Bullet Points
Vehicles
by Charles Ryan

Welcome to the twenty-eighth 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.

Vehicles

In this installment, we're going to have another look at vehicles. The vehicle questions that have come in don't quite add up to as long a column as I usually put together, but never fear -- I'll make it up to you next time! So let's get down to it.

In the vehicle movement rules, the description of the dash stunt states that a character can accelerate a total of two speed categories in the same round -- first when choosing his speed, and then again when using the dash stunt. What if both of his stunts for the round are dashes? Could he increase his speed by three categories? How about using two hard brake stunts to decrease speed by five categories?

A character may succeed in a dash stunt only once per round, but he can use his second stunt to attempt it again if he fails the first time. The same goes for the hard brake stunt.

Suppose the heroes are involved in a car chase when a bad guy hoses down their car with an M-60. He targets a 10-foot-by-10-foot square that the car occupies. Does the car get a Reflex save? If so, whose save does it use? The driver's?

The car makes a saving throw as an attended object (attended by the driver). See Saving Throws under Attack an Object on page 150 of the **d20 Modern** *Roleplaying Game.*

In the above example, a later attack blows out the windshield of the heroes' car, and a bad guy tosses a lit stick of dynamite into it, managing to hit the center point among all four player characters. They each get a Reflex save, but what about the car?

Man, you run a rough-and-tumble game! Glad I'm not a car in your campaign.

Seriously, though, the same principle applies. The car gets a Reflex save as an object attended by the

driver.

I know you probably can't list statistics for every car, but can you give some for the Dodge Viper and Formula 1 cars?

You're right -- short of a darn hefty sourcebook, it would be impossible to provide stats for more than a handful of vehicles. But in this case, what the heck. Here you go.

Dodge Viper GTS Coupe
Crew: 1
Pass: 1
Cargo: 90 lb.
Init: -2
Maneuver: +1
Top Speed: 308 (31)
Defense: 8
Hardness: 5
Hit Points: 32
Size: H
Purchase DC: 33
Restriction: Lic (+1)

Formula 1 Race Car (Typical)
Crew: 1
Pass: 0
Cargo: 0 lb.
Init: -1
Maneuver: +2
Top Speed: 387 (39)
Defense: 9
Hardness: 5
Hit Points: 26
Size: L
Purchase DC: 47
Restriction: Lic (+1)

Does a vehicle's bonus to Defense based on its speed category apply even if the attacker is moving at the same speed (in a pursuing vehicle, for example)? In other words, is the bonus based on relative or absolute speed?

It's based on absolute speed. If two cars are driving side by side at highway speed, each gets the bonus to Defense. (For that matter, attackers in both vehicles are affected by the check/roll modifier for highway speed.) The bonus to Defense and penalty on attack rolls are as much a result of the bouncing, buffeting, and rocking of the fast-moving vehicles as of their speeds relative to one another. So even though the two vehicles remain side by side, it gets harder for the passengers to attack one another as the vehicles' speeds increase.

What happens if a character who's driving doesn't use her move action to move the vehicle? For example, what if she instead chooses to draw a weapon and attack?

If no one is driving a moving a vehicle (perhaps because the driver is killed or disabled, or because she chooses not to spend the requisite move action driving), the vehicle keeps moving in a straight line. It continues to move on the driver's action each round.

An air or water vehicle continues on without losing speed, but a ground vehicle loses speed over time. The first round that no one is driving, it moves at its last driven speed. The following round, it drops one speed category but moves the highest number of squares for that category. (For example, if it drops to alley speed at character scale, it moves 20 squares.) Thereafter, it drops one speed category every other round until it comes to a stop.

Occasionally a moving vehicle that isn't being driven must make a Drive check -- for example, as a result of

a collision, or if its path forces it to jump a ditch. In such a case, the GM makes the check using the vehicle's maneuver modifier, modified by the check/roll modifier for the vehicle's speed category.

What are the steps to figure out a vehicle's Defense value? Do you add the driver's Dexterity or Defense bonus to the vehicle's Defense bonus, Defense modifier for speed, and any bonus from driving defensively?

No. The vehicle does not get the benefit of the driver's Dexterity bonus or Defense. It does, as you mention, get its own Defense bonus, a bonus to Defense for its speed category, and, if appropriate, a dodge bonus for driving defensively (or in a state of total defense). It also gets a bonus to Defense against attacks from some targets if the driver has the Vehicle Dodge feat.

Then, as I compute it, the Acura 3.2 TL would have an absolute maximum defense of 17: + 8 [Defense bonus] + 4 [all-out speed] + 4 [total defense] + 1 [Vehicle Dodge] = 17. But an M1A1 Abrams tank would have a maximum defense of just 13! These Defense values seem low. And why does the tank have a lower Defense than the Acura?

Your math is correct. If the numbers seem low, remember that the target is a big vehicle -- much, much larger than a Medium-size creature, the typical target of an attack. (And let's face it, a 17 Defense is respectable for a typical person.) And while a vehicle may be moving quickly, it doesn't actively dodge the way a creature in combat does.

The fact that the tank is easier to hit than the car simply reflects the fact that it's much bigger -- and somewhat slower -- than the Acura. What it lacks in Defense, though, it makes up for in hardness. Tanks are successful in battle not so much because they dodge enemy fire as because they're relatively impervious to it.

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.