



## Bullet Points

# *Urban Arcana*

by Charles Ryan

Welcome to the twenty-second 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.

## The *Urban Arcana* Campaign Setting

This installment is dedicated to the *Urban Arcana Campaign Setting*. Most of the questions I've received relating to this book are related to magic and other FX topics, but there are a few mundane questions here as well.

## Questions and Answers


Let's start off with a few questions about the character classes, then move on to equipment, spells, and other miscellaneous topics.

 In the *Dungeons & Dragons* game, a monstrous PC with more than one Hit Die had to use character levels to account for those extra Hit Dice. In the *Urban Arcana Campaign Setting*, the only thing that counts as levels is the Level Adjustment modifier, which ranges from +1 to +3. Why is the approach in *Urban Arcana* so much more generous?

Put simply, the **d20 Modern** game is a different system. It allows characters to be more powerful in some ways than **D&D** does, but they are weaker in other ways.

In fact, the **Urban Arcana** system doesn't simply eliminate Hit Dice from the equation. If you look at the level adjustments for creatures with more than 1 Hit Die, you'll see that they're all higher than those for the corresponding creatures in **D&D**. They're not high enough to make the creatures' ECLs equal to those of their **D&D** counterparts, but they do help to close the gap a bit.

However, there is one error in the **Urban Arcana** system. Replace the term Challenge Rating (or CR) with Effective Character Level (or ECL) everywhere that it appears on page 25 of the *Urban Arcana Campaign Setting*. Why does it matter? For one thing, since it's a different quantity, it shouldn't be called by the same name. For another, if you use the formula on page 25 to determine a creature's CR, you may get a different result than you would using the standard method.

 **The description of the Archmage's total spellcasting ability reads, "Count all character caster levels when determining the Archmage's casting level for arcane spells." I take this to mean that I should add Archmage levels to levels of Mage and/or Techno Mage to figure out my hero's caster level. But I have a few questions. First off, should I also add my hero's Artificer levels? For that matter, should his Archmage levels count? (After all, archmage doesn't grant any spellcasting powers.) Secondly, the Ecclesiarch has what appears to be the same ability, but the description reads, "Count all character levels when determining the Ecclesiarch's casting level for divine spells." Should I count only caster levels, or all character levels? Should I count all character levels for the Archmage?**

The language describing the total spellcasting ability is a little confusing. It should read as follows for the Archmage.

"Add all arcane caster levels to the Archmage's class level when determining the Archmage's casting level for arcane spells."

An arcane caster level is a level in any class that grants arcane spells per day. For example, levels in Mage are arcane caster levels, but levels in Occultist or Artificer are not.

The same principle applies to the Ecclesiarch. The description of total spellcasting for that class should read as follows.

"Add all divine caster levels to the Ecclesiarch's class level when determining the Ecclesiarch's casting level for divine spells."

 **The Archaic Weaponmaster has Archaic Armor Proficiency in his list of bonus feats. I can't find that feat anywhere! Where is it, and what does it do?**

Actually, it's an error; there is no such feat. Simply ignore it.

 **I have a player who wants to create an orc Shadow Slayer, and that raises a few questions for me. Shouldn't the Slayer have to take an allegiance to Good? Furthermore, since the character is an orc, would he have a problem taking his own race as a shadow enemy? And would the 10th-level word of slaying ability affect him?**

There's no requirement for allegiance. A Shadow Slayer can have an allegiance to any alignment, or to none at all.

As far as the rules are concerned, the orc should have no problem with designating his own race as a shadow enemy. (He may personally have a problem with it, but that's for him to work out.)


Finally, the word of slaying ability would not affect the orc hero. It would affect any of his Shadow friends, though, if there are any in the party.

 **The Arcane Arranger's word on the street ability allows instantaneous Gather Information checks. Does the hero still have to make Wealth checks for this information?**

Yes. The following line was left out of the description of that class feature.

"The purchase DC for the Gather Information check is reduced by 10."

In effect, this rule means that no Wealth check is necessary for general or specific information because the purchase DC would be reduced to or below 0. The purchase DC becomes 5 for restricted info and 10 for protected info.

 **In the description of the Techno Mage's machine empathy ability, it says that an untrained Pilot check made with this ability would still use the character's Intelligence modifier. But the key ability for the Pilot skill is Dexterity. Does this rule mean that all untrained checks made using machine empathy are Intelligence checks?**

The example in parentheses is incorrect. It should read, "(her Dexterity bonus, in addition to the competence bonus, applies in this case)."

 **Is there any difference between a Techno Mage's spellfiles and a Mage's spellbook in game terms?**


No.

 **Does the +1 bonus on saving throws from the Shadow Heritage feat add to the surprise avoidance benefit from the Dedicated hero's aware talent? My guess is that it doesn't, but I'd just like to make sure.**

No, it doesn't. A character with the aware talent adds her base Will save bonus to Listen and Spot checks -- not her save bonus after adding in modifiers such as the one from the Shadow Heritage feat.

 **Is there an XP cost for emailing spells? What's to prevent my hero from emailing a bunch of beneficial spells to his own PDA the day before he heads out on a dangerous mission?**

Casting a spell through email costs the same as creating an equivalent scroll. Sorry that point wasn't clearer in the text.

 **How can incantations be used offensively? If *baleful polymorph* has a range of touch and a casting time of 70 rounds, then how can a character actually use it against an opponent?**

I don't think an incantation generally makes a good offensive spell, unless the caster very carefully tailors the circumstances for its intended use. That's where player creativity comes in.

Also, keep in mind that many spells traditionally used as combat spells in **D&D** can still be useful outside of combat. The *baleful polymorph* incantation may be hard to use during a fight, but that doesn't mean it's never useful.

 **There's an illustration of a *shotgun of wounding* in the *Urban Arcana Campaign Setting*, but the description of the wounding property says that it can only affect melee weapons. Is it the**

## illustration or the property description that's wrong?

The illustration caption is incorrect. It should read, "shotgun of thundering."

## Why do all the vehicles in Urban Arcana have such weird sizes?

The sizes given in the vehicle descriptions are largely incorrect. Here's a rundown of the proper sizes. If you don't see a vehicle here, its size in the book is correct.

Police Cruiser	2 squares by 4 squares
Dodge Intrepid Police Interceptor	2 squares by 4 squares
Ford Econoline 150	2 squares by 4 squares
Jeep Wrangler	2 squares by 3 squares
Perterbilt 379	2 squares wide and 14 squares long (including full-sized trailer), or 5 squares long (cab alone)
Tow Truck	2 squares by 4 squares
V-Rod	1 square by 2 squares
Police Motorcycle	1 square by 2 squares
Fishing Trawler	4 squares by 16 squares
Tug Boat	4 squares by 18 squares
Fire Truck	2 squares by 6 squares
Police Peacekeeper	2 squares by 4 squares

**The sidebar on page 80 of the *Urban Arcana Campaign Setting* says that bicycles can reach street speed. Yet on the table on page 81, the speeds given for bicycles aren't anywhere near street speed -- or even near the speed my character can move on foot! How fast should bicycles go?**

Table 2-6 should give the following top speeds for bicycles.

Diamondback X-20	40 (4)
LeMond Victoire	50 (5)
Mongoose Fuzz Pro	30 (3)

## Do the bonuses granted by the *Index of Alexandria* have any types?

Are you talking about the increases to Intelligence and Wisdom? Those aren't bonuses; they're permanent increases to those scores. If a hero reads the index, her Intelligence and Wisdom scores simply go up.

The bonus on Knowledge checks, however, is an insight bonus, as noted in the text.

## Can portals between our world and Shadow be detected magically?

Portals between our world and Shadow are fleeting, rarely lasting more than a few moments. While they exist and for a short time afterward, they are detectable via the *detect magical aura* spell. The aura power of a portal is overwhelming while it exists and lingering afterward.

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Do you have a rules question about the d20 Modern Roleplaying Game? Send it to [bulletpoints@wizards.com](mailto: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

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.

