looks, the GM will add 2 to any reaction roll made by someone who can see you. This is likely to improve the way they behave toward you!

For details on reaction rolls, see p. 180 and the *Reaction Table*, pp. 204-205.

(3) *Damage Rolls*. A “damage roll” is a roll made in a fight, to see how much harm you did to your foe. Damage rolls use the “dice plus adds” system (see the box below).

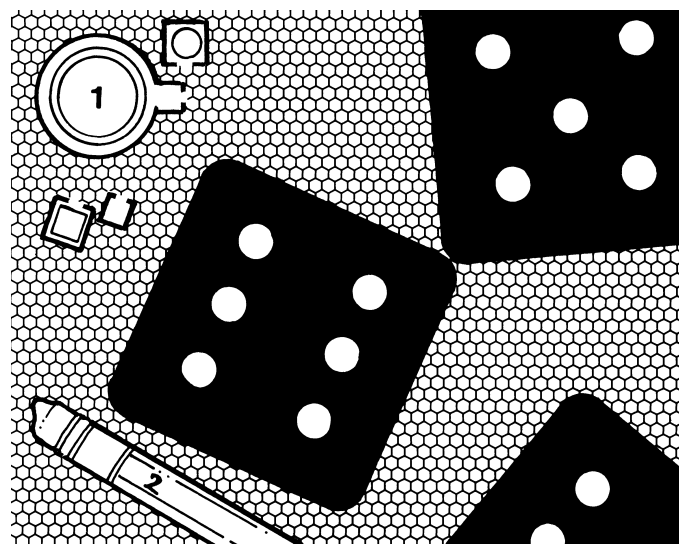
Many things can affect the final damage done by an injury. Armor protects the wearer; cutting and impaling weapons, and some bullets, can do extra damage if they get through the armor. “Critical hits” can do extra damage. All these things are explained in the combat rules, starting on p. 95. But the combat system is “modular”; you can use all the rules for a complex, detailed, realistic combat simulation – or just the Basic Combat System for a quick game.

There’s another important system – but you don’t need to know it to start with. It’s the *character creation* system. Each character starts with 100 points to spend. High levels of Strength, Dexterity, etc., cost points; so do special advantages. “Disadvantages” like Greed and Berserk are also available; these give you *extra* points.

This is described in the *Characters* section, on the next page. These rules let you do all your calculations *before* play starts, and enter them on the Character Sheet (p. 12). That way, you don’t have to bother with calculations during play!

But you don’t need to know this to start; you can pick one of the pregenerated character sheets, pp. 214-217, for your first adventures.

Got all that? Good. Now you can play *GURPS*. The rest is just detail. Have fun.



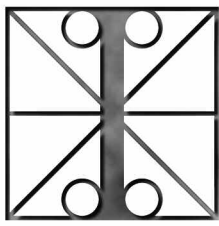
## a note on dice

*GURPS* uses six-sided dice only. All “success rolls,” and most other rolls, require 3 dice to be thrown at once.

To figure combat damage, and for many other things, the “dice+adds” system is used. If a weapon does “4d+2” damage, this is shorthand for “roll 4 dice and add 2 to the total.” Likewise, 3d-3 means “roll 3 dice and subtract 3 from the total.”

If you see just “2d,” that means to roll two dice. So if an adventure says “The base is guarded by 5d human soldiers and 2d+1 robots,” that’s short for “Roll five dice for the number of human guards at the base. Then roll two dice, and add 1, for the number of robots.”



For really huge numbers, dice can be multiplied. “2d×10” would mean “roll 2 dice and multiply by 10.”



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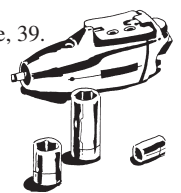
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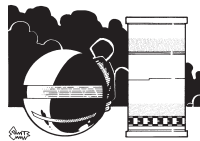


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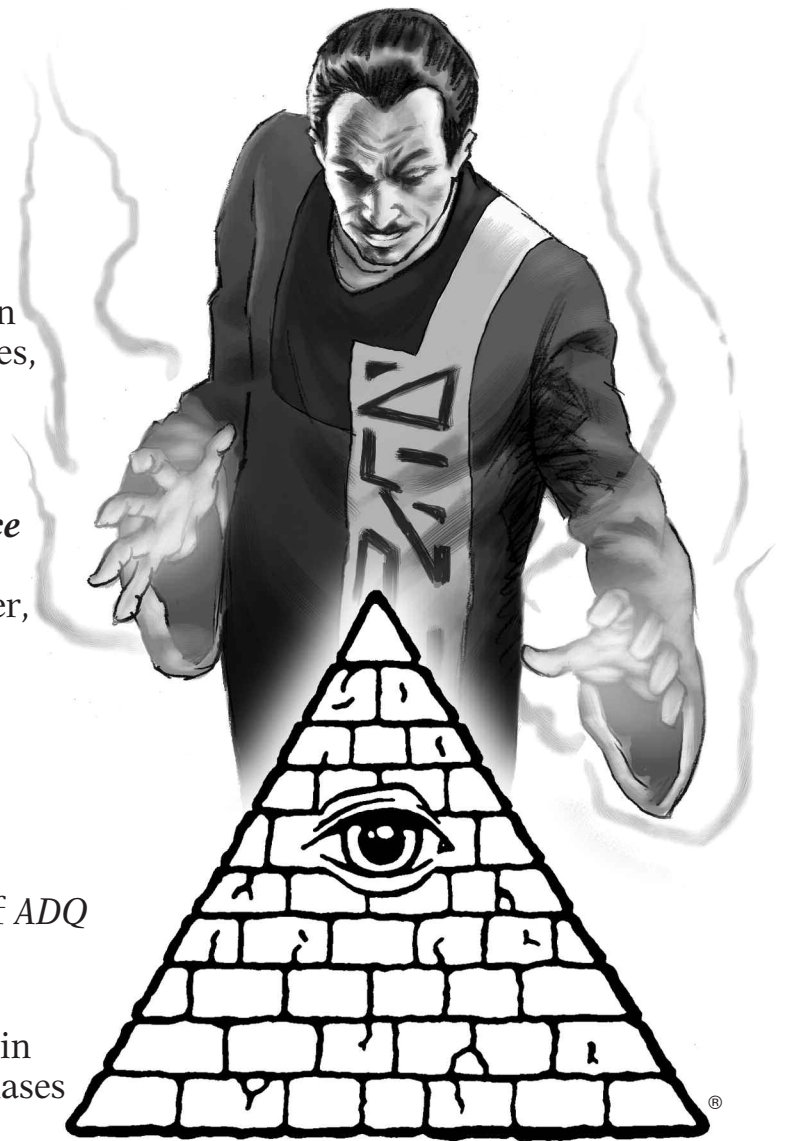


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