



Bullet Points

Maneuvers and Actions

By Owen K.C. Stephens

Welcome to the latest installment of *Bullet Points*. I'm Owen K.C. Stephens, writer of quite a bit of **Star Wars Roleplaying Game** material and contributor to the recently announced *d20 Apocalypse* book, plus some other **d20 Modern** projects as yet unannounced. 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 the mailbox contains any unrelated but pressing questions, 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.

Maneuvers and Actions

In this installment, we'll look at some questions about specific maneuvers and how they interact with feats and other maneuvers, as well as how they function in certain unusual situations.

Questions and Answers

Without further ado, let's get down to those questions!

 **Does a character who bull rushes as part of a charge get a single melee attack plus the bull rush, or just the bull rush? Charge is a full-round action that includes a single melee attack. But while the bull rush description says the character may make a bull rush as part of a charge, it doesn't say that it replaces the melee attack already included in the definition of a charge. So the character gets to move, make an attack, and do a bull rush -- even if he is limited to a single attack action, as per the rules for a charge -- right?**

Let's break down your question. First, you want to know whether a hero gets a single melee attack as part of a charge even when doing a bull rush. The answer is no; the bull rush replaces the melee attack.

Regardless of what the description of bull rush says (namely, that a character may make a bull rush as part of a charge), the description of charge on page 137 of the **d20 Modern Roleplaying Game** specifies that instead of making an attack, the character may attempt to push a target. At that point, it refers the reader to the bull rush entry. Thus, a charge ends with either a single melee attack or a bull rush, but not both.

The second part of your question boils down to whether a character can end a charge with a bull rush even if he is limited to a single attack action. The answer is yes, though he is limited to moving his speed rather than twice his speed.

 **How far can a character push a target that she has bull rushed as an attack of opportunity? Does movement taken count against her last round of action, or against her next round?**

The answer is moot, because a character can't do a bull rush as an attack of opportunity. Table 5-2 on page 135 of the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game* shows that some attacks count as attack actions (such as aid another and bull rush), and others are simply substituted for attacks (such as trip). An attack of opportunity is a single attack and does not take a whole attack action. Thus, while your hero can use it to trip, disarm, or grapple a foe, she can't use it to bull rush, feint, or activate total defense. She can, however, use it to make a single melee attack -- even though the table lists a melee attack as an attack action -- because a single melee attack is included in the definition of an attack of opportunity.

 **According to the rules, charging requires a full-round action. With the start/complete full-round action option, a character can begin a full-round action as a move action in one round, then finish it as another move action in her next move. So is the following sequence legal?**


Round One: Shoot a foe as an attack action, then start a full-round action as a move action to begin a charge.

Round Two: Use complete a full-round action to complete the charge as a move action (thus gaining a single melee attack), then make a melee attack as an attack action.

If this arrangement isn't legal, why isn't it?

Under a strict reading of the rules, what you describe perfectly legal. However, since a target aware of your character's presence is likely to know that he's charging rather than just approaching, it could certainly use its own action to move out of his way. Since a character must finish any full-round action he begins, and a charging character must move in a straight line even if the charge is broken up into 2 rounds, the character would end up charging an empty space.

Given the risks and limitations of this specific maneuver, I don't think it's unbalancing. However, a GM who felt otherwise could certainly create a house rule to prevent it. The simplest solution would be to specify that making a charge ends the character's round. A GM could also argue that finishing a charge counts as an attack action rather than a move action, even if the character is using the complete full-round action maneuver.


 **A character doesn't have to decide whether she's taking a full attack action until after she sees the results of her first attack. Furthermore, she can use the complete full-round action maneuver to finish a full attack as a move action during the next round. Given those caveats, is it legal for a hero to run up to a target and attack it once during one round, then use the rest of the attacks she would get with a full-round action during the next round by completing a full-round action? And if she did so, could she then attack one more time, since completing the full attack counts as a move action?**

This question is very similar to the one above. By strict interpretation of the rules, the tactic you describe is indeed possible. However, if this kind of situation comes up frequently in your game, I suggest that you as GM rule that whenever part of a full-round action involves an attack of any kind, using the start/complete full-round action maneuver counts as an attack action rather than a move action.

 **If a character takes the -4 penalty to deal lethal damage with an unarmed strike, is he considered armed? Since he's dealing weapon-type damage, shouldn't he get the benefits of having a weapon,**


the way a character with Combat Martial Arts does?

No. A character with Combat Martial Arts gains the benefits of being armed because he has learned to strike with greater force and skill. A character who takes a -4 penalty to deal lethal damage with an unarmed strike is attempting to hit a vulnerable spot on his foe, as defined on page 136 of the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game*, but he is not striking with any greater skill or force. Thus, he is no less vulnerable than normal and is not considered armed.

 **The description of a trip attack specifies that it provokes an attack of opportunity because the character is making an unarmed attack. It also says that if she can attack with a weapon, she doesn't provoke an attack of opportunity. So does a character with Combat Martial Arts provoke an attack of opportunity when making an unarmed attack, since she is considered armed? And if not, why would anyone take the Improved Trip feat?**

A character with Combat Martial Arts does not provoke an attack of opportunity when making a trip attack for exactly the reasons you have outlined, though she does still provoke one when disarming, grappling, and the like. Improved Trip is still useful to her because it grants a free attack against a tripped target.

Imagine, for example, that a character with Combat Martial Arts is facing a target with a 20 Defense, thanks in large part to plate mail. The character with Combat Martial Arts needs only a successful touch attack to trip the target, but even if she succeeds, the target is likely to get up before the attacker can take advantage of the bonus to hit a prone target. A character who also has Improved Trip can achieve the same result, but since he immediately gains another attack as soon as his target is down, he is better able to take advantage of a prone target's -4 penalty to Defense against melee attacks.

 **According to the rules that cover multiple characters in a grapple, two or three characters gain no benefit when trying to bring down a single, stronger foe. Even if three characters are trying to grapple one foe, each can make only a single grapple check against that opponent each round, and they gain no bonuses to do so. The stronger target character can simply pin his targets one at a time until he's free. What gives?**

Actually, multiple characters grappling the same target does provide an advantage. If three heroes are all making grapple checks against the same character, one of them is likely to roll well enough to beat his grapple check on any given round. If the target character wants to escape, his grapple check must beat the grapple check results of all three foes instead of just one. As for pinning his foes, the target can make a check against only one target per round. So if he pins one foe, the other two are still free to grapple him, and if he tries to grapple a new opponent, he must let the old one go.

However, if you want to give multiple grapplers a bonus on their rolls, you could certainly make a house rule for it based on the aid another rules. For example, a grappler who can beat DC 10 with his grapple check might grant a +2 circumstance bonus to all other grapplers making checks against the same foe. Such a character shouldn't allowed to make other grapple checks in the same round, however, so the target need not beat that opponent's grapple check to escape.

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.

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