

# GO WEST, YOUNG GAMER

by Steve Winter

Early in the course of a **BOOT HILL** game campaign, most referees find themselves wishing their characters were more defined. Speed, Strength, Accuracy, and Bravery will get characters through gunfights well enough, but what happens when somebody wants to jump from one roof to another? Or scan the windows for ambushers? Or frighten the undertaker into revealing where he hid Coyote Joe Hardy's map?

These problems can be solved by adding four new character abilities to the game: Coordination, Observation, Stature, and Luck.

To determine Coordination, Observation, and Stature, roll two 10-sided dice and add the results together. Multiply this sum by 5, and modify the product according to the Initial Modification Table in the **BOOTHILL** game rules booklet.

For example, Mike is creating a new character and has reached Coordination. He rolls both dice, getting a 7 and a 4. Their sum is 11 which, multiplied by 5, gives a product of 55. Checking the Initial Modification Table, Mike sees that the modifier for a dice score of 55 is +10, so his character has a final modified Coordination score of 65.

To determine Luck, roll two 10-sided dice, add the results together, and multiply the sum by 2½. Round fractions up to the nearest whole number.

For example, Mike rolls a 5 and a 3 for his new character. The sum is 8; this, multiplied by 2½, gives Mike's character a Luck score of 20.

Coordination measures a character's skill at jumping, leaping, catching, tumbling, and other acrobatics. One example of its use is the classic leap from the dance hall balcony onto the back of a horse for a quick getaway. Other examples are: diving through a window; rolling across a table and pulling it over for cover without getting hurt; catching a tossed gun or saddlebag; or leaping from a hayloft onto a prowling gunman.

Observation measures the acuteness of a character's senses, and can be used in any situation where a character has a chance to see, smell, or hear something that is hidden or far away. A character could see a gun barrel poking around a corner, or movement in the rocks along the canyon; he can hear footsteps outside his door, or the rumble of an approaching train through the rail; he can smell a distant fire or rainstorm, and figure out how long ago a campfire or cigar was put out.

Stature measures the combined effect of a character's physical impressiveness and his reputation. It can be used to impress shopkeepers, farmers, and other minor NPC's, or to influence lynch mobs or political audiences. Whenever a character does something that will increase his reputation — capture a criminal, rob a bank, out-shoot a famous gunfighter — add 1 to 5 points to the character's Stature score. The number of points added is up to the referee, but it should depend on the number of people affected by or aware of the deed. Drygulching drifters and shooting drunks in alleys won't increase a character's reputation at all. Saving horses from a burning stable or out-drinking the local bully might raise a character's Stature by 1 point. Any deed that will be generally known throughout the town is worth 2 points. If the deed will be known throughout the county, it is worth 3 points, or 4 if known throughout the state. Any action that gets reported in an Eastern newspaper is worth 5 points.

A character's Luck has three uses:

1. When the referee isn't sure whether a bullet will strike a character or piece of cover (i.e. a rail fence), the player can make a Luck check. The bullet strikes the cover if the player rolls a number less than or equal to the character's Luck score on percentile dice.
2. When a character's Strength is reduced to 0 or less by wounds, the character will die unless the player rolls a number equal to or less than 2 times the character's Luck score.

3. If a character suffers a mortal wound and the player rolls a number less than or equal to the character's Luck score, the mortal wound becomes a serious wound. If the serious wound reduces the character's Strength to 0 or less, another Luck check must be made to see whether the character will recover from the wound.

Luck scores also can be used when a character wants to do or find something that is not covered in the rules. For example, a Luck check could determine whether a third-floor room with a view to the front of the saloon is available for rent, whether a horse is tethered behind the dance hall, or whether a river can be crossed at a particular point.

The following table shows average Coordination, Observation, Luck, and Stature scores for typical NPCs.

Character	Cor	Obs	Luc	Stt
Town Marshal	55	60	25	60
Deputy	55	55	210	50
Sheriff	60	65	40	70
Stage Guard	55	65	30	50
Dep. U.S. Marshal	70	80	40	80
Gunfighter	70	90	40	80
Drifter	650	50	20	20
Detective	45	60	25	60
Bounty Hunter	65	70	35	55
Cavalry Trooper	55	55	15	50
Indian	65	70	15	35
Cowboy	55	55	25	45
Homesteader	50	55	10	30
Miner	50	60	30	35
Bartender	45	60	30	45
Gambler	60	60	40	45
Merchant/Teller	40	55	25	45
Saloon Gal	55	55	15	30

These new abilities won't run the game themselves, but will make the referee's job easier, and possibly encourage the players to more fully role-play and enjoy their characters. Remember that the referee is the final authority in all cases. Keep your saddlebags packed, and your back to the wall.

