Bullet Points
FX Abilities
by Charles Ryan

Welcome to the eighth 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.

FX Abilities

The topic for this installment is FX abilities. I'll keep my introductory comments brief this time to leave room for answers to all the great questions that have come in on this topic. Some of these questions relate to typos or information that's missing or unclear in the **d20 Modern** *Roleplaying Game*, but others bring up interesting situations that delve into the way magic works in the modern world.

How Magic Works

As a blanket rule, magic works more or less the same in the modern world as it does in medieval settings such as your **Dungeons & Dragons** campaign. If you find yourself wondering how a spell should work -- especially a spell whose effect is similar to that of a **D&D** spell -- think about how it works in **D&D.** Usually, it functions exactly the same way in **d20 Modern.**

Questions and Answers

As promised, we're going to questions early in this installment.

How many times per day can the Shadow Slayer use his Slayer Weapon ability?

The slayer weapon ability can be used at will. Generally, that means he can use it once per combat because the weapon is empowered for a minimum of 4 rounds. Since most combats are over in 4 or 5 rounds, there isn't usually time to empower the weapon again, though the Shadow Slayer can certainly do so if time does permit.

A Shadow Slayer who has chosen monstrous humanoids as his shadow enemy attacks a medusa guarded by an ogre Bodyguard. The Bodyguard uses his harm's way ability to take

the blow. The medusa is a monstrous humanoid, but the ogre is a giant. Does the Shadow Slayer get the bonuses for attacking his shadow enemy?

No. The Shadow Slayer may have intended to attack the medusa, but he actually attacked the ogre, against which his shadow enemy bonus doesn't apply.

When a Mage makes scrolls or potions, the purchase DC for the raw materials is the same as the purchase DC for a finished scroll or potion. Shouldn't the purchase DC be higher than the raw material DC, especially since there's a very high XP cost associated with making the potion or scroll?

There's a typo in the raw material costs for scrolls and potions. The purchase DC for the raw materials to scribe a scroll should be 13 + spell level + caster level. The purchase DC for the raw materials to brew a potion should be 15 + spell level + caster level. That adjustment reduces the creation costs a bit, not just in Wealth but also in XP (although the XP cost is still a great deal higher than it is in **D&D**).

As a side note, you still can't reliably increase your Wealth bonus by selling scrolls or potions (even if you wanted to suck up the XP to do so) because when you sell an item, you gain Wealth as if the item's purchase DC were 3 points lower than it actually is.

If a Mage records his voice on a tape while casting a spell that requires only verbal components, will the spell go off when the tape is played back later? (I see this as sort of like writing a scroll. The Mage would be able to make only a certain number of recordings, but any person could then use such a recording to set off the spell.)

Simply recording a spell -- even one with only a verbal component -- does not cause the spell effect to occur every time the recording is played. Spells are cast primarily through the mental manipulation of arcane forces; the components are only a small portion of the process.

You might be able to create rules for recording scrolls in other media besides the written word, but all the rules for scroll creation and use would still apply. The material costs, the XP cost, and the creation checks would remain the same, and the restrictions on who could activate the scroll (a creature capable of casting that type of spell, or someone making a Use Magic Device check) would not change.

If a character finds or creates an electronic copy of a scroll, can she duplicate the file to make more? How about photocopying a scroll on paper?

A scroll works only because the caster imbues it with magical energy. Copies of the scroll, regardless of the medium used, do not carry that energy and therefore do not function. For example, if you create a scroll in your PDA, then duplicate the file, the original file still functions as a scroll but the duplicate file does not. In the same manner, if you create a scroll on a piece of paper and then photocopy it, the original scroll functions normally but the photocopy does not. For that matter, if you scribe a scroll on a roll of parchment, then have a professional scribe carefully copy it to another sheet of parchment, the original scroll functions normally but the copy does not.

In short, no matter how you duplicate a scroll, the duplicate is not magical and does not function as a scroll. This property of scrolls is just as true in the **d20 Modern** game as it is in the **Dungeons & Dragons** game.

How does *flaming projectiles* work with the Double Tap and Burst Fire feats? Does it deal +1d6 or +2d6/+3d6/+5d6 on one hit? How about when it's used with autofire?

The *flaming projectiles* spell increases a weapon's damage by +1d6, period. If your weapon deals 4d8 points of damage because you're using the Burst Fire feat, it deals 4d8+1d6 with the *flaming projectiles* spell.

A spell called *shatter* appears on the list of 2nd-level Acolyte spells (page 338), but there's no spell by that name. Where's the *shatter* spell?

It was inadvertently left out of the book. Here it is.

Shatter

Evocation [Sonic/Concussion]

Level: Divine 2; **Components:** V, S, F; **Casting Time:** Attack action; **Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels); **Area or Target:** 5-ft.-radius spread; or one solid object or one crystalline creature; **Duration:** Instantaneous; **Saving Throw:** Will negates (object) or Fortitude half (see text); **Spell Resistance:** Yes (object)

Shatter creates a loud, ringing noise that shatters brittle, nonmagical objects, or sunders a single solid, nonmagical object, or damages a crystalline creature.

Used as an area attack, *shatter* smashes nonmagical objects made of glass, crystal, ceramic, or porcelain (such as vials, windows, mirrors, bottles, windshields, and so forth) within a 5-foot radius of the point of origin. Any object weighing more than 1 pound per caster level is not affected, but all other objects of the appropriate composition are shattered. Alternatively, you can target *shatter* against a single solid object, regardless of composition, weighing up to 10 pounds per caster level. If targeted against a crystalline creature of any weight, *shatter* deals 1d6 points of sonic/concussion damage per caster level (maximum 10d6). A successful Fortitude save halves the damage.

Focus: A tuning fork.

You'll find *shatter*, plus a whole lot of other nifty spells, in *Urban Arcana*, which should be hitting the streets right about the time this article is posted to the web.

My character has the Wild Talent feat, which lets her use the *distract* psionic power. The range of *distract* is 25 feet plus 5 feet per 2 levels, and its duration is up to 1 minute per level. But she doesn't have any levels. How do I determine the range and duration of this ability?

A character with no levels in a psionics-using class is treated as 1st level for the purpose of determining any level-dependent effects of a psionic power. A character who does have levels in a psionics-using class uses her levels in that class to determine the effects.

Under Monsters of the Id, it says that a crazed talent always creates the same kind of monster. Later, a character is described as creating different kinds of monsters. Which is correct?

A crazed talent can create one or more creatures of the same kind with each manifestation, but the creature kind can change with the next manifestation. The beginning of the paragraph on page 304 should read, "A crazed talent can create a single monster with Hit Dice equal to two times the crazed talent's character level, or a number of identical monsters whose total Hit Dice equal two times the crazed talent's character level."

In the adventure described on page 311, Cindi's initial manifestation is a set of kobolds. If these are destroyed, her next manifestation is a single gnoll, and the one after that is two goblins. Subsequent manifestations then repeat that rotation, beginning again with kobolds.

***Mind darts*, a 3rd-level psionic power, deals 2d6 points of damage. *Concussion* deals 3d6 points of damage, even though it's just a 2nd-level power. Is that correct?**

No, it isn't. There are a few typos in the *mind darts* spell description. The damage should be 5d6, not 2d6. Also, the range should be Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level), and the saving throw should be Will half.

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.