



Bullet Points

Tactics

by Charles Ryan

Welcome to the twenty-fifth 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.

Tactics

A few months ago, I devoted two columns in a row to tactics (see *Bullet Points* #17 and *Bullet Points* #18). Since then, I've accumulated almost enough questions for another two installments on the subject. I'm going to limit it to one this time, but it's an extra-long column.

Questions and Answers

Since we have so much to cover, I'll skip my normal pre-question rambling and get right down to business.

☘ If a hero has both the Brawl and the Combat Martial Arts feats, how do the benefits stack, if at all? Does he deal 1d6 points of damage (lethal or nonlethal, his choice) with no attack of opportunity? Or must he simply use one or the other?

I've answered this question before, but it shows up in the *Bullet Points* inbox so often that the answer bears repeating.

A character cannot use Brawl and Combat Martial Arts at the same time. If he has both, he must decide which one he wants to use before making an unarmed attack.

☘ I know you can't combine the Brawl and Combat Martial Arts feats to deal 1d6 points of lethal damage, but if a character has both feats, does she get the +1 competence bonus on unarmed attacks from the Brawl feat if she's dealing 1d4 points of lethal damage with the Combat Martial Arts feat?

Again, no. The character can use one feat or the other, but she cannot mix or match features of the two feats.

 **What about Streetfighting? Can a hero use that feat while using Combat Martial Arts?**


Yes. None of Streetfighting's benefits conflict with those of Combat Martial Arts. As with any two feats that don't have conflicting benefits, a hero can use them both at the same time.

 **My Fast hero has the Defensive Martial Arts, Combat Martial Arts, and Brawl feats. Can he use all of these feats simultaneously? Or does he have to announce which he is using?**

See what I mean? This question is everywhere. See above.

 **If my character, Jackie, a Strong Hero 3/Martial Artist 8, has the Brawl feat as well as the Combat Martial Arts and Defensive Martial Arts feats, how much unarmed damage does she deal?**

As you may already have noted, a character can't stack the effects of the Brawl and the Combat Martial Arts feats. Defensive Martial Arts doesn't affect the character's unarmed damage.

 **Can a hero use the Brawl, Improved Brawl, and Knockout Punch feats to deal lethal damage if he takes the normal -4 penalty on the attack roll?**

With the Brawl and Improved Brawl feats, yes. Your character may take the standard -4 penalty for dealing lethal damage with a nonlethal attack.


Knockout Punch is a different story. The feat description for that one specifies (in the Special section) that the damage is always nonlethal.

 **Is switching between a weapon's automatic and semi-automatic setting a move action, an attack action, or a free action?**

It's not an action at all. In combat, changing fire modes (or switching a safety on or off) is simply considered part of an attack.

 **Is firing a gun with autofire a full-round action, or can my character shoot on autofire more than once if she has multiple attacks and enough bullets in her gun?**


In the same way that making a trip attack is an option that a character can choose when making a melee attack, using autofire is an option she can choose when she makes a ranged attack -- assuming that she has a weapon capable of autofire. If your hero has multiple attacks (from a high base attack bonus, for example), she can use autofire on some or all of the attacks. There's no restriction on the number of times in a round that she can use autofire, other than the amount of ammo in her weapon.

 **Why do the Burst Fire and Dead Aim feats require a good Wisdom score? It seems strange that a character needs to be wise to aim properly or to target burst fire accurately. Because of that prerequisite, most trained soldiers in the typical game world can gain no benefit from Burst Fire because they will never qualify for the feat.**

Funny you should mention that point. Most real-world soldiers aren't trained to use autofire on specific


targets -- automatic fire is used primarily against area targets or to suppress enemy positions. In fact, the M16A2 was built without an autofire setting to prevent soldiers from wasting ammunition by rockin' and rollin' on automatic when they stood little chance of hitting anyone. Typical soldiers are taught to take single, aimed shots at individual targets, not to hose them down with bursts. Some elite units, such as counterterrorist units, do train to use automatic fire against specific targets. But since those soldiers are elite, they're more likely to qualify for feats that others might not be able to gain.

All that information doesn't really answer your question, though. Why Wisdom? Well, Wisdom is the ability that governs perception and self-control -- two capabilities that are crucial to gaining the maximum benefit from automatic fire.


 **When my hero uses a double weapon (a three-section staff, for example), do I add 1.5 times his Strength modifier to the damage roll (since it is used two-handed), or do I treat it as two one-handed weapons?**

Any time a hero makes a two-weapon melee attack -- whether with two weapons or with a double weapon -- you add 1 times his Strength modifier to the damage roll for the primary weapon (or the primary end of the weapon) and 0.5 times his Strength modifier to the damage roll with the second weapon (or secondary end of the weapon). If for some reason the hero uses a double weapon to make a single two-handed attack, you add 1.5 times his Strength modifier to the damage roll.

For example, if your hero has a Strength score of 14 (+2 Strength bonus) and uses a rifle with a bayonet as a double weapon, he deals 1d4+2 points of damage with the bayonet (the primary end) and 1d6+1 points of damage with the butt (the secondary end). If he grabs the rifle with two hands and just whacks someone with the butt, he deals 1d6+3 points of damage.

 **If a character uses a Medium-size melee weapon (such as a pipe or a baseball bat) with two hands, she gets to multiply her Strength bonus by 1.5 for damage, right? So should she also add 1.5 times her Strength bonus to her attack roll?**

No. The increase in damage when using both hands to wield a Medium-size weapon applies just to damage, not to the attack roll. Add your hero's Strength modifier, just as normal to the attack roll.


 **Can you use the Quick Draw feat to draw a grenade? I want my hero to use his Two-Weapon Fighting and Improved Two-Weapon Fighting feats to throw a bunch of grenades in a round, but our GM said he couldn't draw explosives because explosives and splash weapons aren't considered ranged or melee weapons. He said my hero could draw and throw a dagger with every attack, but not a grenade.**

Your GM is mistaken in this case. A thrown weapon counts as a ranged attack, regardless of whether the weapon is a knife or an explosive. Thus, your character can use Quick Draw to draw a thrown weapon as a free action. However, a hand grenade is still a two-handed weapon, so he can't take advantage of any two-weapon fighting feats when using grenades.

It is technically possible to attach grenades to your body by the pin, so that pulling off the grenade pulls the pin. But that arrangement isn't really practical for a couple of reasons -- the most important being the extreme danger of blowing yourself up if one of the grenades is accidentally pulled.

 **Can a character make an attack of opportunity with an attack that would normally provoke one?**

Yes. A character making an attack of opportunity can use any melee attack option that can be made as an attack action. So she could, for example, attempt a trip as an attack of opportunity. In that case, the opponent would then get an attack of opportunity against her before you resolve her trip attempt.


 **My hero has the Two-Weapon Fighting feat and a high base attack bonus. Does he have to make all his attacks in a round against the same opponent? What are the penalties for attacking different opponents?**

There is no penalty for using a hero's multiple attacks to attack multiple opponents. If he is entitled to more than one attack per round because of a high base attack bonus, feats, or a combination of the two, he is free to choose the target for each attack as he sees fit. There are no penalties for attacking different targets, nor are there any bonuses for attacking the same target.

 **What can a character do while at 0 hp and disabled without losing a hit point? The book says that any strenuous activity drops the hero's hit points to -1, but what is considered strenuous? Is it attacking strenuous? How about moving her speed?**

In general, a disabled hero can do anything shown under Move Actions on Table 5-2 without losing a hit point. Your GM always has the option to declare a particular action strenuous, however, depending on the circumstances. For example, moving a heavy object is probably strenuous most of the time.

Any activity that requires an attack action is usually strenuous. Again, however, your GM can rule a particular action nonstrenuous. For example, many skills require attack actions to use but probably aren't strenuous.

 **Suppose my Tough hero is thrown out a window and falls to the pavement below. Is he protected by his Damage Reduction talent, his Energy Resistance (sonic/concussion) talent, or both?**

Damage reduction is effective in this circumstance, but energy resistance is not -- falling is not an energy type.

 **How does strangulation work? It's unclear how the rules on page 214 interact with the grappling rules on page 152.**

You're right; those rules are unclear. Use the following rules instead of those on page 214. (These rules completely supercede those under the Strangulation header.)

You can strangle or choke any target up to one size category larger than yourself. (For example, a Medium-size character can strangle any Large or smaller creature.)

When grappling an opponent, you can choose to strangle him instead of damaging him (see Damage Your Opponent on page 154). With a successful opposed grapple check, you prevent the opponent from breathing for 1 round. If you get more than one attack per round, you need to succeed on only one of them

to prevent your opponent from breathing. (That is, if you fail one attempt but succeed on a second, the strangle is maintained.)

The target can hold his breath for a number of rounds equal to his Constitution score. After that period of time, he must make a DC 10 Constitution check at the beginning of his next turn. He must continue making a Constitution check each round for as long as the strangle is maintained, but the DC of the check increases by 1 each round after the first.

When the opponent fails one of these checks, he begins to suffocate. The next round, he falls unconscious (to 0 hit points). In the following round, his hit point total drops to -1, and he is dying. On the third round after failing the check, he dies of suffocation.

While still conscious, the target can attempt to break the strangle as if escaping from a pin (see Escape from Pin on page 154 of the **d20 Modern** game). If the target breaks the strangle, he can breathe again. Any accumulated increases to the Constitution check DC are negated and do not apply to future attempts to strangle the target.

If the target is both pinned and being strangled, he must escape from the pin before he can attempt to break the strangle.

If a character is strangled by something other than an attack (such as being hung by a noose), he suffocates. See Suffocation and Drowning on page 213.

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

Charles Ryan was one of the designers of the **d20 Modern Roleplaying Game**. He has been designing and editing games for more than twelve years. His other credits include such diverse titles as the *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, two rats, and a dog. He works for Wizards of the Coast, Inc.



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