




Bullet Points

Interactive Gadgety Goodness

By Owen K. C. Stephens

A wave of questions concerning recent rulings about equipment, gadgets, and even sand slaves have come in since I started covering the subject of gear. Normally it takes a few months for a *Bullet Points* question to hit the front of the list, but since I'm already on the subject, I decided to catch up before moving on to new topics.

Some of the questions have been very detail oriented ("What's the Listen DC to hear a needler fire?") to a degree I'm unlikely to ever get into. There's no way to cover every possible situation that comes up in thousands of campaigns being run by fans using rulebooks. Authors try to think of the most common questions, but after that it's up to the GM to make a sensible ruling in the context of that particular campaign. Is a needler loud? Does it sound like a big snake? Does it make a distinctive sound when fired? These are GM calls, and I encourage everyone to not only answer them when they come up, but put a personal spin on the answers to make them unique to your game.


 **What is the benefit of a flechette pistol or rifle? They do less damage than a charge pistol, with the same crit range and a reduced range increment. Also, the text states that flechette charges deal half damage past two range increments.**

First, it's a mistake to think that all weapons must somehow be 'equal'. Yes, the flechette guns are less effective than their charge weapon rivals. But then, people often claim one or another real-world weapon is superior to its rivals. Often they're right, but both guns still get sold. Characters in the game world don't get to see the weapon's statistics, so they must make do with imperfect testing and marketing claims.


Second, the flechette's reduced damage at greater range could well be a feature, not a bug. Police might love a weapon that becomes less lethal at longer ranges. That allows them good stopping power at the short ranges where most of their shootings occur but reduces the risk to bystanders who are probably farther away. On starships, weapons that are unlikely to penetrate an important gasket or piece of equipment would be required. Further, various planets might allow a flechette gun as a defensive weapon while outlawing more offense-oriented firearms.

Finally, the flechette does two damage types. While there are no existing rules that make slashing and piercing preferable to ballistic damage, it's easy to imagine technology like anti-ballistic cloth that gives DR 5 vs. ballistic damage only but can be bypassed by a flechette weapon.

All of the equipment in any *d20 Future* book is designed to give GMs tools with which to run interesting adventures. Even though players tend to seek out maximum lethality, the weapons aren't all optimized that way, quite intentionally. If you want to rewrite such weapons for your games, we encourage that, too.


 **While I'm griping, the PL 7 needlers seem to hit the same snag. Argh! Reduced damage range, no appreciable bonus to crit levels (even though they are the PL 7 "variation of the PL 6 flechette weapons"). With a decreased range increment, I can only see the larger magazine capacities as a bonus. Plus, does damage on a needle weapon drop in half past the second range increment, like a flechette weapon?**

The huge magazine capacity for needlers makes them very attractive as automatic weapons. With Burst fire you can make 16 attacks with a needler pistol, each dealing 4d4 points of damage. Try that with a charge pistol, and you'll run out of ammo in six shots. And, with the needler, you have the option to attack an area, making it attractive against numerous targets.


 **When using a weapon with the variable charge gadget, if you have primed it more than once, will the weapon explode if not fired? For example, if you primed the weapon to +2 dice of damage and slide it along the floor at your enemy the third round, would it explode on the fourth round and damage an enemy sharing its square?**

Short answer: no.

A weapon with variable charge explodes only if it has been charged four times. When the description states it may be primed "for three rounds," it means as three separate attack actions, each of which causes its next attack to deal +1 die of damage. That's why if it explodes it deals "normal weapon damage +4 dice." You can charge your weapon and leave it charged for several minutes, as long as you only charge it one, two, or three times. If you charge it a fourth time, you must fire it *immediately* or it explodes (at the end of your turn). Because it's an attack action to charge the weapon, you're only going to fire it successfully if a) you have Heroic Surge or b) you're priming a weapon and someone else has a readied action to fire it (as might happen with an emplaced rifle, for example).

 **The gadget system only works on personal weapons and equipment, right? Or is it possible to miniaturize a mecha weapon that normally takes up two slots (for example) to be fitted into one slot?**


If a GM decides to, there's no reason why the gadget system can't be applied to mecha weapons. Many gadgets make perfect sense for mecha. A GM doing so, however, must decide exactly how the two systems interact. In some cases, it's obvious. A Huge M-9 barrage chaingun with the compact gadget is now Large, and thus can be used by a Medium-sized character (as a two-handed weapon). A GM may allow three-space mecha equipment to be fit into two spaces with this gadget, but doing so is entirely a house rule (though a perfectly reasonable one).

 **A recent *Bullet Points* ("Gamemaster Calls") stated that an RPG-7 would deal 3D6 damage and have a range increment of 150 ft. (70 ft.). In the four-year-old Web Enhancement "Even More Modern," the RPG-7 also gets a treatment in which it deals 6D6 damage with a 100ft. range increment and a range of special rules. Which one is right?**

Mea Culpa.

Normally the rule is, whatever version of an item comes out more recently is official. In this case, however, I just didn't check through all the web enhancements when I answered the RPG-7 question, so the version from "Even More Modern" should be used, with its higher damage and lower range increment.


That said, the basic principle of how to stat a real-world weapon, which is what I was trying to show with the RPG-7, is still sound. In the future, I'll check alternate sources more closely when giving specific game statistics for gear.

 **"To determine a new character's TU budget, roll 4d10x2. if the character has any wealth bonus due to her occupation, multiply the bonus by 2 and add the result to the TU budget."**

Is this statement missing the all too important word of "Multiplier" right at the very end of it? IE if I have an occupation which I've been working for years and years that's rated at a +1 Wealth Bonus (Military, Law Enforcement, etc) shouldn't this add two to the multiplier of x2 as opposed to adding a simple 2 TUs to the total TU budget?

After all, I didn't spending years of my background to have my life savings equate to.. an MRE. Your Wealth bonus should become a multiplier, not a speck of an addition right? If the Wealth Bonus is added to the total instead of the multiplier (Only a few TUs versus several tens per +1 bonus) then your life savings bonus from your occupation is literally a couple days of food. So with only having a couple days worth of supplies to show for your background you might as well have only been employed for a couple days.

No, the rule is correct as listed. In a post apocalyptic world, you were most likely working for room and board. If you managed to save up a few extra meals before striking out, good for you! If not, you'd better have some ranks in Survival. Unlike a game set in a typical world, *d20 Apocalypse* assumes it's hard to save any wealth to speak of.

 **According to both the *d20 Menace Manual* and the *d20 Dark Matter* campaign setting, the sand slave has an ability called hot running that, with a successful Constitution check (DC 15), can "negate all nonlethal damage the sand slave has sustained..." Yet according to page 141 of *d20 Modern* nonlethal damage is never sustained, by any character or creature. Was this a typo in the two other books?**

It's possible the authors of the sand slave were thinking of nonlethal damage rules from *D&D*, which are a popular variant rule with a lot of groups. However, the hot running ability can work with the normal nonleathal rule. If a sand slave actually suffers a negative effect from being struck by nonlethal damage, it can negate that effect with a DC 15 Constitution check.

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 the **d20 Modern** website for *Bullet Point* updates.

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 freelancer 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.

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