



Bullet Points

Class Features and Mastercraft Items

by Charles Ryan

Welcome to the fifteenth installment of *Bullet Points*. I'm Charles Ryan, one of the designers of the **d20 Modern Roleplaying Game**. I'm here to answer your questions about the game, offer advice on tricky issues, and give you a little peek into the minds of the designers. You'll be hearing from me every couple of weeks.

If you've checked out the earlier installments of *Bullet Points*, you know the format. Every two weeks I pick an issue that's provoked a lot of questions or comments, begin with a general discussion of the topic, and then answer specific questions related to it. If there are any unrelated but pressing questions in my mailbox, I might tackle them at the end of the column, but only if there's room and they can't wait for an appropriately themed column.


An Odd Combo

In this installment, I'd like to address a couple of related topics: class abilities and mastercraft items. "How are those related?" you ask. Well, making mastercraft items is a class feature of the Techie advanced class. Okay, so that's a pretty tenuous connection. But I had about a half-column's worth of questions about each topic, so it seemed like a good idea to throw them together.

I don't really have any hot issues to cover regarding these two topics, so we'll move right into the Q&A portion of the column.

Questions and Answers

We'll start with the miscellaneous class-related issues, then get into the mastercraft questions.

 **The flurry of blows and lightning shot abilities (Martial Artist and Gunslinger class features, respectively) are both noted as full-round actions. Does using one of these abilities preclude making a full attack for the round? Or can a character take a full attack and still get to use these abilities?**


Each of these abilities incorporates your hero's normal full attack and adds one extra attack of the appropriate kind to the attacks that she would already be entitled to. Thus, your hero gets her normal full attack (as many attacks as her base attack bonus allows), plus one extra, when using either of these abilities. She can't do anything else except take a 5-foot step during that round, just as she couldn't if she made a normal full attack. Perhaps the descriptions of these abilities would be clearer if the last sentence of each were struck and replaced with:

This ability can be used only by a character using the full attack action.

It's also worth pointing out that the -2 penalty associated with each of these abilities applies for the entire round -- not just the attacks associated with the full attack action. All other attacks the character makes that round, including attacks of opportunity, are subject to the penalty as well.


 **Can a Bodyguard use the harm's way ability when he is flat-footed, if he started the combat adjacent to the ally he is defending?**

Nope!

 **A number of the Charismatic hero's talents (namely charm, captivate, dazzle, and taunt) are noted as usable only on GM characters. Was this restriction intended to keep players from abusing each other, or does this literally mean that GM character Charismatic heroes are unable to use those particular talents on player characters?**

Charm affects a GM character's attitude. The rules concerning GM character attitudes don't apply to player characters, so charm can't affect them.

The information on captivate, dazzle, and taunt is simply misprinted. The parenthetical note in the first sentence of each ability description -- "(a GM character)" -- should not be there. All of these abilities can be used on any appropriate target, including a player character. The same is true of the Smart hero's trick talent.

 **My hero has the linguist talent and speaks French, German, and Spanish. Suppose she hears someone speaking Chinese. With a successful check (DC 20), she gets a general understanding of what has been said. An hour later that person says something else in Chinese. Do I need to roll again? What about a day later? A month? Since Chinese is not a "new" language now, I maintain that I don't need to roll again -- but my GM says I do. Who's correct?**


Your GM is correct. (The GM is always correct, but in this case, he's got the rules right as well!)

The wording describing this ability could certainly be clearer. That second sentence should read:

Whenever the hero encounters a language, either spoken or written, that he does not know, he can make an Intelligence check to determine whether he can understand it.

While we're at it, let's clarify another aspect of the linguist talent. At the end of the description, just above the prerequisite paragraph, there should be a paragraph that reads as follows:

A single check covers roughly 1 minute of spoken language or one page of written language. You cannot retry a failed check. You can take 10, but you cannot take 20.

 **The text on page 94, and in the Techie's mastercraft ability description, is extremely general regarding what mastercraft can actually affect. The Techie description says that all weapons, armor, and some other devices can be made mastercraft. The mastercraft description says a mastercraft object can provide a bonus on attack rolls, damage rolls, Defense, or some other characteristic that improves when the object is used.**

So, what can mastercraft actually be used on? Can an object have more than one mastercraft bonus? For a +12 purchase DC, could my 1911 have a +2 bonus on attack rolls and a +2 bonus on damage rolls? What about my box of .45 caliber ammunition? My cleaver? Can I give my armor a +2 bonus to Defense and a -2 to its check penalty?

As a very general rule, you can mastercraft pretty much any item that does or can provide a bonus on a roll or check, or which otherwise has a numeric value. So, yes, you can give a firearm a +1 on both attack and damage rolls. You can increase an armor's Defense. You can affect a cleaver, or even ammunition. The quantity of ammunition indicated on Table 4-5 counts as a single object for the purpose of the mastercrafting rules. In other words, if you set out to mastercraft a batch of 5.56mm ammo, and you follow the rules on page 179 as if mastercrafting a single object, you end up with 20 mastercrafted bullets.

A given item can have a total bonus from mastercrafting of up to +3. You can distribute this amount in any way you like. For example, if your 10th-level Techie mastercrafted his Barret Light Fifty, he could give it a +2 bonus on attack rolls and a +1 bonus on damage rolls, or vice versa, for a total bonus of +3.

You can also mastercraft multiple items for a combined effect. For example, you could mastercraft the rifle to give you a +3 bonus on attack rolls, and a box of ammo to give you a +3 bonus on damage rolls.

You can't, however, stack multiple bonuses derived from mastercrafting if they affect the same quantity (such as attack rolls). Bonuses from mastercrafting are all circumstance bonuses arising from the same circumstance, so they don't stack with each other. (They do, however, stack with circumstance bonuses arising from different circumstances.) Thus, you could mastercraft a laser sight to give you an extra +3 bonus on attack rolls (in addition to its existing +1 equipment bonus). The +3 bonus would apply to any weapon you attached the laser sight to, but it wouldn't stack with the weapon's bonus on attack rolls from mastercrafting, if any. So a +3 sight attached to a +3 weapon would simply give you a +3 bonus on attack rolls.

It's also worth mentioning that mastercrafting can't give an item an ability it wouldn't normally have. You can't mastercraft your eyeglasses to give you a bonus on attack rolls because eyeglasses don't normally have any game effect on attack rolls. Likewise, a mastercrafted laser sight still won't work outdoors in daylight.

 **If I mastercraft my Beretta 92 to get a +1 bonus on damage rolls, does that bonus also apply to pistol whip attacks I make with it?**


No. If you mastercraft a weapon to provide a bonus on damage rolls, and the weapon has more than one mode of use, you must specify to which mode the bonus applies. So if you give your pistol a +1 bonus on damage rolls when fired, that bonus doesn't apply to the damage roll for a pistol whip attack.

 **When you mastercraft armor, does the increase in Defense bonus affect both proficient and nonproficient users? Also, can mastercrafting be used to reduce the armor check penalty?**

The general rule is that you can increase one bonus. So, for example, if you apply a +1 bonus to armor for mastercrafting, you can use it to increase either the proficient bonus or the nonproficient bonus, but not both.

You cannot use mastercrafting to reduce the armor check penalty. However, you can get the same effect in

another way -- by increasing the armor bonus of a different set of armor. For example, rather than decreasing the armor check penalty of a tactical vest from -5 to -4, simply start with a light-duty vest and increase its armor bonus. That'll give you armor with the same armor bonus as the tactical vest, but with the desired -4 armor check penalty. It'll also be lighter and have a higher maximum Dexterity bonus!

 **Does a magic weapon have to be mastercraft? If so, what happens if the bonus from mastercrafting exceeds the enhancement bonus? What happens if you have a dagger that has a +3 bonus on attack rolls from mastercrafting, a +1 enhancement bonus, and the keen special quality? What stacks and what doesn't?**

Okay, let's take it from the top. Only a mastercraft weapon can be made into a magic weapon. (If you're just using the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game* rules, you might want to check out the additional rules for creating magic items in the *Urban Arcana Campaign Setting*.) The bonus from mastercrafting must be at least +1, though it doesn't matter what the bonus from mastercrafting applies to. (In other words, in the case of a dagger, it doesn't matter whether it's been mastercrafted to provide a +1 bonus on attack rolls or on damage rolls.)

You could certainly have a case in which a weapon mastercrafted to provide a +3 bonus on attack rolls also has a +1 enhancement bonus from magic. But enhancement bonuses don't stack with circumstance bonuses from mastercrafting, so the +1 bonus from magic doesn't increase the weapon's bonus on attack rolls. It does, however, apply to damage, and it also allows the dagger to overcome many kinds of damage reduction (see page 226 for more on that topic). The keen special quality just increases the dagger's threat range; it doesn't affect its bonuses.

Do you have a rules question about the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game*?
Send it to bulletpoints@wizards.com, and then check back here every
other week for the latest batch of answers!

About the Author

Charles Ryan has been designing and editing games for more than twelve years. His credits include such diverse titles as the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game*, *The Wheel of Time Roleplaying Game*, *Deadlands*, *Millennium's End*, *The Last Crusade*, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, *Dune: Chronicles of the Imperium*, and *Star Trek: Red Alert!*, to name just a few. Charles served as Chairman of the Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts & Design, the professional organization of the games industry, from 1996 through 2001. He lives in Kent, Washington with his lovely wife Tammie, three cats, and a dog. He works for Wizards of the Coast, Inc.



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