



Bullet Points *Characters*

by Charles Ryan

Welcome to the twenty-sixth 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.

A Full Year

Can you believe it? *Bullet Points* has been going strong for a whole year now. It's been a real pleasure helping out with your rules and game questions! It seems like I've answered so many questions to date that I ought to be running out, but my inbox is still overflowing, so I look forward to answering your questions for some time to come.

Characters


In this installment, we'll look at questions related to characters. I don't have many general comments on the topic, so let's dive right into the questions.

Questions and Answers


Here are the questions about characters that have landed in the inbox recently.

 **If a character has not used all of her action points when she attains a new level, does she add the new points to the unused total, or are the unused points simply lost?**


A character never loses action points except when she spends them. So if she has unused action points when she attains a new level, just add the new level's action points to the pool and drive on!

 **The example Dedicated hero detailed on page 19 of the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game* gets 7 skill points per level. But at the top of page 28, in the class description, it says a Dedicated hero gets 5 skill points per level. Which is correct?**


Page 28 is correct. In general, whenever you see an example elsewhere in the book that conflicts with the "primary" source of information (such as a class description), assume the example is in error.

 **My Strong hero has reached 10th level. The rules say that he can advance to 20th level, but Table 1-3 only goes up to 10th. So what does this mean? Should I extrapolate the information myself, or do characters just stop gaining base attack bonus, saves, Defense, and other attributes at 10th level?**


Your character is not limited to ten levels. He is, however, limited to ten levels in any given class. To advance your 10th-level Strong hero, you'll need to pick a different class. You might consider one of the advanced classes, or have him pick up some levels in a different base class. (The Strong/Tough combination is pretty sweet for melee-oriented characters!) There are twenty-six classes in the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game* rulebook alone, so it shouldn't be hard to find something that works for you!

 **The 1st-level character I'm creating has a feat that gives her a class skill and an occupation that gives her the same skill as a class skill. Can she get the +1 bonus on that skill from the occupation? In other words, does the feat give her the class skill *before* she picks the occupation?**

In a word, yes. There is no set order for creating your character at 1st level, so you're free to choose feats before choosing an occupation if you want. If you've chosen a feat that gives you Concentration as a class skill, for example, then your character can be considered to have it as a class skill already when you choose her occupation. Thus, if the occupation you select also offers Concentration as a class skill, she can get the +1 bonus on those checks.

 **My hero has the Heroic Surge feat. If he makes a full attack (with his Gunslinger's lightning shot class ability, for example), can he still use Heroic Surge to get an extra action? The feat description says a full-round action takes all of the hero's concentration.**

A full-round action normally uses up a character's entire action for the round. However, as is often the case with feats, Heroic Surge lets a hero break that rule. There is no inherent restriction on when the hero can use this feat, so he can use it regardless of what type of action he takes in the "normal" part of his turn.

 **The prerequisite for the Combat Martial Arts feat is base attack bonus +1. Yet on page 76, in the opening example, Yoriko chooses Combat Martial Arts as a feat at 1st level. Yoriko is a Fast hero, so she doesn't meet the prerequisite. Is the prerequisite wrong, or can Yoriko take the feat because she gets it as part of her starting occupation?**

The example on page 76 is in error. Yoriko does not meet the prerequisites for Combat Martial Arts, so she can't take the feat at 1st level. She should have been given some other feat in the example.

Some feats conferred by occupations (including Combat Martial Arts, which is granted by the law enforcement and military occupations) have prerequisites that not every character can meet. But prerequisites for a bonus feat still apply, and a character that doesn't meet them can't select that particular bonus feat.


 **Why does the Techie mastercraft class ability require XP to use? How can I rationalize the loss of XP in non-metagame terms?**

Experience points are primarily a measure of a character's adventuring experience and prowess. Thus,

when a hero puts a great deal of time and energy into nonadventuring activities, his adventuring abilities tend to atrophy a bit.

As you point out, that rationale does create a small paradox: Characters who adventure get better at their nonadventuring skills, while those who stay at home (ostensibly honing those skills) don't get better. There's not much I can do to explain that away, except to point out that the d20 rules are about adventuring. So if you want to develop your character, go adventuring.

Sorry I can't be of more help on this issue. You're right about the paradox, but that's just what happens when the game includes adventuring characters (such as the Techie) who are built around essentially nonadventuring concepts.

 **The Craft skills let a hero piece together and make items from component parts. With it, she can make a generic item that performs various functions, such as a phone, a computer, or whatever. What about items such as firearms that vary a bit based on their types? Is the character crafting an assault rifle or an M16A2? If it's the former, how do you determine its qualities (range, 3-round burst capability, caseless ammo benefits [as per the G11], and so forth)? If it's the latter, how can the character design or invent a wholly new firearm? Someone's gotta be able to do that because they get designed all the time.**

On the same topic, could a hero craft a firearm that's similar to another but has certain modifications? Could he craft a weapon similar to an M16A2, but with 2-round burst and full auto capability? How about an SAR-21 variant with 3-round burst capability and single fire selection only?

I'm sure the same ideas would apply to other craftable items as well. What if a hero wants to design something new and/or improved?

In general, items created through the Craft skill are "generic" versions of specific items that a character might otherwise purchase. For example, a hero who uses Craft to build a cell phone creates a generic, homemade cell phone, not a Motorola TX 3310 (or whatever). The item he makes is crude but effective -- not highly polished or feature-rich. The only features it has are those common to average baseline items of that sort. So, for example, a homemade assault rifle probably has the ability to fire on semi or auto, has a range increment of about 80 feet, has a 30-round box magazine, deals 2d8 points of damage, and so forth. It is neither an M16A2 nor an SAR-21; it is a homemade gun.

You are welcome to modify the rules as you see fit if you want to add features to an item. As a general rule of thumb, each feature added probably increases the Craft DC by 5, the purchase DC for parts by 2, and the time required by +50%. So if your hero wanted to add a 3-round burst feature to his homemade assault rifle, you would apply each of those modifiers once. Creating an assault rifle is normally a complex Craft (mechanical) check that requires 24 hours. The parts purchase DC is 16, and the Craft (mechanical) DC is 25. For the modified weapon, the parts purchase DC would be 18, the Craft DC would be 30, and the time required would be 36 hours.

If you wanted to brew up a more sophisticated set of guidelines, you might check out the rules for crafting poisons in the **d20 Modern** web enhancement. That rationale allows you to determine a total Craft DC based on the effects you're looking for. A similar set of rules could work just fine for crafting firearms or other types of items.

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.

