# Bullet Points
## *Talents*
### *By James Wyatt*

Welcome to the latest installment of *Bullet Points.* I'm James Wyatt, designer of a lot of **D&D** books, plus one **d20 Modern** book that's coming out in 2005, though I can't tell you about that one just yet. It's my job to answer your questions about the game, offer advice on tricky issues, and give you a little peek into the minds of the designers (insofar as I can pry their minds open to wrest insight from them).

Every two weeks I'll 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 there are any unrelated but pressing questions in the 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.

## *Talents*

Talents. It's a great word. In the days of the Roman Empire, a talent was a unit of money (and weight). Its modern meaning is derived from one interpretation of the Biblical "parable of the talents" (Matthew 25:14-30), in which a landowner entrusts his servants with money and rewards those who invest it and show a return.

This column is hardly the place to discuss whether this tale is an allegory about using one's gifts (talents, in the modern sense), or investment advice from the Bible, or something else entirely. So let's talk about talents in the **d20 Modern** game instead. In game terms, talents are those nifty, "one from column A, one from column B" abilities of the six base classes that seem to raise so many questions.

## Questions and Answers

And now without further ado, here is a sampling of those questions.

**How does the Fast hero's increased speed talent affect the speed penalties for wearing armor? Does the armor negate the use of her talents? Or does she add her speed bonuses to the maximum speeds imposed by the armor? Or is the answer somewhere in the middle? Could my Fast hero have up to advanced increased speed, wear a forced entry unit, and still outdistance her unarmored buddies from other classes?**

A Fast hero is still fast in armor. Her armored speed increases by the same amount as her base speed does. So your example hero has a base speed of 45 feet and a speed of 35 feet in heavy armor.

**Here's a fun question about the Tough hero's second wind ability (page 25 of the d20 Modern rulebook). How much time does it take to use this ability? Is it a free action, a partial action, a standard action, or a full-round action? Also, is there a limit to the number of times the hero can use it each day -- other than the number of action points required?**

Getting a second wind is a free action, so a Tough hero can use this ability at the start of his turn and then act normally. He does have to use it on his turn, though. The action point rules on page 36 of the rulebook clearly state that a hero can spend an action point to use a class feature or talent only on his turn, so he couldn't do it just as a thug hit him, for example.

Aside from his pool of action points, there is no limit on the number of times per day this ability can be used.

**My GM and I were discussing the Dedicated hero's faith ability, which my character intends to take at her next level in that class. Does her Wisdom modifier replace the d6 that she would normally roll when using an action point, or is it added?**

Her Wisdom modifier is added. Thus, if she has a Wisdom score of 16, add 1d6+3 to her die roll.

**If a Tough hero with a Constitution score of 18 has electricity resistance and is hit by a stun gun or taser, does he still have to make the stunning check?**

As a general rule, a character who takes no damage from an attack can't suffer any other effects of that attack that might result from the damage. So if a Tough Hero's electricity resistance negates all of the electricity damage from a stun gun or taser, he is unaffected by the paralysis because it results from electricity damage. So yes, once his Constitution score reaches 18, he no longer has to worry about attacks from such weapons at all.

The same general rule applies if, for example, a hero with damage reduction is attacked with a poisoned weapon. If his damage reduction negates all the damage from the attack, he doesn't have to make a saving throw against the poison.

**My GM is thinking of modifying the Fast hero's evasion talent or even removing it from the game entirely. He said that a character in a small, empty room always takes full damage from an explosion or other effect because she has no way of avoiding it. Thus, she gets no Reflex saving throw, and he offers no Fortitude saving throw either, because he says that nothing can protect the character. I thought that the hero might lie down flat or avoid damage by rolling with it, but he says those options aren't realistic. Please clarify the mechanics of evasion.**

The "realism" of the evasion talent came up a couple of months ago in connection with the nuclear toxyderm. The main point to consider is that **d20 Modern** is a fantasy game, just as **Dungeons & Dragons** is. While **d20 Modern** isn't necessarily about swords-and-sorcery fantasy, the action heroes and superspies that populate **d20 Modern** campaigns are no less fantasy heroes than Regdar and Lidda are in the **D&D** game. In real life, you would probably die (and you'd certainly take damage) if you were in a small, empty room with a big, nasty explosion. Fortunately, however, you're not playing a game set in the real world, but one set in the world of movie action and fantastic heroes. Far be it from me to tell your GM that he's wrong, but personally, I'm happy to suspend my disbelief in the interests of a more heroic game -- namely, one in which my character always has at least a chance to cheat death.

**Suppose my character goes first in the initiative count, moves toward a weak opponent, and then attacks him with a dagger. The opponent pulls the pin on a grenade in his hand and attempts to throw it, but rolls a 1 and drops it near us instead. The GM says my hero can't move to avoid it (that is, make a Reflex save) because she has already moved that round. Does evasion**

**count as a free action, a move action, or something else? Also, when my character uses it, does she automatically move out of the blast radius? If so, how far can she move?**

Making a Reflex save and using evasion are not actions, but reactions. The character is not assumed to move out of the blast radius even on a successful save; she merely avoids taking damage from the blast. So even though she has already moved, she can still make a Reflex save (and benefit from evasion, if she has it) when that grenade goes off.

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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!

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**About the Author**

James Wyatt is an RPG designer at Wizards of the Coast, Inc. His design credits include *The Speaker in Dreams, Defenders of the Faith, Oriental Adventures, Deities and Demigods, Fiend Folio, Draconomicon,* and the *Book of Exalted Deeds.* He wrote the Origins award-winning adventure *City of the Spider Queen* and is one of the designers of the new Eberron campaign setting, which is due out in June 2004. James lives in Kent, Washington with his wife Amy and son Carter.

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