



Bullet Points

Equipment and Gear

by Charles Ryan

Welcome to the thirteenth 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.

Questions, Questions!

Can you believe it? We've already passed the one-half year mark for this column, with an installment every two weeks, but it seems like I just started writing *Bullet Points* a couple months ago! But for better or worse, the questions keep rolling in, so I'll have plenty to talk about for the foreseeable future!

The Right Stuff

In this installment, I'll tackle a bunch of inquiries involving equipment and gear. As usual, I'll kick off with a few thoughts on the related design issues, then get to your questions.

Shotguns

My topic of rumination today is shotguns. One undercurrent running through a number of the questions I've received is: Why aren't shotguns cooler? Why is it that shotguns really kick ass in other roleplaying games, but in **d20 Modern**, they're not much different than other guns? The basis for this question seems to be the premise that shotguns are somehow better than rifles, and that that's why they're so popular with military and law enforcement agencies.

Shotguns do, in fact, offer some advantages over other types of firearms. For one thing, they're inexpensive and commonly available. Also, at medium ranges, it's easier to hit with a shotgun than with a rifle. This fact is already reflected in the **d20 Modern** rules by the fact that shotguns handle range increments differently than other firearms do. But, contrary to common gaming lore, shotguns are not extraordinarily more powerful than high-powered rifles. Yes, shotguns are extremely brutal when fired at people from close range -- but so are rifles.

Some people have pointed out that shotguns have a lower level of penetration than rifles do. That's true, and that fact does make them somewhat more nasty at close range, since they deliver their energy to the target more efficiently than rifles do. Unfortunately, the **d20** system doesn't really model penetration. Even if it did, the difference that aspect would make still might not be a big enough factor to warrant changing the

weapon's existing statistics.

But if penetration isn't a big deal, then why are shotguns so popular? Well, the truth is that they aren't. Many hunters still favor them, but the traditional preference for shotguns on the part of U.S. law enforcement agencies has been on the decline for years, and many are switching to submachineguns. Shotguns have never been a tradition for law enforcement agencies in any other country, except for the purpose of riot control, where they're preferred for their *low* level of lethality. Some purpose-built combat shotguns do exist, as some contributors to this thread have pointed out, but to my knowledge, they haven't been adopted wholesale by a single military force.

If your character has a reason to use a shotgun -- perhaps it's the only firearm available, or your purposes call for its special strengths -- make good use of it! But if you want to carry a shotgun because you think it's cool, and you're disappointed that its statistics don't back up your idea of what it should do -- well, sorry. Sounds like you'd probably be better off with a rifle or submachinegun.

Questions and Answers

Now that I have that little rant out of my system, let's look at some questions. The first few pertain to the shotgun topic, but several other equipment-related questions follow!



I can't seem to find a rule regarding double-barreled shotguns. If both barrels are fired at once, is the attack handled like a double tap, dealing one extra die of damage?

Effectively, yes. If the shotgun is fully loaded (that is, there are two shells in it), you can fire both barrels at once. You take a -2 penalty on such an attack, but you deal +1 die of damage with a successful hit.

Obviously, firing both barrels leaves the weapon empty, so you have to reload to fire again. Reloading a double-barreled shotgun, like reloading any firearm with an internal magazine, is a full-round action.

These rules apply to the sawed-off shotgun in the *d20 Modern* rulebook.



The description of the single shot rate of fire (at the top of page 96) says that pump shotguns are single shot. The description of the Mossberg (on page 101) says that it's a pump shotgun, but Table 4-4 shows it with a semiautomatic rate. Which is correct?

The Mossberg should have a Single rate of fire; the entry on Table 4-4 is incorrect. The same is also true of the Browning BPS.



There's no description for the surgery kit. How does it work?

The description of the surgery kit was inadvertently left out of the book. Here's what it should say.

Surgery Kit

About the size of a small backpack, this kit contains the instruments needed to conduct rudimentary emergency field surgery. A surgery kit is used in surgical procedures (see the Treat Injury skill, page 74). A -4 penalty applies to a Treat Injury check made to perform surgery without such a kit. (This penalty is in addition to the -4 penalty that applies if the character performing the surgery does not have the Surgery feat.)

 **In the Rent or Own sidebar on page 93, it says that Table 4-10 gives the Purchase DCs for buying houses. But they aren't there. How do I find those DCs?**


The sidebar is misprinted. The Purchase DCs for buying houses are on Table 4-12.

 **What are the statistics of bulletproof glass?**

We haven't established any official stats for bulletproof glass yet, but I'd put it at about hardness 5, 5 hp per inch. A 1-inch thickness is pretty typical for most applications.

 **The parabolic microphone and laser microphone described in the *d20 Modern* web enhancement both indicate that the user must point them at the source of the sound. Does this pointing require a touch attack or a check?**


No check or attack roll is necessary. The user must, however, have an unobstructed line of sight to the source of the sound. The distance penalties are reduced as described in the web enhancement, but any other penalties (such as "listener distracted") still apply.

 **The laser microphone picks up sounds by measuring vibrations on window glass. Does the sensitivity of this measurement require that both the listener and the target be still? In other words, can a laser microphone be used on a moving vehicle and/or from a moving vehicle?**

Both the listener and the target must be still. Thus, this piece of equipment can be used only by a stationary listener, and only on a stationary window (not, for example, on the window of a moving vehicle).

 **Does a license for a firearm simply allow a hero to own it, or does it also license him to carry the weapon?**

In general, the license allows a hero to own and use (in a legal manner) the item in question. Thus, the license for a firearm allows the owner to carry the weapon, though it doesn't, of course, legally permit him to shoot someone with it.


 **The standard scope in the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game* multiplies the weapon's range increment by 1.5. Many more powerful scopes than that exist out there -- what if my hero gets a more powerful version? Would it give her a bonus on attack rolls?**

The standard scope in the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game* represents a typical 3x to 7x telescopic scope. And you're right -- more powerful scopes (up to 12x) do exist. We don't have any official statistics for them, but if you'd like to make a house rule to cover such scopes, they should probably carry more severe penalties for use than the standard one. For example, the user might need two or more attack actions to acquire the target, or might have to make a successful Concentration check to use the scope, or might be


effectively blind to anything except the target while using it. Higher-powered scopes might multiply the range increment by 2 or even 2.5, but probably not more than that. Range increments involve a lot more factors than just the magnification of the sighting device. That's why the standard scope multiplies the range increment by only 1.5, even though the scope magnification is 3x to 7x.

As for providing bonuses on attack rolls, scopes already do that by increasing the range increment (and thus decreasing the range penalty). For example, a hero who shoots a weapon with a range increment of 100 feet at a target 550 feet away takes a -10 penalty on the attack roll. With a scope, the range increment becomes 150 feet, so she takes only a -6 penalty on her attack roll. That's like getting a +4 bonus compared to using the weapon without a scope!

Finally, when you consider the long ranges that some snipers achieve, remember that the benefit of the Far Shot feat stacks with the benefit of a scope. So even with a basic, standard scope, a sniper with the Far Shot feat actually doubles the range increment of her weapon.

 **Exactly what does tear gas do? The description in the book states that it forces every creature within its area to make a Fortitude save (DC 25) or be blinded and stunned for 2d6 rounds. On Table 2-5, the Craft (chemical) skill entry gives the Fortitude save DC as 15, and the effect as blindness for 1d6 rounds. And the *d20 Modern System Reference Document* says the Fortitude save is DC 15 and the effect is nausea for 1d6 rounds! Which is correct?**

The SRD is correct. A creature in the area must make a DC 15 Fortitude save to avoid being nauseated for 1d6 rounds. The book was already at the printer when we discovered this error, so we couldn't change it there, but we fixed it in the SRD even before the book came out.

 **The footnote under the Acid Table on page 54 says that the damage given is per round of exposure to the acid, but it doesn't give a duration. How long does acid last?**

That footnote refers to immersion. In all other cases, the acid deals damage only once, on initial contact. In other words, a flask of mild acid deals 1d6 points of damage (or 1 point as splash damage; see page 106). Then it's gone.

On the other hand, a character immersed in a pool of mild acid would take 1d10 points of damage per round of immersion. There is no duration per se in this case; the character simply continues to take 1d10 points of damage per round until he's either dead or no longer immersed in the acid.

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!

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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