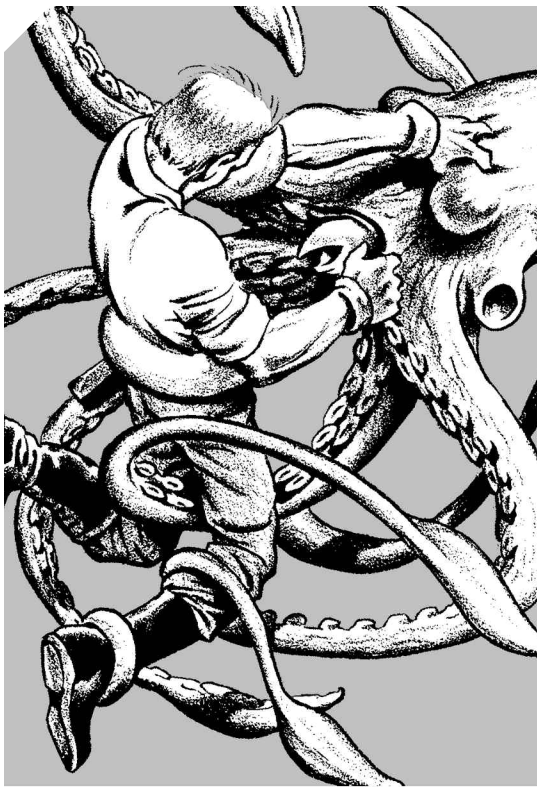


**GURPS**

Fourth Edition

# **POWER-UPS™**

## **TALENTS**



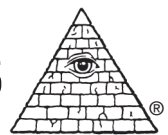
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# INTRODUCTION

An important game concept introduced when *GURPS* evolved from Third Edition to Fourth Edition was *Talents* (see pp. B89-91). A Talent is an aptitude for a set of closely related skills; it effectively increases a character's attribute scores where those skills are concerned. Unlike raising DX, IQ, HT, Will, or Per directly – which would improve his abilities in an all-around sense – buying a Talent makes him a “natural” at a collection of tasks that are on some level linked.

Thus, Talents are above all else characterization aids. They help explain why a hero went into his chosen profession or sideline, or adopted a particular lifestyle or outlook. Moreover, the fact that Talents outnumber attributes and secondary characteristics means that buying one affords an adventurer better odds of standing out among his peers than would, say, improving DX or IQ.

In support of this goal, the basic rules for Talents explain how to create *new* ones – and *GURPS* writers have been hard at work doing exactly that. The 10 examples in the *Basic Set* are now merely a drop in the bucket! *GURPS Power-Ups 3: Talents* collects *all* of the Talents published so far, clarifies how they work, and introduces several optional rules related to them. Even the GM who doesn't allow any Talent in this catalog should find the worked examples and added detail valuable when designing his own.

## PUBLICATION HISTORY

*Power-Ups 3: Talents* contains *every* Talent published for *GURPS* as of July 2011, including those in the *Basic Set*;

each entry gives its original source. This work strives to be complete, listing even Talents that are nearly identical, and expanding on the original text as needed to clarify, generalize, or address errata. It also offers some *new* Talents – mainly out-takes from early drafts and previews of works in progress. This list isn't meant to stem the flow; future *GURPS* projects will bring even more Talents!

The only deliberate omission is *power* Talents (see p. B255 and *GURPS Powers*). While these are related to the traits defined on pp. B89-91 in the sense that both grant bonuses to success rolls (whence the similarity in name), they aren't identical. Power Talents affect the use of advantages, not skills.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sean “Dr. Kromm” Punch set out to become a particle physicist in 1985, ended up the *GURPS* Line Editor in 1995, and has engineered rules for almost every *GURPS* product since. He developed, edited, or wrote dozens of *GURPS Third Edition* projects between 1995 and 2002. In 2004, he produced the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition* with David Pulver. Since then, he has created *GURPS Powers* (with Phil Masters), *GURPS Martial Arts* (with Peter Dell'Orto), and the *GURPS Action, GURPS Dungeon Fantasy, and GURPS Power-Ups* series . . . and the list keeps growing. Sean has been a gamer since 1979. His non-gaming interests include cinema, cooking, and wine. He lives in Montréal, Québec with his wife, Bonnie, and their two cats, Banshee and Zephyra.

## About GURPS

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

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.

# CHAPTER ONE

# TALENTS

First, let's review how Talents work, in a little more detail than the *Basic Set* offers.

## Benefits of Talent

A Talent come in *levels*, and grants three benefits:

1. A bonus of +1 per level with all of the skills listed under it. This effectively raises attribute scores for the purpose of *those skills only*. It applies no matter what attribute the skill is used with. Even default use enjoys this benefit (for more thoughts on defaults, see *Defaults and Talents*, below) – although if you *only* want to boost defaults, it's cheaper to buy Jack of All Trades (p. 11) or the Dabbler perk (*GURPS Power-Ups 2*, p. 16).

2. A bonus of +1 per level on all reaction rolls made by anyone in a position to notice the Talent, *if he would be impressed by such aptitude* (GM's decision). This applies only after demonstrating the Talent – normally by using the affected skills. The GM may opt to replace this element; see *Alternative Benefits* (pp. 18-19) for details.

3. A reduction of 10% per level in the time needed to learn the affected skills in play, regardless of *how* they're learned; e.g., Animal Friend 2 enables you to acquire animal-related skills in 80% of the usual time. This never affects the skills' *point cost*.

## Defaults and Talents

When skills that enjoy Talent bonuses are used in default calculations, always do the math and determine the point costs *without* the Talent level, and then add the Talent bonus at the end. The Talent only adds to the skills listed for it – never to skills that default to those skills, unless they're noted under the Talent as well (in which case, adding Talent as the final step ensures that it isn't counted twice).

*Example:* Hamid has IQ 12, Artificer 2, and Electronics Repair/TL8 (Sensors) (A) IQ+5 [12]-17. This skill level includes the +2 for Talent. If he decides to learn Electronics Repair/TL8 (Surveillance) from its Sensors default, first he subtracts Talent from his Sensors level, giving him IQ+3 level (15); then he applies the -4 default penalty, which yields IQ-1 level (11); and finally he improves his new skill from there. If he invests 1 point, he raises Surveillance to IQ level (12). Only at the end does he add his Talent bonus, giving him IQ+2 level (14).

If Hamid wants to learn Electronics Operation/TL8 (Sensors), which defaults to Electronics Repair/TL8 (Sensors) at -5, Artificer is of no help, as Electronics Operation isn't one of its skills! He doesn't start with his modified Electronics Repair skill of 17, apply the -5, and improve his new skill from 12. Rather, his default level is his unmodified Electronics Repair skill of 15, -5. That's just 10, which is too low to save him any points.

## Limits on Talent Level

The standard limit on Talent is four levels. However, Talents *can* overlap to give skill bonuses in excess of +4. If you possess two levels in each of three Talents that influence Singing, then you get +6 to Singing, even though you could get only +4 from any one of those Talents. Reaction and learning-speed bonuses can't exceed those for four levels of Talent, though.

For exceptions to these rules, see *Extended Talents* (pp. 21-22)

## Cost of Talent

A Talent's cost depends on the size of the group of skills affected:

Small (6 or fewer related skills): *5 points/level*.

Medium (7 to 12 related skills): *10 points/level*.

Large (13 or more related skills\*): *15 points/level*.

\* There's no hard upper limit, but a Talent that benefits 18+ skills is probably *too* broad.

If a Talent affects a skill that has multiple specialties, treat all of its specialties as *one* skill for the purpose of calculating cost. However, many Talents benefit only *some* specialties – those that suit the Talent! There's no discount for this, and a

Talent never improves specialties that fall outside its area; subtract Talent before finding your default skill with specialties it doesn't cover, and don't add it back at the end. For additional important notes on skill counts, see *Counting Your Blessings* (p. 5).

No Talent should encompass wildcard skills (p. B175). Wildcards are an *alternative* to Talents. Both share the goal of using a single trait to improve many related skills at once. Including such a skill in a Talent would be superfluous and possibly unbalanced.

A Talent's skill list is fixed when the Talent is created. However, the GM might make exceptions for new skills he invents or allows from later *GURPS* supplements. If so, then for simplicity's sake, cost per level doesn't change.

The GM who feels that broad cost bands are unfair should check out the optional but more complex alternative of *Smooth Talent Cost* (p. 25).

## Racial Talents

As explained on p. B452, a Talent may be restricted to members of a particular race.

## Academic

5 points/level

Public Speaking, Research, Speed-Reading, Teaching, and Writing.

*Reaction Bonus:* Students and teachers.

*Alternative Benefit:* +1/level to any roll that notes a bonus for Eidetic Memory (p. B51), including the recall roll for Speed-Reading.

*Alternative Cost:* 5 points/level.

## Alien Friend

5 points/level

Diplomacy, Expert Skill (Xenology), and all specialties of Anthropology, History, and Psychology that pertain to *alien* cultures and races.

*Reaction Bonus:* Aliens.

*Alternative Benefit:* None. This Talent represents an innate curiosity, respect, or *je ne sais quoi* that's best handled as a general reaction bonus from aliens.

*Alternative Cost:* 5 points/level.

*Source:* **GURPS Space**.

## Allure

5 points/level

Dancing, Erotic Art, Makeup, Sex Appeal, and Singing.

*Reaction Bonus:* Anyone attracted to your specific combination of race and sex; people who might employ you as an actress, courtesan, or model.

*Alternative Benefit:* None. Allure grants a mix of grace and ideal features that affects those who find your "type" appealing – not unlike specialized Appearance. The reaction bonus is fitting.

*Alternative Cost:* 5 points/level.

*Sources:* **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 11** and **GURPS Fantasy**.

## Animal Friend

5 points/level

Animal Handling, Falconry, Packing, Riding, Teamster, and Veterinary.

*Reaction Bonus:* All ordinary animals.

*Alternative Benefit:* None. Some individuals' body language, scent, or whatever is clearly more appealing to animals, and a reaction bonus models this ideally.

*Alternative Cost:* 6 points/level.

*Source:* **GURPS Basic Set**.

*Notes:* Compare Beastmaster.

## Antiquary

5 points/level

Architecture, Connoisseur, Heraldry, History, Literature, and Research.

*Reaction Bonus:* Devotees of the old and beautiful.

*Alternative Benefit:* -1/level less-severe penalties from *Time* (p. B176) when dealing with old stuff, and/or from *Tech-Level*

*Modifiers* (p. B168) when dealing with sciences of a *lower* TL (e.g., Antiquary 3 lets someone with Chemistry/TL8 use Chemistry/TL4 at -4 instead of -7).

*Alternative Cost:* 6 points/level.

*Source:* **GURPS Horror**.

## Artificer

10 points/level

Armoury, Carpentry, Electrician, Electronics Repair, Engineer, Machinist, Masonry, Mechanic, and Smith.

*Reaction Bonus:* Anyone for whom you do work.

*Alternative Benefit:* Success with an *appropriate* skill listed for this Talent lets you improvise equipment for other skills that's good enough to cut -1/level from the penalty for being improvised (p. B345). When rolling on the *Enigmatic Device Table* (pp. B478-479) or making any similar unskilled roll to figure out tech, apply +1/level instead.

*Alternative Cost:* 9 points/level.

*Source:* **GURPS Basic Set**.

## Bard

5 points/level

Heraldry, Literature, Musical Influence, Poetry, Public Speaking, and Singing.

*Reaction Bonus:* Audiences and fellow bards.

*Alternative Benefit:* +1/level to the first Influence roll (p. B359) of any kind made on an audience member (or several of them as a group) after a *successful* performance.

*Alternative Cost:* 6 points/level.

*Sources:* **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 11** (as "Bard-Lore") and **GURPS Fantasy**.

## Beastmaster\*

10 points/level

Animal Handling, Disguise (Animals), Falconry, Flight, Hidden Lore (Lycanthropes), Mimicry (Animal Sounds and Bird Calls), Mount, Naturalist, Packing, Riding, Teamster, and Veterinary.

*Reaction Bonus:* All animals, however extraordinary.

*Alternative Benefit:* None. As noted for Animal Friend, a reaction bonus from animals is an entirely appropriate benefit for such a Talent.

*Alternative Cost:* 12 points/level.

*Notes:* This enhanced version of Animal Friend adds skills allowing a deeper grasp of and even impersonating beasts, and tacks on Flight and Mount for those who can *become* animals. It's intended for fantasy druids and heroes with similar abilities.

## Born Entertainer

5 points/level

Acting, Dancing, Performance, Public Speaking, Singing, and Stage Combat.

*Reaction Bonus:* Crowds – they love you!

*Alternative Benefit:* +1/level to the first Influence roll (p. B359) of any kind made on an audience member (or several of them as a group) after a *successful* performance.

*Alternative Cost:* 6 points/level.

The GM doesn't *have* to make prerequisites and enablers fixed properties like point costs, skill lists, alternative abilities, etc. If a Talent suggests a character concept, then he might permit it to anyone who has spent at least as many points on advantages related to that concept as a level of the Talent would cost. He could even handle such assessments entirely on a roleplaying basis; e.g., a priest played as being devout may get permission to purchase Devotion (pp. 9-10), or receive a level of that Talent *instead* of earned points.

## SMOOTH TALENT COST

Using broad skill-count bands to price Talents is arbitrary but affords several advantages. Most important, it enables gamers who dislike complexity to avoid the need to deal with exact skill counts and with point costs that aren't easily remembered multiples of five. More subtly, neat size categories are valuable for descriptive purposes. It's handy to be able to say, for instance, "Choose any 10-point Talent" on a template, and convenient to qualify optional rules or house rules with straightforward riders such as "Only Small Talents can be learned in play" or "These additional benefits apply to Large Talents."

However, not everybody likes the way that adding one skill to a group of six or 12 bumps up cost by 5 points/level, while doubling three skills to six or adding five skills to seven has no effect. This can seem a little unfair, leading to "solutions" like every Talent with fewer than 13 skills covering exactly six or 12 skills – even when this means adding skills that don't fit well, or weakening a strong concept to *force* them to fit. In addition, there are untidy end effects. At the low end, the 2 points/level for single-skill bonuses (pp. B118, B452) doesn't dovetail neatly with the cost of Talent for two to six skills. At the high end, "13 or more" is open to abuse in the shape of Talents that benefit dozens of skills.

For a simple fix that addresses all of these concerns, use the following alternative pricing scheme:

Talent costs 1 point/level per skill affected, with a minimum cost of 5 points/level.

This produces a decent match to the prices in the *Basic Set*. Talents that cover two to six skills average  $(5 + 5 + 5 + 5 + 6)/5 = 5.2$  points/level; rounded to the nearest integer, that's 5 points/level and the same price as a "Small" Talent. Those that cover seven to 12 skills average 9.5 points/level, which rounds to 10 points/level, like a "Medium" Talent. And reading "13 or more" as "13 to 17" provides a perfect match to the 15 points/level for a "Large" Talent.

The minimum cost *is* an arbitrary cutoff that makes five-skill Talents more attractive than anything smaller. This is necessary

to avoid the oddity of a Talent for two to four skills being a better deal per level than a single skill. While *all* Talents are cheaper than individual skill improvements, a per-level cost less than or equal to that of just *one* skill would mean that anyone buying a skill covered by such a Talent would select the Talent instead of a higher skill level – even if it didn't fit the character concept. The temptation doesn't vanish at 5 points/level, but at least it's no worse than that of raising Will or Per instead of a skill based on one of those scores.

The upper end merits discussion, too. While 15 points/level is a fair deal for a Talent that covers many skills spread out over at least two of DX, IQ, and HT, it would be a rip-off for a Talent covering just HT-based skills; obviously, raising HT for 10 points/level would be better. By the same token, a Talent that hits 20 points/level will look second-rate if it mostly serves as limited DX or IQ. Indeed, these attributes are so valuable that few players would select *any* Talent over a level of either. Thus, it's best to cap Talents at the 17 skills hinted at above when using this optional rule.

For the sake of convenience, all of the Talents in Chapter 1 offer alternative point costs worked out under this scheme.

## TALENTS AS TRAINING

While *Learning Talents* (pp. 22-25) explores the possibility of improving an innate gift, the mechanics of Talents lend themselves well to a radically different take on learning. Some groups of skills are related not in a profound way by neurology or epistemology – or even by game concepts such as defaults and controlling attributes – but by the fact that they're regularly taught and used together. Students study common situations applicable to all of those skills, and that training makes it easier for them to apply the skills . . . just as a Talent for those skills would!

This kind of thing is always learnable in play, although it often requires hundreds or thousands of hours of intensive training. Such a fundamental difference necessitates a few special rules, summed up under the following new advantage.

### Job Training

#### Variable

You've received the intensive training necessary to do a demanding job. To be eligible for this advantage, the position must be extremely specific: "U.S. Army Special Forces Weapons Specialist" or "Imperial Navy Engineer" would qualify; "soldier" or "engineer" (or even "U.S. soldier" or "starship engineer") would not. Moreover, the role has to be defined by a character template, and you must meet all of the template's requirements to be entitled to Job Training.

*I'm Gunnery Sergeant Hartman, your senior drill instructor. From now on you will speak only when spoken to, and the first and the last word out of your filthy sewers will be "Sir." Do you maggots understand that?*

*– Gunnery Sergeant Hartman, in **Full Metal Jacket***

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*Let the path be  
open to talent.*

– Napoleon  
Bonaparte

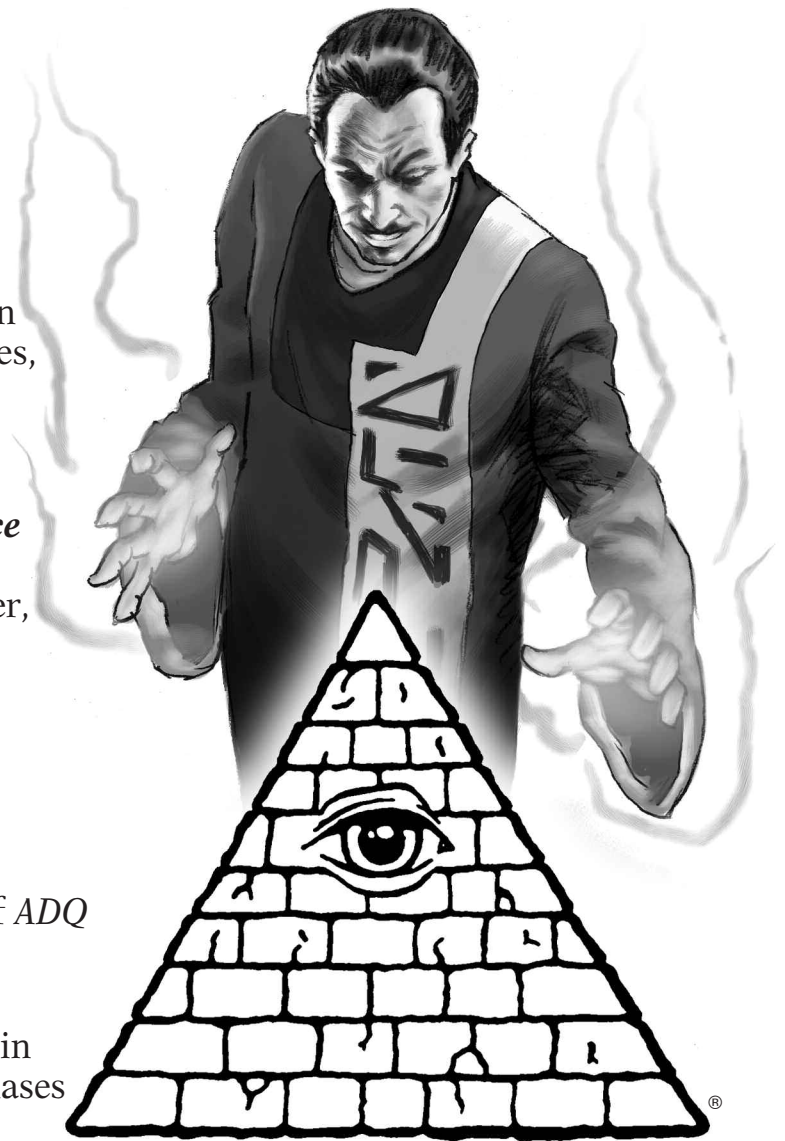
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