

**GURPS**<sup>®</sup>

Fourth Edition

# Social Engineering<sup>™</sup>

## KEEPING IN CONTACT<sup>™</sup>



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*When you're burned, you've got nothing . . . You rely on anyone who's still talking to you. A trigger-happy ex-girlfriend . . . An old friend who used to inform on you . . . Family, too . . . if you're desperate.*

*– Michael Westen,  
in **Burn Notice** season 1 opening*

# INTRODUCTION

*The list of all possible Contacts – and their skills – would fill an entire book.*

– *GURPS Basic Set*

**GURPS Social Engineering: Keeping in Contact** covers the Contact advantage and its related traits in greater depth and detail than ever before. Contacts are an extremely valuable part of the roleplayer's toolkit. For the player, Contacts provide their characters with access to useful or secret information and helpful favors that can make or break a mission. For the GM, a Contact is an interesting NPC who the players *want* to interact with regularly, connecting their characters to the setting and facilitating classic plot elements around protagonists' friends and associates.

Contacts have sometimes been seen as not worth the points. **Keeping in Contact** addresses this, explaining the major benefits of Contact-type advantages, and covering the various ways they can be modified and customized to fit concepts. This supplement goes into detail on what sorts of information and favors are available. It also covers a variety of Contact types, explaining what skills are available to each and the type of knowledge and assistance they can provide. Additionally, examples describe popular individuals and groups.

## RECOMMENDED BOOKS

**Keeping in Contact** is an optional expansion for the *GURPS Basic Set*, and doesn't require *GURPS Social Engineering*. However, *Social Engineering* can be useful,

with its extensive rules on using reactions and Influence rolls to win people over who could become Contacts. **GURPS Social Engineering: Pulling Rank** includes numerous favors that organizations can do, several of which have been used in this book as well. **Pulling Rank** is a great source for other ideas of what a Contact could do. **GURPS Boardroom and Curia** gives stats for a wide range of organizations, and offers more details on what they can provide as Contact Groups. Finally, **GURPS Social Engineering: Back to School** presents rules for teaching that are referenced here (see *Teaching*, p. 39).

## PUBLICATION HISTORY

This is the first edition of *GURPS Social Engineering: Keeping in Contact*. It expands on the rules for Contacts and Contact Groups in *GURPS Basic Set*, and draws the rules for Contacts! from *Trusted Assistants* on p. 65 of *GURPS Supers*. Many of the categories of Contacts have been inspired by *Type* (*GURPS Boardroom and Curia*, pp. 11-13).

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kelly Pedersen lives and works in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, in Canada. He's played *GURPS Fourth Edition* for almost 15 years now, using it for a variety of settings and genres. He's written numerous articles for *Pyramid* magazine, but this is his first *GURPS* book. He figures serving as a Contact (Games (Tabletop RPGs); Skill-15) for his friends qualifies him to write this.

## ABOUT GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of *GURPS* players. We can be reached by email: [info@sjgames.com](mailto:info@sjgames.com). Our address is SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Resources include:

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*Pyramid* ([pyramid.sjgames.com](http://pyramid.sjgames.com)). For 10 years, our PDF magazine *Pyramid* included new rules and articles for *GURPS*, plus systemless locations, adventures, and more. The entire 122-issue library is available at Warehouse 23!

*Internet.* To discuss *GURPS* with our staff and your fellow gamers, visit our forums at [forums.sjgames.com](http://forums.sjgames.com). You can also join us at [facebook.com/sjgames](http://facebook.com/sjgames) or

[twitter.com/sjgames](https://twitter.com/sjgames). Share your brief campaign teasers with #GURPSHook on Twitter. Or explore that hashtag for ideas to add to your own game! The web page *GURPS Social Engineering: Keeping in Contact* can be found at [gurps.sjgames.com/keepingincontact](http://gurps.sjgames.com/keepingincontact).

*Store Finder* ([storefinder.sjgames.com](http://storefinder.sjgames.com)): Discover nearby places to buy *GURPS* items and other Steve Jackson Games products. Local shops are great places to play our games and meet fellow gamers!

*Bibliographies.* Bibliographies are a great resource for finding more of what you love! We've added them to many *GURPS* book web pages with links to help you find the next perfect element for your game.

*Errata.* Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Errata pages for *GURPS* releases are available at [sjgames.com/errata/gurps](http://sjgames.com/errata/gurps).

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.

## CHEAPER CONNECTIONS: OPTIONAL RULES

These two optional rules make Contact advantages cheaper and work together well.

### *Low-Skill Contacts*

Sometimes, a Contact doesn't need skill even as high as 12. Easy-to-acquire information and simple favors might be all that's needed, and various options can improve the effective skill if desired (see *Boosting Skill*, p. 18). Contacts with skills lower than 12 have a base cost in fractional points:

<b>Effective Skill:</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>
Base Cost:	0.25	0.5	0.75

To calculate a low-skill Contact's cost, multiply the base cost for frequency of appearance and reliability, and

for either Contact Group or Contact!, as usual, and round the price up to the nearest whole number. For instance, a Completely Reliable Contact with skill 6 and frequency of appearance 15 would cost 4.5 points, rounded up to 5.

### *Friends in High Places*

In very high-powered games, to ensure Contacts are competitive with other traits, raise effective skill by one step for PCs built with 500 points, and another step for every additional 500 points.

*Example:* Divine Grace, built on 1,000 points, buys cub photographer Judy Owlson as a Contact with Current Events (Headline News)-12 for 1 point. However, Judy's effective skill is raised to 18 due to Divine Grace's point total.

## CONTACT MODIFIERS

Most of the following can be applied to any Contact, Contact Group, or Contact!, unless noted in their description.

### *New Special Enhancements*

*Broad Scope:* This is only applicable for disparate Contact Groups (see *Organized and Disparate Groups*, p. 5), and expands the area they cover. This is worth +50% if it covers a significant fraction of the campaign setting, or +100% if it includes almost everywhere, like a typical Contact.

*Disparate:* This enhancement only applies to Contacts, not Contact Groups or Contact!. Rather than a single person, your Contact is a number of similar-but-unconnected individuals, spread out over a wide area. Use this when it doesn't make sense for one person to have broad influence, but you still want to access your Contact throughout the setting. Losing one individual (due to social blunders or enemy action) doesn't affect the others. Also, in an area that could contain more than one example of your group, the benefits of disparate groups apply (calling on the Contact more than once a day, with no repeated request penalty if you reach a new person; see *Organized and Disparate Groups*, p. 5). +25%

*Highly Accessible:* This enhancement comes in two levels. The first level makes it one step more convenient to reach the Contact than normal (see *Contact Convenience*, p. 19). At the second level, you can *always* reach your Contact, even in extreme circumstances with no normal way of communicating, and it will never be worse than mildly inconvenient. The second level is usually only appropriate for supernatural Contacts. +25% per level.

*Patient:* Your Contact is particularly willing to put up with you. Each level of this enhancement either lets you make one additional, distinct request without a penalty per day, or permits you to contact them more frequently. Choose which benefit applies when you buy the Contact. One level of Patient enables you to call on a Contact once every 12 hours, two levels allows once every three hours, three levels permits once an hour, and four levels (the maximum for

these purposes) lets you call every 15 minutes. Frequency of appearance is rolled each time you try to get in touch, and if it fails, the Contact is unavailable until the time period indicated by your level of Patient passes. +20% per level.

*Did you think I was going  
to run all around the city  
desperately trying to save  
everyone all by myself?  
I'm not Batman. I have friends.  
– Red Robin,  
in Red Robin #12*

### *New Special Limitations*

*Convince Me:* Your Contact always needs some persuasion. Each time you call on them, you must roll an appropriate skill to talk them into helping. If the roll fails, your contact refuses to help this time. Choose when you take this limitation whether this is always the same skill, or if it varies based on circumstances. If it varies, the GM has the final call on which skill is appropriate. It is usually an Influence skill (though not a Quick Contest – Will is not rolled to oppose it), but others may be used as appropriate: Soldier to convince a captain that you've got a valid military concern, Psychology to pull the right levers on a stubborn personality, and so on. -10% (or -5% if you always roll a Will- or Per-based skill).

*Inaccessible:* This is the opposite of the Highly Accessible enhancement, above – you cannot take both! For each level of Inaccessible (to a maximum of three), the convenience level of getting in touch is one step worse than it would otherwise be (see *Contact Convenience*, p. 19). -10% per level.

# CHAPTER TWO

# HOW TO

# CONNECT

Handling Contacts can take finesse. This chapter gives guidelines for that, including details on what sort of information and favors Contacts can provide, advice on managing

the relationships between the heroes and their associates, and some optional rules for various aspects of Contacts.

## THE BENEFITS OF CONTACTS

As suggested in *Contacts*, pp. 4-5, there are two main benefits: supplying information and doing favors.

### INSIDE INFORMATION

The knowledge Contacts provide should always be more than what a simple skill roll would give. Contacts can offer three broad classes of information (though not all Contacts have the same degree of access): *secret information*, *convenient information*, and *information synthesis*.



### Secret Information

When most people talk about “asking my contacts,” they’re looking for hidden knowledge. This is the most common type of information a Contact can provide. An associate’s nature is more important than the skill they’re defined with when deciding what they know. A consigliere knows things about *la Famiglia* whether his skill is *Savoir-Faire* (Mafia) or *Streetwise*. The skill “flavors” the information, however – the wiseguy with *Savoir-Faire* puts details in terms of the relationships and social power of various Mafia members, while the *Streetwise* guy talks about which underworld source they heard it from, and how it affects the larger criminal scene.

Contacts definitely know and can share more than the average person, but they aren’t omniscient, either. That short-circuits too many good plots! Available information

is divided into four broad categories, corresponding to skill level.

- *Common knowledge* (skill 12). Known to most members of a group, though restricted from the general public. *Examples*: the identity of the head of a crime family, the general layout of a military base, a privately traded company’s annual performance report.

- *Restricted knowledge* (skill 15). Limited to people who give orders (Rank 1 or higher), or shared with the rank-and-file only when it’s relevant to their tasks. *Examples*: broad plans for criminal activity within a locale, the tactical objectives of a battle, the company’s business plans and objectives for the next quarter.

- *Secret knowledge* (skill 18). Limited to only leaders who need to know, and significant steps are taken to keep it confidential. *Examples*: specific targets and plans for upcoming criminal activities, troop strengths and planned movements over a whole theater of battle, a company’s hostile-takeover and market-manipulation strategies.

- *Absolutely confidential knowledge* (skill 21). Confined to only the highest leaders, usually related to their ultimate plans or future goals. *Examples*: the don’s plans to get into drug smuggling as well as distribution, the ultimate strategic goals and plans of a whole army, a corporation’s scheme to control all their major competitors and dominate the market.

A Contact can be asked about information above their “pay grade,” at -3 to skill per level this exceeds what’s normally available. Additionally, requesting information *personally* dangerous to the Contact is another -5, whether because it would be obvious who released it, or the information’s use would involve harming them. To avoid these penalties, ask for rumors instead. Hearsay is less certain, however. The GM should provide two or three *possible* answers per level the information exceeds the Contact’s skill, each of which requires legwork by the adventurers to verify or dismiss (Intuition is very handy to narrow this down!).

### *Unusual and Supernatural Contacts*

Contacts with “supernatural abilities” increase their base cost by 1 point. Almost any of the categories presented here can qualify for this, if they’re composed largely of supernatural beings or simply have access to resources that aren’t otherwise common in the setting. For example, a Religious group in a setting with interventionist deities would qualify if they can call on divine power with any regularity.

Finally, typical *favours* are listed. In addition to specific tasks described in the category, Contacts can provide authorization to enter their own private spaces, material assistance for cash loans or gifts at the personal level (see *Material Aid*, p. 14), social privilege in the form of introductions to other members of the group, and transportation to and from locations of specific interest to that category. Practically every type of Contact also can supply some sort of skilled assistance, usually taking the form of complementary bonuses (see *Complementary Skills*, p. 15).

## THE CATEGORIES

In addition to the specifics listed in each category, Contacts can provide general assistance. See *Understanding the Contact Categories* (pp. 23-24) for suggested information and favours that almost anyone could supply. See *Special Cases* (pp. 38-39) for additional effects of some of the skills.

### **ADVOCACY**

These Contacts promote an agenda, whether legislative, social, or otherwise. Advocacy overlaps with many other categories, depending on what they’re agitating for.

#### *Skills*

- One or more Influence skills, and Propaganda to win public approval or Politics to get elected.
- Common group skills (p. 23).
- Law, Philosophy (usually a political specialization, such as Marxist), Public Speaking, and Writing.
- Other skills appropriate to their purpose (Veterinary for animal rights, Biology for an environmentalist agenda, etc.).

#### *Individuals and Groups*

A local protester, a courtier to the local baron, the President of the NAACP, the head of the Interstellar Health Organization; the mayor’s campaign office, the Black Panthers, an abolitionist group known throughout the Empire, the International Council of Women.

#### *Information*

Personal information relating to their focus: who’s for it, who’s against it, who publicly opposes it but indulges in secret.

#### *Favors*

- Covert Assistance: Gathering groups of protesters or simply angry oppressed.
- Protection, Rescue, and Warning: Bailouts or otherwise escaping official legal trouble; warning that you are being targeted by groups they are politically opposed to.
- Skilled Help: Complementary bonuses on getting the ear of politicians or the public to further *the PC’s* agenda, or assistance designing propaganda campaigns.

- Social Privilege: Introductions to people in power.
- Violence: Advocacy groups willing to use violence to achieve their ends or defend their charges make the following available: thugs (willing to back up intimidation or indulge in actual violence against those cruelly opposed to their cause) and riots (with groups of angry people lashing out against their opponents).

### **AID**

This category is devoted to providing assistance, sometimes to the disadvantaged, or more generally to all of society. They often cross over with Advocacy (above) groups, if they want to change society or law to benefit their charges, and Medical (p. 32) if they provide such services. Cultural/Ethnic (pp. 26-27) to provide assistance to a specific group is common. Frequently, these Contacts are Government (pp. 28-29) or Religious (pp. 36-37) as well.

#### *Skills*

- Skills necessary to provide help (First Aid and Physician for medical aid, Finance for monetary, and so on).
- Common group skills (p. 23).
- Technical skills to operate equipment that comes up in their work – Paramedics have Electronics Operation (Medical), many tools firefighters use call for Forced Entry, and so forth.
- Current Affairs (Headline News).
- Accounting and Influence skills for contributions, if not publicly funded, or Market Analysis if the group invests.

#### *Individuals and Groups*

A local public defender, a firefighter, the *praefectus annonae* who distributed the grain dole in Republican Rome, Mother Teresa; a shelter for indigent spacers, a Coast Guard station, Amnesty Interstellar, the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

#### *Information*

Statistics and other data relevant to their social issue; details on who opposes them, either by creating more work or interfering.

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