



Bullet Points

Omerta and Combat

By Owen K. C. Stephens

Hello all, and welcome to the latest installment of *Bullet Points*. I'm Owen K.C. Stephens, writer of a lot of *Star Wars Roleplaying Game*, *Dungeons & Dragons*, and **d20 Modern** material, including a chunk of **d20 Apocalypse** and **d20 Cyberscape**. Every two weeks (or so) I answer questions about rules from the **d20 Modern** line of games and give advice about more difficult rules issues.

In this installment, I'm going over one question about a real-world reference and a bunch of combat-related questions. Also, let me take this opportunity to ask everyone sending questions to *Bullet Points* to make sure they're free of any coding or attachments. Some of the queries come in so choked with html and other formatting that the question is difficult to find.

In the description of the cleaning crew in the *d20 Menace Manual*, all the members have an allegiance to Omerta. Who or what is that? I can find no mention of Omerta anywhere else in the book. The name of "da family" is the Corleone family, and the boss is named Dominic Lombardi. So who (or what) is Omerta?

Omerta is the vow to never discuss the business of the mafia or even acknowledge its existence. Most especially, to never talk to or cooperate with police regarding mafia investigations. It's also observed by people who live in mafia-controlled areas (especially in older neighborhoods). It can thus be seen as allegiance to a belief system (page 37, **d20 Modern**) or another way of describing allegiance to an organization (the mafia).

I DM for a Fast Hero-type inside a mecha suit, and while I don't have a problem with mecha in general, this character seems to be very difficult to even have BBEGs able to hit him, combat is not a challenge at all for him, and it makes the other players frustrated. His biggest sticking point is that the character has Evasion, and the player insists that it works inside the mecha suit. I think of a mecha suit as a vehicle of sorts and thus cannot use Evasion -- who is correct?

A mecha is most definitely a vehicle for most purposes. While a GM could allow Evasion to work in a vehicle, and thus a mecha, if he wished to, it's certainly reasonable to decide it does not apply.

Considering that with the release of *D20 Past*, there are likely to be more western-themed campaigns. How would one take into account the ability of a gunslinger to fan the hammer of a revolver, effectively giving it an automatic rate of fire?

Fanning was done with early revolvers because they were single-action weapons, meaning the hammer had to be cocked prior to the weapon firing each round. With the advent of double-action weapons, where the hammer is automatically cocked when the trigger is pulled, fanning became largely unneeded. The simple answer is to say anytime a character uses Double Tap with a single-action revolver, he's fanning.

If you firmly believe fanning a weapon produced a truly automatic rate of fire, I recommend you create the Fan Pistol feat as a house rule, which has Double Tap as a prerequisite and acts like Burst Fire for a revolver (requiring six rounds rather than the normal 5).

The combat rules state that unarmed combat deals nonlethal damage unless you take -4 on your attack roll. But nonlethal is ignored if you don't deal damage equal to your opponent's Constitution score. I think that's a bit anticlimactic; I mean if your character doesn't have a good Strength and some feats, he is not going to enter any brawl.

On the other hand, if you are a low-level martial artist and you don't deal a lot of damage (1d4 +2 (STR bonus) for example), the only way you may defeat your opponents are by killing them (not always the best solution) or with lots of luck, knocking them out.

I understand that the idea of unarmed combat in *d20 Modern* is that you can't kill someone with unarmed fighting (unless you hit vital spots). That's fine, but I don't think that saying that the punch or kick never exists solve the problem.

If you're unhappy with the nonlethal rules as presented, I recommend you borrow the nonlethal rules from *Dungeons & Dragons*. You'll have to adjust a few feats and class abilities, but in most cases the conversions needed are obvious.

Do mecha have to equip the list of weapons in their section or could they equip a medium machine gun from *d20 Weapons Locker*?

As long as it's no bigger or heavier than similar equipment, your GM is OK with it, and it's of an appropriate PL, a mecha can equip any weapon they can get hold of.

The rules seem clear on this, and I have not been able to find a *Bullet Points* that indicates otherwise, but it seems odd so I wanted to confirm:

- A character who makes a ranged attack from a threatened area provokes an attack of opportunity;
- A character can take a 5-foot step out of a threatened area, even when making a full attack, without provoking an attack of opportunity;
- Thus a character with two pistols who has been engaged by a character with a melee weapon can simply take a 5-foot step back and then fire twice without provoking an attack of opportunity.

I realize that the environment or circumstance may prevent the action and that the enemy can continue to close, but otherwise is this correct?

Correct.

I am specifically writing about the psi-blade feature. Is there any way I can switch the damage type from piercing to slashing?

There is no way in the rules as written. It would not, however, be unbalancing to allow. As a GM, you could just make the change and assume it was balanced. As a player, you can always ask your GM if he'll allow it as a house rule, possibly at the cost of a feat or one of the psi-blade's later enhancement bonuses.

It's stated that a charge doesn't provoke an attack of opportunity. But is that for the attack itself or for the movement? In other words, we always assume that you wouldn't provoke an AoO on a regular attack action, and it states that a charge attack doesn't either. But if you run at twice your speed through threatened squares (be it through someone else's or if your opponent has reach) does *that* part of the charge provoke for the movement?

Sure does.

The list of actions that provoke AoOs is a list of things that in themselves do so. While movement can be considered part of a charge, it's the charge itself that doesn't provoke. If you move through a threatened space (such as if your foe has reach), your movement *does* provoke an AoO, just as normal movement does.

How many squares does furniture take up, such as beds, basic computer desks, tables, countertops, couches, etc.? It seems that they could only occupy a 5x5 or maybe a 5x10 area.

Generally, you can just measure a real-world object and figure it takes up as many 5-foot square spaces as you need to fit it in. So if a given bed is 6 feet 6 inches long and 5 feet wide, then it either completely fills one 5x5 square or partially fills two 5x5 squares, whichever you prefer. In either case, people can get on (or maybe even under) the bed. As long as you make it clear how many spaces the furniture occupies, it doesn't really matter.

When a character uses a semiautomatic starship weapon, can he use Double Tap? If so, shouldn't it deal more than +1 die of damage? When a character uses an automatic starship weapon, can he use his Burst Fire? If so, shouldn't it deal more than +2 dice of damage?

Burst Fire and Double Tap both specify they work with firearms. Starship weapons aren't firearms, so those feats don't apply to them.

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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