

# GURPS®

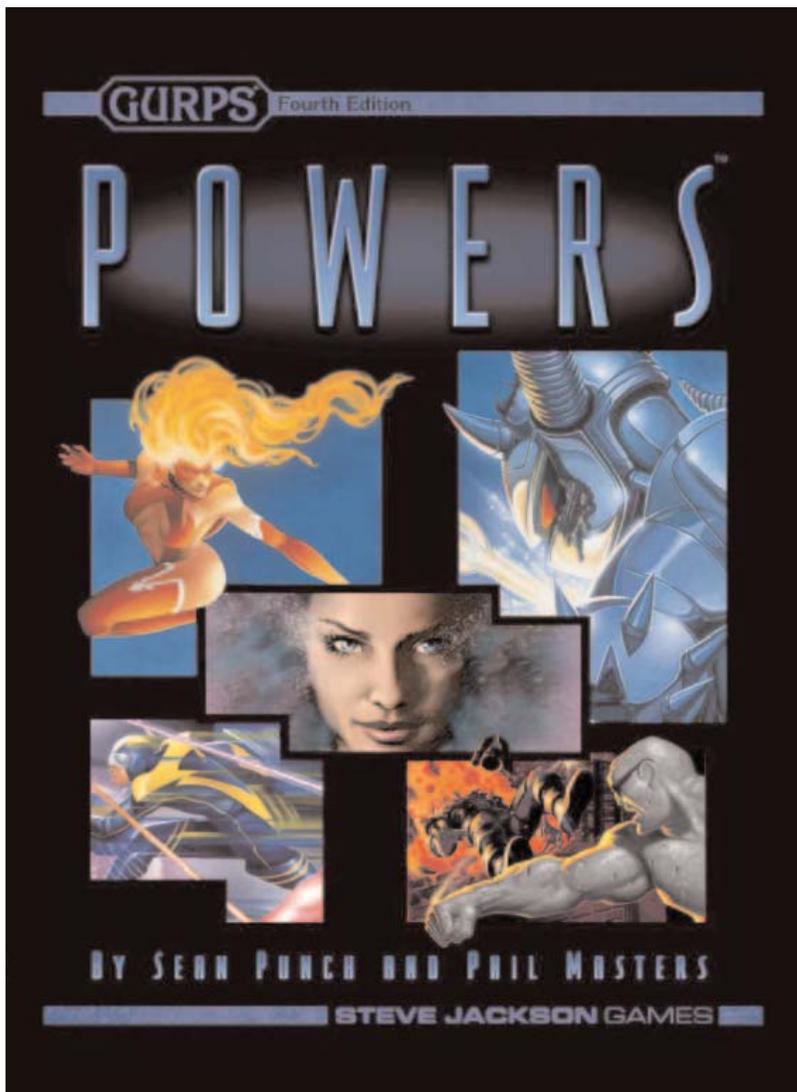
## SAVE THE WORLD . . . OR DESTROY IT!

*GURPS Powers* is the ultimate book for the ultimate characters in the new Fourth Edition of *GURPS*! Here's everything you need to create every kind of amazing, off-the-chart superhero you can imagine . . . as well as amazing wizards, wuxia fighters, shamans who command spirits . . . even gods!

Written by *GURPS* Line Editor and Fourth Edition co-author Sean Punch, *GURPS Powers* introduces some new rules, but it is mostly about using the rules that are already in the *GURPS Basic Set* to cover superpowered characters, megawizards, and earth-shattering psionics. *GURPS Powers* also includes guidelines for "special effects" and several different ways to vary a power on the fly – two crucial concepts for comic-book superheroes.

If you've got a high-powered campaign . . . or high-powered players . . . you want *GURPS Powers*!

This PDF is an electronic copy of the recently released printed edition of *GURPS Powers*. All known errata from that edition have been corrected, as of the publication date, listed below.



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GURPS®

Fourth Edition

# POWERS™



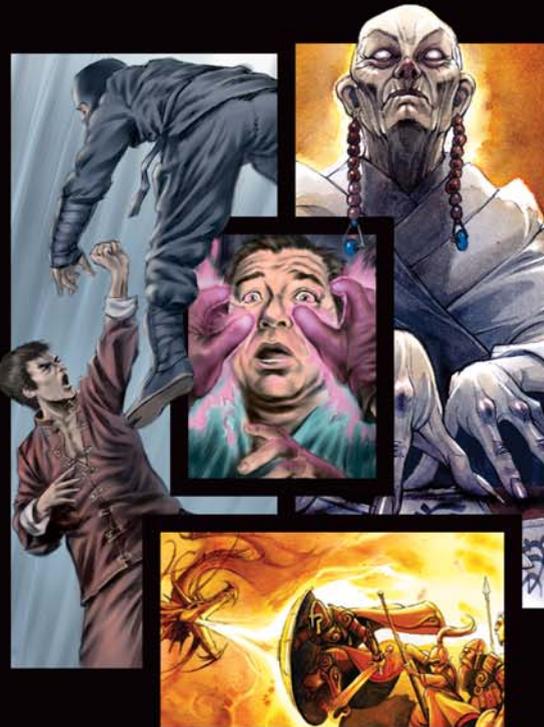
BY SEAN PUNCH AND PHIL MASTERS

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

# SAVE THE WORLD . . . OR DESTROY IT!

Want to create a superhero? A *wuxia* fighter? An earth-shattering psi? A wizard or shaman with abilities beyond spells and rituals? A *god*? With the *GURPS Basic Set* and *Powers*, you have everything you need to create superhuman heroes:

- Case-by-case advice on how to turn over 100 advantages from the *Basic Set* into superhuman abilities – with new modifiers, variant traits, optional rules, and plenty of examples.
- Five flexible new advantages: Control, Create, Illusion, Leech, and Static.
- Dozens of new enhancements and limitations to fine-tune your abilities.
- Energy Reserves to fuel abilities, “alternative abilities” that don’t all work at once, and ways to substitute abilities you have for those you don’t.
- Hundreds of sample abilities – energy blasts, curses, defenses, mental gifts, and more.
- Rules for *powers* – groups of abilities linked by origin – with over 40 ready-to-use examples.
- Guidelines on biological, chi, divine, elemental, magical, moral, nature, psionic, spirit, and super powers – even godlike *cosmic* powers – and their interactions.
- Advice to GMs on how to keep it *fun* and prevent high-powered heroes from taking over!

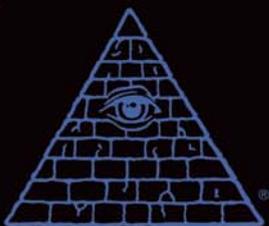


*GURPS Powers* requires the *GURPS Basic Set*, Fourth Edition, and replaces the Third Edition books *GURPS Supers* and *GURPS Psionics*. The advice on abilities and powers can be used with any game that features superhuman characters.

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# INTRODUCTION

Not all games feature superhuman gifts – but most do! Fantasy wouldn't be the same without mages and priests pitting their magic and miracles against monsters with exotic attacks. Space opera practically requires telepaths, not to mention godlike aliens. Horror features everything from children with uncontrollable psychokinesis to space-warping, madness-inducing Things. And the entire supers genre is *defined* by unusual abilities.

Even in less “over-the-top” backgrounds, heroes – and their foes – may have special capabilities that set them apart. The kung fu master who can kill with a touch, the psychic detective, the faith healer, the feral child who speaks with beasts . . . characters like these abound in adventure fiction.

Superhuman doesn't have to mean *supernatural*, either. Nature is full of

creatures that can do things like inject venom, spin webs, and walk on walls – and in a “hard” science-fiction setting, advances in biotechnology might let humans do all of these things without invoking the impossible. Even shooting devastating energy beams and deflecting bullets might be realistic. . . for a robot.

The common theme here is gifts that no ordinary human can possess. When designing such abilities, the **GURPS Basic Set** – with its hundreds of advantages – is an excellent starting point. But all that variety can be daunting: to get the ability you want, you might have to choose between several similar advantages, and apply many modifiers. The top priority of **GURPS Powers** is to provide advice, examples, and new options that make this process easier and more *fun*.

In particular, **Powers** gives significant thought to a matter that the **Basic Set** only touches upon, which is that a character gifted with special abilities might produce some or all of them by manipulating a single superhuman force: divine will, inner strength, life energy, mana, psychic potential, spirits, etc. Someone with the capacity to direct such energies is said to possess a *power*. **Powers** includes full rules for creating powers and using them in play – hence the title.

**Powers** also looks at how to integrate superhuman capabilities into a campaign with due respect for its genre and dramatic mode – and without blowing game balance out of the water. It's a toolkit, and the GM is responsible for choosing the right tools for the job. Before allowing the players to use the rules in this book, the GM should read it all – especially the last two chapters – to discover which options best suit *his* campaign.



## PUBLICATION HISTORY

This is the first edition of **GURPS Powers**. The **GURPS Third Edition** books **GURPS Psionics** and **GURPS Supers** were inspirational – and a few modifiers for Shapeshifting (p. 74) first appeared in **GURPS Shapeshifters** – but it's otherwise a completely new product.

### Note to Third Edition Players

If you've been playing **GURPS** since the Third Edition (or earlier!), you might ask, “What does **GURPS Powers** replace?” The answer is simple . . . and not so simple.

**Powers** covers a lot of the same ground as **GURPS Psionics** and **GURPS Supers**. By following the advice in this book, you'll be able to recreate the *effects* of psi and super abilities from those supplements. The implementation isn't the same,

however, so old hands definitely have some learning to do.

For psi powers, there's no overall "level" that rates every one of the power's abilities. Instead, the player crafts each ability separately by buying it as an advantage, choosing the level (where possible) and modifiers that fit his vision of his character's aptitude with *that one ability*. Many of the special rules and "stunts" from *Psionics* appear in *Powers*, but they're generalized to all powers and *optional*, so that the GM can better tailor them to his campaign.

For supers, the emphasis is on *active* abilities, such as flying and shooting rays. Some passive abilities – e.g., tough skin – appear, but they aren't a priority. This is because the

*GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition* covers more territory than did the *Basic Set, Third Edition*. High ST, DR, extra limbs, and gadgets are all common in supers games, but the *Basic Set* has them covered. The same goes for rules for super-speed collisions, picking up and throwing huge objects, and so on. This leaves more space for other things.

The biggest change for both psi and super abilities is that they don't require skills. We present skill use as an option (see *Skills for Everyone*, p. 162), but the GM doesn't have to use it. Talents (p. 8) fill this role, and a new enhancement (see *Reliable*, p. 109) permits fine-tuning.

*Powers* covers much more than just psis and supers, though. It's equally

capable of handling high-powered fantasy "spellcasters," *wuxia* fighters, shamans who command spirits . . . even gods. Thus, it represents a truly generic and universal advantage-based alternative to the skill-based abilities of Third Edition books such as *GURPS Martial Arts*, *GURPS Religion*, and *GURPS Spirits*. This makes it easy to mix characters with radically different powers in the same campaign.

In other words, *Powers* by itself isn't *quite* the complete book of supers or psi – it's something more. It's a "how to" guide to the *Basic Set* for these things and nearly every other kind of wondrous ability; think of it as a *Basic Set: Powers*. Combined with the *Basic Set*, it gives you the tools to create almost *any* powered character you can dream up – a claim that no Third Edition book could make.

## About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of *GURPS* players. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! We can also be reached by e-mail: [info@sjgames.com](mailto:info@sjgames.com). Resources include:

*Pyramid* ([www.sjgames.com/pyramid/](http://www.sjgames.com/pyramid/)). Our online magazine includes new *GURPS* rules and articles. It also covers the *d20* system, *Ars Magica*, *BESM*, *Call of Cthulhu*, and many more top games – and other Steve Jackson Games releases like *Illuminati*, *Car Wars*, *Transhuman Space*, and more. *Pyramid* subscribers also get opportunities to playtest new *GURPS* books!

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*Errata*. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are available on our website – see below.

*Internet*. Visit us on the World Wide Web at [www.sjgames.com](http://www.sjgames.com) for errata, updates, and much more. The *GURPS Powers* web page is [www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/powers/](http://www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/powers/).

*Bibliographies*. Many of our books have extensive bibliographies, and we're putting them online – with links to where you can buy the books if they interest you! Go to the book's web page and look for the "Bibliography" link.

*GURPSnet*. This e-mail list hosts much of the online discussion of *GURPS*. To join, point your web browser to [www.sjgames.com/mailman/listinfo/gurpsnet-l/](http://www.sjgames.com/mailman/listinfo/gurpsnet-l/).

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sean "Dr. Kromm" Punch set out to become a particle physicist and ended up as the *GURPS* Line Editor. Since 1995, he has compiled the two *GURPS Compendium* volumes, written *GURPS Wizards* and *Undead*, edited or revised over 20 other *GURPS* books, and masterminded the rules behind dozens more. Most recently, he and co-author David Pulver created the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*.

Sean has been a fanatical gamer since 1979. His non-gaming interests include cinema, computers, and wine. He lives in Montréal, Québec, with his wife, Bonnie. They have two cats and a noisy parrot.

Phil Masters has been playing RPGs since 1978; his first professional writing appeared in 1980, his first RPG book in 1990, and his first work for Steve Jackson Games (*GURPS Arabian Nights*) in 1993. Since then, he's worked on many more *GURPS* books, including the *Discworld* and *Hellboy* RPGs (the latter also with Jonathan Woodward). He's also written for White Wolf, Guardians of Order, and Eden Studios, among others. He lives in the U.K., runs a biweekly game, and sometimes helps organize RPG conventions.

# CHAPTER ONE

# BUILDING POWERS



The thief stepped off the flat roof of the skyscraper. Falling, he gestured, and wings of fire billowed out and carried him gently to the ground. Where his feet touched the road, the asphalt melted and bubbled.

At the sight of him, and the flames that flared about him, civilians and guards alike fled for their lives. By the time he reached the bank, only a single figure, clad in black and yellow, stood in his path.

"Ah," the thief said, "the mutant freak is back. But this time, I'm ready, and you have nowhere to run. Do you really think that your telepathic trickery

will protect you against the power of elemental fire?"

His opponent frowned, as though considering this as a serious academic question. "I'm not sure," she admitted.

"Then die." The thief gestured again, and sent a searing blast of flame toward his opponent. But the telepath was no longer in its path.

"It might not protect me, but it means that I can control your visual cortex." The telepath's amused tones echoed in the thief's head. He frowned, then shrugged. "It makes no difference," he said. "You can project your voice, and maybe you can plant a picture or

two in my brain, but I can just burn my way into this place, and burn anything that stands in my way. The more you annoy me, the more I'll destroy. You lack power."

"True," the telepath replied, and suddenly, the blue sky above darkened with black clouds. "I'm a little short on raw force. But I do have range, and I have friends who'll help when I need them." From the clouds, hailstones large as fists came pounding down, quenching the thief's flames and hammering him to his knees. "And I'm told that a fire elemental is a couple of steps down from a storm god."

From ancient demigods to costumed comic-book vigilantes, heroes with superhuman abilities abound in myth and fiction. Each has a different explanation for his gifts, but most have one thing in common: their capabilities are rooted in the energies they control, in the *power* they manipulate – be that inner strength, magic, an elemental force, or the will of the gods.

The **Basic Set** presents many advantages that *could* be attributed to such powers, but leaves their source unspecified. On their own, these traits are "wild" gifts; they work like they work. And sometimes, that's enough. In most game worlds, though, it's important to answer the following questions:

- Which advantages could logically originate from a given source of power?
- How does this source change these advantages?
- How do these abilities relate to one another?
- How do these abilities interact with other powers?

These are questions that **GURPS Powers** aims to answer.

# WHAT IS A POWER?

A “power” is an exotic or supernatural gift that you can direct in different ways to produce a number of related effects. A good example is Telepathy (see p. B257): the capacity to channel your thoughts in order to affect others’ minds. This might let you read minds, transmit thoughts, and lash out with bolts of mental energy. Yet *all* of these things are just manifestations of a single power – the power of Telepathy.

## Source

Each power has a *source*: the origin of the energy the wielder manipulates to produce its effects. This is normally chosen from the list under *Advantage Origins* (see p. B33) – for instance, Telepathy is “psionic” – but the GM is free to invent other sources.

The “chi” and “psionic” sources suggest that the power comes from within – from the user’s body and mind, respectively. Most other sources imply that the user is channeling external energies: the will of a god for “divine,” servitor spirits for “spirit,” mana for “magical,” and the energy of creation for “cosmic.” A few straddle the line, and suffuse the user *and* his surroundings; see *Nature* (p. 28) for a source like this. It’s important to be aware of this distinction, as it can affect how powers work in play (see *Channeled Energies*, p. 24).

For more on sources, including a discussion of which sources are appropriate for a given genre and campaign type, see *Origins* (p. 179).

## Focus

A power also needs a *focus*: the item it manipulates or the concept it revolves around. This can be broad, but should be well-defined and fit into one of these categories:

- A form of matter or energy, or its absence (e.g., air, cold, darkness, earth, electricity, fire, light, radiation, sound, vacuum, or water).
- A natural phenomenon (e.g., death, disease, volcanic activity, or weather).

- A supernatural phenomenon (e.g., astral projection, second sight, or the will of a *specific* god).

- A class of targets (e.g., animals, computers, living bodies, plants, sentient minds, or spirits – or other *powers* of one particular source).

- An abstract notion (e.g., good, evil, the future, or probability).

## ANATOMY OF A POWER

In addition to its source and focus, a power has three game-mechanical components:

1. A set of advantages that represent different ways the power can manifest. These are known as the power’s *abilities*.

2. A special modifier – most often a limitation – called a *power modifier*. This turns any advantage that has it into an ability within the associated power.

3. A *Talent* that makes it easier to use all of the power’s abilities.

## Abilities

Each power has a list of *abilities*: advantages that make sense as manifestations of the power, given its focus. For instance, Telepathy offers such abilities as Empathy, Mind Control, Mind Probe, Mind Reading, Mind Shield, Mindlink, Possession, and

Telesend (for a complete list, see *Telepathy*, p. 134). What these advantages have in common is that they lend themselves to interpretation as direct interactions between sentient minds.

A power’s abilities usually have a number of structural similarities. They might all be physical or mental, or supernatural – or perhaps they all depend on rolls against the same attribute. This is a suggestion and not a requirement, but the GM should definitely bear it in mind when designing powers. A power will seem contrived if its abilities belong to many different classes of advantages that work nothing alike.

It might be necessary to modify or qualify an advantage to better meet these goals before allowing it as an ability. For instance, Telepathy lists Affliction and Innate Attack as abilities, but only when they cause fatigue, stunning, incapacitation, temporary mental disadvantages, or DX, IQ, or Will penalties – and only with the Malediction enhancement. These restrictions serve to exclude such attacks as fire bolts and death rays, which are inappropriate for Telepathy as depicted in most fiction.

The GM need not treat a power’s list of abilities as exhaustive or prescriptive. If a player provides a *reasonable* explanation for why an advantage that isn’t on the list would suit a particular power, the GM should be generous.

## Focus vs. Source

Focus and source *might* correspond on a one-to-one basis. For instance, the power to command some spirits in order to influence others would have “spirit” as both its source and its focus. This doesn’t have to be the case, however.

Most sources encompass more than one focus. For example, the “psionic” source extends to all six powers described in Chapter 6 of the **Basic Set**: Antipsi (focus: other psionic powers), ESP (focus: knowledge), Psychic Healing (focus: healing), Psychokinesis (focus: motion), Telepathy (focus: sentient minds), and Teleportation (focus: instantaneous travel). Likewise, the “divine” source is extremely broad; in most settings, each god grants its servitors a unique power.

Conversely, a given power could have more than one source. The focus “fire” might be divine, magical, or psionic in nature, depending on the game world.

See *Choosing Abilities* (p. 9) for a detailed discussion of how to choose appropriate abilities for a power.

### Power Modifiers

Each power also has a *power modifier*: a limitation or enhancement that turns an advantage into one of the power's abilities. An advantage *must* have the relevant power modifier in order to be part of the power; there are no exceptions.

An advantage with a power modifier is subject to all the special rules that apply to the power. If the power is subject to a broad set of countermeasures or situational penalties, only works in certain circumstances, or restricts the user's actions, its power modifier is a limitation. If the power's abilities are *more* flexible than the unmodified traits, its power modifier is an enhancement. The value of the limitation or enhancement depends on just how much the restrictions are tightened or relaxed; see *Evaluating Power Modifiers* (p. 20).

### Talents

Finally, each power has a *Talent* that represents natural or learned aptitude with the power. This is similar to a mundane Talent (see p. B89), but instead of giving a bonus to skill rolls, it gives a bonus to all success rolls made to activate or use any of the power's abilities; e.g., Telepathy Talent 3 gives +3 to the IQ, Will, and Perception rolls to use telepathic

## Powers vs. "Wild" Advantages

Not everyone with advantages from a power's list of abilities possesses that power. As explained under *Power Modifiers*, an advantage only becomes part of a power if it has the relevant power modifier. The GM decides whether it's possible to buy the advantages that make up powers as stand-alone traits.

In some game worlds, many advantages exist both "in the wild" and as part of one or more powers. Without a power modifier, an advantage works exactly as per its description – none of the special rules for powers apply to it. For instance, effects that negate, drain, or enhance an advantage when it's part of a particular power have *no effect* on the wild version. Things that benefit or restrict the wild version have their usual effects on all modified versions, though!

In other settings, the *only* way to obtain certain advantages – especially exotic or supernatural ones – is as part of a power. By ensuring that unusual abilities are always subject to power modifiers, the GM can control dozens or *hundreds* of advantages by defining a small number of modifiers. Of course, unusual NPCs might still have wild versions of such traits . . .

abilities. The GM is free to interpret Talent creatively for abilities that don't normally require a die roll; see *The Role of Talent* (p. 158) for ideas.

The cost per level of Talent can vary, as explained under *Pricing Talents* (p. 29), but most Talents cost 5 points/level. No one may buy more than four levels of a given Talent without the GM's permission.

It's possible to purchase the abilities of a power without taking the associated Talent, but most empowered heroes will find Talent indispensable. Likewise, the GM may allow

Talent without abilities. Those in either situation possess the power in question, and can generally add the missing component later on; see *Adding and Improving Powers* (p. 33).

This is all you absolutely *need* to know to skip to Chapter 3 and start adding powers to a character. The remainder of this chapter is aimed at GMs who are designing powers for their campaign, and players who have the GM's permission to give their characters custom-built powers.



to hit is required, but those with Aura can actively try to affect a victim by making a melee attack.

*Gas:* Sleeping gas, paralysis gas, and the like. Such Afflictions have Area Effect (+50%/level) and *one* of Respiratory Agent (+50%), Blood Agent (+100%), or Contact Agent (+150%). For a mobile gas cloud, add Drifting (+20%) and Persistent (+40%). A gas that surrounds the attacker has Emanation (-20%) instead. Insidious gases have No Signature (+20%) and possibly Onset (variable). There's no roll to hit; gas has a chance of affecting everyone exposed to it.

*Gaze:* A gaze is a common vehicle for supernatural Afflictions. For instance, a hypnotic gaze might cause the target to sleep. If the gaze works on any target the attacker can see, it has the Vision-Based *enhancement* (+150%). Roll against Innate Attack (Gaze) to hit. Gaze attacks by fantasy monsters tend to be short-ranged and curse-like; apply Malediction 1 (+100%) and the Vision-Based *limitation* (-20%) instead. To affect the target, make the usual Will roll for Malediction.

*Mental Blast:* Direct mind-to-mind attacks that stun or daze are common psi abilities. Such Afflictions have Malediction 2 (+150%) and Based on Will (+20%). If the attack is *totally* undetectable, add No Signature (+20%). As with all Maledictions, the only roll required is a Will roll.

*Sensory Attack:* Some Afflictions affect everyone nearby though their senses. Such attacks have Area Effect (+50%/level) and Emanation (-20%). Bright flashes are Vision-Based (+150%), with a Disadvantage enhancement that inflicts Blindness (+50%); howls, thunderclaps, etc., are Hearing-Based (+150%), and cause Deafness (+20%). As with gas, no roll to hit is necessary – everyone in the area is exposed.

*Touch:* Monsters, wizards, and supers often have to touch those they wish to afflict. The simplest form of this is Melee Attack (-30%). Attacks that must touch bare skin or an open wound have Contact Agent (-30%) or Blood Agent (-40%), respectively, while supernatural attacks that bypass DR get Malediction 1 (+100%). Make an unarmed melee attack to hit. For

## Optional Rules for Afflictions

Afflictions don't *have* to do bad things to living targets. These rules address two common exceptions.

### *Beneficial Afflictions*

If an Affliction's effects are so unquestionably positive that no one would ever object to them, the GM may reverse the sign of the HT modifier; e.g., Affliction 3 gives a HT+2 roll instead of a HT-2 roll. Duration becomes minutes equal to the subject's margin of *success*, not his margin of failure.

If such an Affliction has Malediction, the subject can *waive* his right to resist. The ability works if the user can make an unopposed Will roll (at the usual range penalties). In this case, duration in minutes equals the *user's* margin of success.

### *Afflictions and Inanimate Targets*

An Affliction can affect anything with a HT score . . . *if* the target is susceptible to its effects. Most inanimate objects – including all machines – have Immunity to Metabolic Hazards. This stops most Afflictions, with two exceptions.

Afflictions restricted to inanimate targets via Accessibility modifiers (such as “Only on Electrical”) affect those objects *instead* of living beings. This is only acceptable in conjunction with effects that make sense for the intended targets. You could render a machine “unconscious” by cutting its power; but you couldn't inflict nausea.

Afflictions that cause Invisibility, Shrinking, and other transformations through the Advantage modifier affect *everything*. To prevent those with low levels from zapping planets, the GM should let unliving, homogenous, and diffuse targets add their SM to their resistance roll (an Earth-sized planet is SM +43). If modified HT comes to 21+ after applying SM and the Affliction's HT modifier, resistance is *automatic* – nothing happens.

Malediction, roll the Quick Contest to see if the Affliction works only *after* scoring a hit.

*Venom:* Toxins often cause weakness, paralysis, unconsciousness, coma, or heart attack. Those borne on fangs, claws, etc. have Follow-Up (+0%), while poisonous spray or spit has Contact Agent (-30%) or Blood Agent (-40%). Many poisons take time to work; if so, add Onset (variable). Make a melee attack to hit with a natural weapon. Roll against Innate Attack (Breath) to hit with spray or spit.

Afflictions that do more than stun have special enhancements, too. Effects might be inconvenient (Irritant, Negated Advantage, or modest levels of Attribute Penalty or Disadvantage),

crippling (Incapacitation, or extreme levels of Attribute Penalty or Disadvantage), or lethal (Coma or Heart Attack). Note that Choking *isn't* usually lethal – it responds to mundane treatment that takes two seconds and a First Aid roll (artificial respiration, oxygen mask, Heimlich maneuver, etc., depending on “special effects”).

The Advantage enhancement is a special case. It's useful for specialized attacks; for instance, it might shrink the target (Shrinking, +50%/level) or turn him into a specter (Insubstantiality, +800%). However, it's also a key element of many *beneficial* abilities, which use special rules; see *Beneficial Afflictions* (box).

Remember that an Affliction can have multiple effects. If an effect applies only if the victim fails his HT

here – pulp heroes are frequently Gadgeteers, Weapon Masters, and so on. *Physical* supernatural and exotic traits can represent secret martial-arts techniques.

*Modifiers:* The most common power modifier is Chi, but Biological works for mad science. Based on Will and Requires Will Roll are commonly added to otherwise physical abilities to represent the triumph of discipline over raw, animal power. The modifiers under *Horror Abilities* fit the bizarre rituals of forgotten civilizations, evil ninja cults, etc.

### Mythic Abilities

*Advantages:* Heroes and demigods of myth generally have a mixture of supernatural advantages and extreme levels of mundane ones – the more cinematic, the better. For actual deities, Control, Create, and Cosmic Power (see *Modular Abilities*, p. B71) are *de rigueur*. Mythic monsters have many exotic advantages.

*Modifiers:* Peculiar usage limits – e.g., “Three times while the sun is in

the sky” – call for creative interpretations of Accessibility, Limited Use, Maximum Duration, Minimum Duration, and Terminal Condition. Heroic gifts often come with a Pact requiring total devotion to a patron deity. Divine beings rarely have severe limitations; often, their abilities are Cosmic, and have powerful enhancements such as Malediction 3, World-Spanning, and Extended Duration, Permanent.

### Space-Opera Abilities

*Advantages:* Almost anyone worthy of being called a hero has cinematic advantages. Space-opera psis have access to most mental advantages, regardless of type. Cinematic aliens and mutants might have almost *any* exotic trait.

*Modifiers:* The Biological and Psionic power modifiers are common. The Unreliable limitation is traditional for experimental rubber-science abilities. Apply the guidelines under “*Hard*” *Science-Fiction Abilities* if they would be *dramatic* . . . but don’t

bother with limitations that merely serve to keep abilities *realistic*.

### Supers Abilities

*Advantages:* Nearly every advantage shows up in *some* comic book. Traits that let the hero adjust his capabilities to suit the situation – e.g., Modular Abilities and Morph – are especially popular. Be sure to use *Alternative Abilities* (p. 11), too.

*Modifiers:* Any power modifier is possible; Elemental, Psionic, and Super are just the most common. Abilities are often Visible, even if traditionally invisible in other genres. Switchable appears on almost any advantage that permits it, Force Field and Reflexive are popular for defenses, and an attack is likely to have Selectivity, Variable, and *many* enhancements so that the hero can tune it from a 1d-2 jet to a 10d explosion. A handful of special enhancements are *meant* for supers, notably Super-Speed for Altered Time Rate (p. 42) and Super-Effort for Lifting ST (p. 58).

### ABSOLUTES

A few classic abilities are *absolute*: invulnerability, death rays, wishes, etc. They’re rarely a problem when a skilled author creates all the heroes, and guides them through a plot that conveniently takes their gifts into account . . . but matters are rarely so simple in a roleplaying game. The GM never knows what the players will try, while the players are never sure exactly what will work. This uncertainty is part of the fun, and the finality of “irresistible forces” and “immovable objects” can diminish that. This makes allowing them a risky proposition – but some important genres simply won’t work without them.

### Unerring Attacks

Attacks that can’t miss – divine thunderbolts, spears of vengeance, etc. – have one of the new forms of Cosmic described on p. 101: “no die roll required” or “no active defense allowed.” Heroes on a budget can obtain *near*-absolute reliability by taking some combination of Accurate, Guided, Homing, and Surprise Attack (p. 104).

## Benchmarking Attacks and Defenses

Below are guidelines on how large an attack must be to simulate a weapon or hazard. Except where noted, damage is per second – the duration of one attack. To *resist* average damage, take DR 3.5 per die; to be *immune*, buy DR 6 per die.

*Acid* (p. B428): Immersion causes 1d-1 corrosion. This can degrade DR.

*Electricity* (p. B432): Household current inflicts 3d burning damage, at worst. Industrial accidents and lightning bolts *start* at 6d and range up to 6d×3.

*Fire* (p. B433): Ordinary fire rarely exceeds 1d burning. To rate other fires, use *Making Things Burn*. For instance, magma should ignite even “highly resistant” items instantly, which takes 30 points of damage – average damage for 8d+2.

*Poison* (p. B437): Most poisons inflict 1d or 2d toxic damage per cycle, and rarely exceed 12d total. The deadliest poisons inflict up to 6d *immediately*.

*Radiation* (p. B435): The most lethal radiation accidents actually inflict less than 1 rad/second. Attacks should rarely exceed 1d rads.

*Weapons* (pp. B267-281): The strongest man is unlikely to inflict more than 4d with a muscle-powered weapon. Pistols range up to 3d; submachine guns, to 4d; rifles, to 9d; grenades, to 10d; and machine guns, to 13d. Rocket launchers and cannon *start* at 6d×2. The heaviest portable weapons (missiles, mortars, etc.) go to 6d×10. Most anti-tank and ultra-tech weapons have armor divisors, too.

unlimited scope comes at a price: the power modifier and associated Talent are both very expensive.

## Cosmic Talent

15 points/level

### Cosmic Abilities

Any advantage can be a Cosmic ability, as long as it has the Cosmic modifier. When creating a god, the GM should consider forbidding abilities that oppose the deity's sphere of influence; e.g., no fire blasts for a sea god. Since *most* advantages remain available, this doesn't lower the cost of Talent.

Note that a "Cosmic Power" advantage appears as part of Modular Abilities (p. B71). In some settings, that trait totally *replaces* this power, and cosmically powerful entities simply wish abilities into being as needed. In others, the two options coexist. The GM decides which is the case in his campaign.

*Power Modifier:* Cosmic, +50%. This is the *basic* modifier. An attack with a more expensive version of Cosmic must pay the difference between +50% and the full cost of that enhancement.

## DARKNESS

*Sources:* Divine, Elemental, Spirit ("Shadow Control"), or Super.

*Focus:* Shadow.

This is the power to create and control shadow. Its effects range from blotting out light to letting the wielder *become* a shadow. Some adept users can even conjure semi-material shadows to attack enemies. Darkness power is usually a form of direct control (Elemental and Super), but it could also represent the favor of dark gods (Divine) or a rapport with animate shadows (Spirit).

## Darkness Talent

5 points/level

### Darkness Abilities

Allies (shadow beings), with Summonable; Control (Light); Create

(Light), with Destruction (+0%); Dark Vision; Illusion, with Visual Only; Invisibility; Modular Abilities with Limited, Darkness (-15%) and Physical; Night Vision; Obscure, against Ladar or any type of vision; Protected Power; Protected Sense (Vision); and Shadow Form.

Afflictions must be Vision-Based, and have Disadvantage (Bad Sight or Blindness) or Negated Advantage (Dark Vision, Night Vision, etc.). Innate Attacks represent conjured shadows that deliver blows or a chilling touch. Any damage type is possible. All such attacks require Area Effect, Mobile, and Persistent, and either Bombardment or Homing.

*Power Modifier:* Darkness. The advantage belongs to the Darkness power. This modifier is typically Divine (-10%), Elemental (-10%), Spirit (-25%), or Super (-10%), and may be both Elemental *and* Super.

## DEATH

*Sources:* Divine, Magical ("Necromancy"), or Spirit.

*Focus:* Death and the dead.

This power deals with every aspect of death: corpses, ghosts, and curses that steal the victim's life force. It's most common among worshippers of gods that rule death or the underworld (Divine), wizardly necromancers (Magical), and those who command ghosts or death spirits (Spirit). Many regard Death power as evil, but this isn't automatically true – see *Evil* (p. 127) for that.

## Death Talent

5 points/level

### Death Abilities

Allies (undead), with Summonable; Alternate Form (any undead template); Channeling, with Specialized, Ghosts (-50%); Detect, for dead bodies, ghosts, undead, etc.; Leech, but *not* with Steal (Other Score); Medium, with Specialized, Ghosts (-50%); Protected Power; Racial Memory; Unaging; and Unkillable.

Attacks must be lethal Afflictions – usually Coma, Heart Attack, or Disadvantage, Terminally Ill – or Toxic

Attacks. All must have one of Malediction, Melee Attack, or Sense-Based. The GM *might* allow Afflictions with Advantage, Alternate Form that can raise corpses as undead.

*Power Modifier:* Death. The advantage belongs to the Death power. This modifier is most often Divine (-10%), Magical (-10%), or Spirit (-25%).

## DIMENSION TRAVEL

*Sources:* Divine, Magical ("Gate Magic"), Psionic, Spirit, or Super.

*Focus:* Parallel realities.

Dimension Travel deals with contacting and journeying to other realities. The number and nature of such realms depend on the setting; this power is most valuable in back-grounds with *many* planes of existence. Dimension Travel is common among wizards who study dimensional gates (Magical) and holy folk who can traverse the domains of gods or spirits (Divine or Spirit). Supers settings often feature parallel worlds, and some supers can move between these using psionics (Psionic) or direct "dimension control" (Super).

## Dimension Travel Talent

5 points/level

### Dimension Travel Abilities

Affliction, with an Advantage enhancement that inflicts Insubstantiality or Jumper; Channeling (Parallel Universes); Clairsentience, with World-Spanning; Detect, for extradimensional phenomena, world-jumpers, etc.; Insubstantiality; Jumper (World), almost always with Interplanar; Medium (Parallel Universes); Protected Power; Snatcher, but *not* with Creation; and Telecommunication (Telesend), with World-Spanning.

*Power Modifier:* Dimension Travel. The advantage belongs to the Dimension Travel power. This modifier is usually Divine (-10%), Magical (-10%), Psionic (-10%), Spirit (-25%), or Super (-10%).

**Reaction Drive:** Flight (Newtonian Space Flight, +25%; Nuisance Effect, -5%) [48] + Enhanced Move 11.5 (Space; Newtonian, -50%; Nuisance Effect, -5%) [104]. *Notes:* A “realistic” rocket. It gives a voyager with Basic Speed 5 a delta-v of 30,720 – enough to escape from and return to an Earth-like planet, with room to spare for travel and maneuvering. A rocket is noisy and visible; the flyer *can't* use this ability stealthily. 152 points.

**Reactionless Drive:** Flight (Nuisance Effect, -5%; Space Flight, +50%) [58] + Enhanced Move 10.5 (Space; Nuisance Effect, -5%) [200]. *Notes:* A “reactionless” rocket like those seen in space opera. It can do everything that Reaction Drive can . . . and maneuver *indefinitely*. 258 points.



**Stardrive:** Warp (Blind Only, -50%; Extra Carrying Capacity, Extra-Heavy, +50%; Hyperjump, 1 LY/day, -25%; No Strain, +25%; Reliable +5, +25%; Tracking, +20%) [145]. *Notes:* A space-opera FTL drive. It lets the user cover a light-year per day, along with anything he can carry. It requires precise coordinates (Reliable cancels the -5 for Blind Only), only works in vacuum, and is useless over short distances. However, it never “burns out,” and can follow other FTL travelers by sensing their “trail.” 145 points.

**Tactical Teleport:** Warp (Blink, +25%; Extra Carrying Capacity, Extra-Heavy, +50%; No Strain, +25%; Range Limit, 10 yards, -50%; Reliable +10, +50%) [200]. *Notes:* Supers-style teleportation that lets the teleporter cover *short* distances – up to 10 yards – safely and reliably, with all of his gear. This requires no preparation; he can even use his ability to evade attacks in combat. 200 points.

## MENTAL ABILITIES

Below are mental abilities from each of the four categories defined in Chapter 1 (see p. 14). Such gifts are popular in fiction – especially as psi abilities – so we provide *many* examples. The GM should review these before allowing them to PCs, to ensure that any assumptions made for the sake of concreteness are valid in *his* setting. For instance, most of these capabilities imply the existence of superscience or the supernatural.

### Communications

**Culture Sense:** Social Chameleon (Accessibility, Must converse with subject, -20%; Exposure Time, 1 minute, -30%) [3] + Xeno-Adaptability (Accessibility, Must converse with subject, -20%; Exposure Time, 1 minute, -30%) [10]. *Notes:* The user *temporarily* adjusts to foreign social norms through careful observation or “psychic osmosis.” After a minute of conversation with a sapient being, he no longer suffers penalties for cultural unfamiliarity or differences in Rank or Status. These benefits last for as long as the user interacts with that person or members of the same culture, and for a minute afterward. 13 points.

**Mindshare:** Mindlink (10 billion people; Racial, -20%; Vague, -50%) [33] + Telesend (Broadcast, +50%; Racial, -20%; Vague, -50%) [24]. *Notes:* The communication ability of “hive minds” in speculative fiction. Each member of the race sends his emotions and *general* experiences (no details!) to every other member at all times, with no chance of failure. 57 points.

**Sampler:** Mimicry (Voice Library, +50%) [15] + Photographic Memory

(Accessibility, Sounds only, -80%) [2]. *Notes:* The user stores recordings of everything he hears. He can play back sounds exactly as he heard them, sample them selectively, or just borrow a *voice* to use with his own speech. 17 points.

**Tactical Radio:** Radio (Burst, 1,000×, +90%; Increased Range, ×20, +40%; Secure, +20%) [25]. *Notes:* A long-range (200 miles) radio capable of encrypted bursts. Attempts to intercept it are at -3 *and* require the eavesdropper to win a Quick Contest of interception skill against the sender’s IQ to understand the message. 25 points.

**Universal Translator:** Mind Reading (Hearing-Based, -20%; Telecommunication, Telesend, -20%; Universal, +50%) [33] + Telesend (Universal, +50%) [45]. *Notes:* The possessor can project his thoughts to make himself understood to anyone, regardless of language. After establishing outgoing contact, he can open full two-way communication. This lets him understand his *subject’s* words and intentions – *if* he can hear that person speak. 78 points.

### Influence

**Compel Truth:** Mind Probe (Accessibility, Must converse with subject, -20%; Vision-Based, -20%) [12]. *Notes:* To use this ability, the user must be close enough to touch his subject, engage his mark in conversation, *and* maintain eye contact. If he satisfies all three requirements, he can compel the subject to give one truthful answer per minute. Roll a Quick Contest of IQ vs. Will for each question. 12 points.

**Cyberpsi:** Mind Control (Conditioning, +50%; Cybernetic Only, -50%) [50]. *Notes:* The ability to seize control of a computer or other Digital Mind. The controller must see or touch his subject. Success lets him operate it remotely. Once “inside,” he can try to rewrite its programming (Conditioning). Use Computer Operation for rolls to establish control and Computer Hacking for reprogramming attempts, where either is superior to IQ. 50 points.

**Data Probe:** Mind Probe (Based on HT, +20%; Cybernetic Only, -50%; Invasive, +75%) [29]. *Notes:* A sensitive electromagnetic probe that affects

If the attack succeeds, the target may defend . . . if he knows he's being attacked. An attack that suddenly comes bouncing around a corner is effectively a surprise attack. An attack from in front of the target that bounces around and hits him from behind or above isn't, but it still gives -1 to defenses *per bounce*. The victim knows he's being attacked, just not from what angle.

Reduce the damage rolled for the attack – or the level of Affliction, Binding, etc. – by 10% per bounce (round down). For a Follow-Up attack, only the carrier is weakened. Don't worry about damage to the bouncing surfaces, though. That's no more relevant than DR and HP were in the first place.

In battles between heroes who can see each other, the GM may reduce this rule to its fundamentals: -2 to hit, -1 to defend, and -10% to damage per bounce.

## DEFENDING WITH POWERS

Defensive advantages – Damage Resistance, Mind Shield, Resistant, etc. – are nearly always passive. The possessor doesn't have to “use” them to enjoy their protection. In the absence of limitations, they work *all the time*.

Buying such a trait as part of a power changes *nothing* – it protects against everything the “wild” advantage does. For instance, Damage Resistance that belongs to a power stops both mundane and powered attacks, and does so regardless of its power modifier or that of the attack (unless one of the power modifiers is Cosmic). Modifiers can change this, of course: a defense with Limited is effective against only *some* attacks, penetration modifiers (Follow-Up, Malediction, Sense-Based, etc.) often let attacks bypass DR, and so on.

In heroic settings, though, individuals with powers often enjoy a broad mastery of their power that transcends its specific abilities. They can bend the usual assumptions, taking control of normally passive defenses in order to defend actively, perhaps even using *non*-defensive abilities to blunt attacks. These rules cover

“power defenses” like this. Work out Power Dodge, Power Parry, and Power Block ahead of time and record them next to the associated abilities on the character sheet.

As with mundane active defenses, power defenses get +1 for Combat Reflexes, +2 for All-Out Defense (Increased Defense), and are unavailable to a fighter who makes an All-Out Attack or doesn't know he's under attack. Power defenses *aren't* mundane defenses, though. A hero can attempt a Power Block and a mundane block on the same turn, has no penalty on future parries if he tries a Power Parry, and *can* attempt a Power Parry during a Move and Attack. No one may use more than *one* power defense per turn, however.

These rules *don't* apply to abilities with the Active Defense limitation. Such abilities use the rules under *Active Defense* (p. 112) instead.

### Power Dodge

If a switchable movement ability or physical transformation is *instantaneous* – either in its unmodified form or due to Reduced Time (p. B108) or Reflexive (p. 109) – the user might be able to use it to evade attacks. This is only possible if the GM feels that activating the ability would cause the attack to pass harmlessly *around* or *through* the defender. Treat this as a dodge, but roll against the following score instead of Dodge:

**Power Dodge = Basic Speed + 3 + Talent/2**

Drop all fractions. Standard Dodge modifiers apply, *except* those for Acrobatic Dodge, bad footing, dodge and drop, encumbrance, posture, relative height, retreating, and shield DB.

Success means the attack doesn't affect the defender at all. Failure means it hits before his ability goes off. Either way, the ability activates. *Exception:* If using *Crippled Abilities* (p. 156), a critical failure means the ability fails completely, in addition to the usual effects of a critically failed defense roll.

Treat a Power Dodge as an active use of the ability for all purposes: detection, FP cost (if any), Limited Use, etc. A physical transformation

leaves the defender in altered-body form. On his turn, he can opt to switch back or remain in that form.

Whether a Power Dodge is better than an ordinary dodge depends on the situation and the ability. It can sometimes avoid attacks that a standard dodge couldn't hope to avoid. Examples include:

*Insubstantiality:* Success means the attack passes right through. This works against *everything* – even area-effect, cone, and explosion attacks. But if the attack has Affects Insubstantial, the Power Dodge is worthless.

*Morph:* A successful dodge means you change shape in such a way that the attack passes over, under, through, or past you. Specify the details; for instance, “I become a mouse and drop under the attack” or “I turn into a giant donut so that the attack passes through the hole.”

*Permeation:* Only allowed if you're standing on a surface you can permeate. Success means you sink into the ground and the attack passes over you.

*Shadow Form:* Success means you become a shadow on the ground, wall, etc., before the attack hits. This lets you dodge in many situations where movement is impossible.

*Shrinking:* Success lets you shrink *away from* or *under* the attack without ducking or sidestepping. This permits a dodge even when restrained.

*Warp:* This advantage has specific rules for evading attacks (see p. B98). Use those *instead* of a Power Dodge.

### Power Parry

An Innate Attack can sometimes knock aside or “shoot down” another Innate Attack, much as one melee weapon can parry another. This is a Power Parry. It's normally only possible in two situations:

1. If the defending and attacking powers share a focus, the defender can exploit his control over the focus to weaken the attack. This is regardless of *source*. For instance, two opponents with Heat/Fire power can use their attack abilities to defend against one another . . . even if one is a priest with a Divine power and the other is a wizard with a Magical power.

# INDEX

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