



Bullet Points

Back to the d20 Future

By Owen K.C. Stephens

Welcome to the latest installment of *Bullet Points*. I'm Owen K.C. Stephens, writer of a lot of **Star Wars Roleplaying Game** material and a few **d20 Modern** products that haven't been announced yet. It's my job to answer your questions about the game, offer advice on tricky rules issues, and give you a little peek into the design philosophy of the game.


Every two weeks I pick an issue that's provoked a lot of questions or comments, begin with a general discussion of the topic where applicable, and then answer specific questions related to it. If there are any unrelated but pressing questions in the mailbox, I might tackle them at the end of the column, but only if I have room and they can't wait for an appropriately themed column.

Back to the d20 Future

This week we're going back to questions about the *d20 Future* supplement, which continues to generate more questions than any other single **d20 Modern** book.

Questions and Answers

Now let's take a look at some of the specific questions I've received on this topic.

 On page 114 of the *d20 Future* book, it says that a starship gets a move action and an attack action, and that it may use its attack action as a move action. Later on the same page, it says a starship has two move actions and an attack action, and that it may forgo its attack but still may not move more than twice. Which is correct, and how does this pertain to character movement? According to page 144, the pilot uses his move action to keep the ship in motion. But does he get to use both his own attack action and the starship's attack action, or are those two separate variables? Should I even get into Heroic Surge?


Starship combat is supposed to be a blend of character combat (for familiarity) and some new rules to add "realism" to a vehicular battle in space. The apparent discrepancy results from an effort to shorten and simplify the original starship combat text, which was lengthier, more complex, and more complete. Here's the lowdown.

As long as a starship is crewed by more than one person, it can take two move actions (under the guidance of the pilot) and one attack action (under the guidance of one or more gunners). The pilot may opt to take just one move action if desired, but the ship is still restricted to a single attack action. If the pilot has the ship take a full-round action, no other actions are possible, so the gunners cannot fire.

A ship with a crew of one is restricted to just two actions -- a move and an attack, a move and a move, or a full-round action.

The same basic rules apply if heroes are crewing the ship. The pilot may move and fire, move and move, or take a full-round action. A gunner may take a single attack action with a ship's guns and then take some unrelated move action, but he cannot take an attack action with ship's weaponry if the pilot has the ship take a full-round action.

A character is free to use Heroic Surge to take an extra action not related to the ship, but he can't use it to gain additional ship actions. For example, a pilot could take a move action to control the ship and an attack action to fire one of its weapons, then use Heroic Surge to draw a pistol because he fears the ship is about to be boarded. But he couldn't use Heroic Surge to take an extra move with the starship -- it can go only so fast, no matter how heroic the pilot is.

 **The weapon systems on a ship seem to be divided up like natural attacks, with a primary and a secondary set. Does this arrangement hold true even if the ship has multiple gunners, one for each system?**

Firing a starship's weapon involves a lot more than just pulling a trigger. The gunner must take into account targeting priority, arcs of fire, energy allocations, and structural requirements -- all of which have been simplified into a quick and playable system for the game.

A ship may fire one weapon system multiple times (if it has a gunner who can fire more than once per round because of a high base attack bonus), or it may fire all its weapons once each. A ship must have at least one gunner per weapon system fired in a round -- a single gunner cannot fire multiple weapons. If more than one weapon is fired in the same round, only the primary one fires at its full attack bonus; each of the others takes a -5 penalty.

Consider for example a group of gunners, each with attack bonuses of +11/+6/+1, on a ship with two fire-linked maser cannons (primary) and four nuclear missiles. The chief gunner could take over the main guns and fire the masers three times at +11/+6/+1, modified by any other bonuses or penalties that apply (such as size or targeting system). Alternatively, the whole gunner crew can fire once. In that case, the masers fire at +11, and every other weapon fires at +6. Again, both of these attack bonuses are modified by any other bonuses or penalties that may apply.

In any case, firing a ship's ranged weapons -- even multiple times -- takes only a single attack action from each gunner involved and counts as a single attack action for the starship.

 **A ship's damage control system takes a move action to use. But where does a character need to be to activate it? Can any crew member with ranks in the Repair skill just slap the nearest "FIXIT" button? How many times can the system be used per round? If my players decide to cram ten engineers into the engine room, can they all jump in with their Repair checks at once?**

A damage control system is a series of connected, semi-automated repair systems. To be effective, however, it requires a sentient operator -- namely a character with ranks in the Repair skill. A character can operate the damage control system from any appropriate station on the ship -- most often the bridge, a damage control station, or the engine room. A damage control system can operate only once per round, but a starship designer could certainly mount multiple damage control systems if she knew the crew would include multiple engineers.

 **The *d20 Future* book introduced a number of new materials in the chapters relating to starships, vehicles, mecha, and robotics. I understand that only hardness really matters when such materials**

are used as plating or armor, but can't they also be used in other ways? They are, after all, superior construction materials. If a mecha or a starship can be made of or protected by duralloy, why couldn't heroes come across an armored door made of duralloy that they need to break down? I know the hardness of all these materials, but can you provide the HP/inch and the break DCs?

Fair enough. The values in the table below are good enough for casual use, though as GM, you should feel free to modify them to fit your vision of how such materials work in your campaign.

Material	Hardness	Hit Points/Inch	Break DC Modifier	Weight (% of Steel)
Ablative polymer(1)	40	30	+9	75%
Alloy (for starship plating)	20	25	+5	100%
Alumisteel	11	30	+2	60%
Cerametal	30	20	+6	75%
Crystal carbon	15	35	+4	80%
Deflective Polymer	40/20(2)	25	+6	80%
Duralloy	13	32	+3	70%
Duraplastic	10	15	+1	50%
Neovulcanium	15	30	+3	90%
Neutronite	40	60	+8	500%
Neutronite (nanofluidic)	50	60	+10	450%
Megatanium	18	20	+5	90%
Polymeric	20	20	+2	50%
Resilium	12	30	+1	100%
Vanadium	30	35	+7	80%

1. Ablative polymer gains part of its hardness from its ability to increase its strength temporarily by shedding some of its mass. Any object made of this silvery material must be given constant minor repairs or it begins to degrade. Each time it does not receive regular monthly maintenance (purchase DC 1/10th the object's full cost), its hardness drops by 2, until it eventually falls apart entirely (at hardness 0). Such repairs are part of regular starship maintenance, and thus the material has no additional cost when used in starship construction.


2. The hardness of a deflective polymer is 40 against energy attacks, but only 20 against all other damage.

The hit points given in the table above are per inch of thickness. Many of these materials are specifically designed to give good protection with only a thin layer. Thus, a 12-inch thick steel vault door could be replaced with a vanadium door only 6 inches thick.

The break DCs are given as modifiers for easier use. When a manufactured object is made of a material from the table rather than normal steel, its normal break DC is modified by the indicated value. Thus, a pair of heavy-duty handcuffs made of starship plating alloy has a break DC of 35 instead of the normal 30 for steel. This modifier also represents the increase in an object's purchase DC when made of the indicated material. Neutronite bolt cutters, therefore, would have a purchase DC of 14 instead of 6.

The weight values in the table are given as a percentage of the weight of a comparable object made primarily of

steel (the default for most metal weapons, armor and gear). Thus, bolt cutters made of neutronite weigh 25 pounds instead of 5 pounds.

 On page 72 of the d20 Future book, Table 3-11: Progress Level 7 Ranged Weapons gives two weapons (concussion rifle and gravity snare) for which the rate of fire entry is "S" (semiautomatic) and the magazine capacity entry is a dash. On page 97 of the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game*, the text about magazine capacities states, "Weapons with a dash in this column have no magazines; they are generally thrown weapons, or weapons (such as bows) that are loaded as part of the firing process."

The concussion rifle and gravity snare should each have "30 box" in place of the dash in the magazine capacity column. Each should also have the following note in its weapon description: "This weapon does not use ammunition. It is powered by a special power pack that allows 30 shots (purchase DC 8)."

Do you have a rules question about the d20 Modern Roleplaying Game? Send it to bulletpoints@wizards.com. For the quickest possible answer, please put the topic of your question in the subject line and keep the question as succinct as possible. If you have more than one question, feel free to send two or more emails -- but for best results please include only one question per email unless your questions are very closely related to one another. Please don't expect a direct answer by email. Check back here every other week for the latest batch of answers!

About the Author

Owen Kirker Clifford Stephens was born in 1970 in Norman, Oklahoma. He attended the TSR Writer's Workshop held at the Wizards of the Coast Game Center in 1997 and moved to the Seattle area in 2000, after accepting a job as a Game Designer at Wizards of the Coast, Inc. Fourteen months later, he returned to Oklahoma with his wife and three cats to pick up his freelance writer/developer career. He has author and co-author credits on numerous **Star Wars** and *EverQuest* projects, as well as *Bastards and Bloodlines* from Green Ronin. He also has producer credits for various IDA products, including the Stand-Ins printable figures.
