



Bullet Points

Combat Confusion

By Owen K.C. Stephens

Welcome to the latest installment of *Bullet Points*. I'm Owen K.C. Stephens, writer of a lot of **Star Wars Roleplaying Game** material and a contributor to the recently announced *d20 Apocalypse* book, plus some other **d20 Modern** projects as yet unannounced. It's my job to answer your questions about the game, offer advice on tricky rules issues, and give you a little peek into the design philosophy of the game.


Every two weeks I 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 the mailbox contains any unrelated but pressing questions, I might tackle them at the end of the column, but only if I have room and they can't wait for an appropriately themed column.

Combat Confusion

In this installment, we'll look at some issues involving specific combat maneuvers and combat-related special abilities.

Questions and Answers

And now, without further ado, let's get down to those questions!

 **Is an attack of opportunity (AoO) resolved before or after the event that provokes it? Consider what would happen in either case if a character with the Brawl feat (which provokes attacks of opportunity) is fighting a Martial Artist.**

If attacks of opportunity happen before normal attacks, and the brawler punches the Martial Artist, she can trip him as her AoO and, assuming she succeeds, throw him to the floor. Since the attacker is now prone and cannot attack, his brawl attack is lost.

If attacks of opportunity come after the initial blow, then the brawler could trip the Martial Artist, and (assuming he succeeds) throw her to the floor. Then the Martial Artist is prone and unable to use her attack of opportunity.


If the two characters' attacks of opportunity occur simultaneously, then the brawler could trip the Martial Artist, and she could use her attack of opportunity to trip him. Assuming both succeed, they both fall to the floor prone! Help!

First of all, a prone position does not by definition prevent a character from making a melee attack. On page 140 of the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game*, it says that a prone character takes a -4 penalty on melee attack rolls and can't use thrown weapons or bows.

An attack of opportunity occurs just before the event that provokes it. So, in your first example, a character with the Brawl feat who swings on a Martial Artist does indeed provoke an attack of opportunity. The Martial Artist may use her AoO to trip her foe, and that attack occurs before the brawler's fist lands. If the trip succeeds, the brawler falls down. His swing then continues, but he takes a -4 penalty on the attack roll for being prone.

The situation can get more complex. Let's imagine that we have two Martial Artists (Marc and Ian). For some reason, Marc wants to force Ian to eat a cookie, and making him do so requires him to grapple Ian. Marc makes a melee attack to start the grapple, immediately provoking an attack of opportunity. For his attack of opportunity, Ian attempts to disarm Marc by knocking the cookie out of his hand. This action provokes another attack of opportunity, which Marc uses to try to trip Ian.

Marc's trip AoO happens first. If he is successful, Ian is prone. Whether or not the trip succeeds, Ian's disarm attempt is resolved next. Whether or not Marc is forced to drop the cookie, his grapple attempt comes next. (Because the disarm attempt can't do damage, it can't prevent the grapple.) Once the grapple attempt is resolved, play continues as normal, regardless of where the two characters end up.

 **A character firing a gun on autofire can target a 10-foot-by-10-foot area. If a creature takes up that entire area, or even more -- say, a 20-foot-by-20-foot area -- does it take any additional damage?**


No. Even very large creatures take only normal damage when hit by autofire attacks. Because a Large creature is likely to have a poor Dexterity score (and therefore a poor Reflex save modifier), it is likely to take damage from an autofire attack. This result may seem illogical for a creature with a high Defense, but the *d20 Modern* rules try to keep gunplay very simple in order to speed play and focus on the overall action.

For people who aren't happy with that result, I recommend the following house rule. A creature whose body fills a 10-foot-by-10-foot or larger area may be targeted as the sole recipient of an autofire attack. Such an attack requires ten bullets, so the attacker's weapon must have at least that much ammunition. Rather than using the normal autofire rules, resolve the attack as if it were a burst fire attack (-4 to hit, +2 dice of damage) that requires ten bullets.

 **When a character attacks a 10-foot-by-10-foot area with an autofire attack and rolls a natural 20, does the attack hit all enemies within that area?**

Not only does the attack hit everything in the area, it also counts as a threat. Therefore, a confirmation roll is needed to see whether the attack results in a critical hit against every target in the area. However, each target may still make a DC 15 Reflex save to take no damage.


Any time an attack roll is required, a natural 20 qualifies as an automatic hit and a threat. However, this fact never changes any other rules that apply to the attack, such as the Reflex save allowed for autofire attacks.

 **I can find no information in the *d20 ModernCore Rulebook* about a character who is armed with two pistols reloading both of them at once. Is reloading two box magazine guns a full-round action normally and a move action if the character has the Quick Reload feat? Or is it a regular move action normally and a free action with the Quick Reload feat?**

Reloading a weapon takes two hands, so a character can't reload two weapons at the same time unless she has some special equipment created by the GM. Thus, a character without the Quick Reload feat needs two move

actions to reload two weapons with speed loaders or box magazines.


Reloading is a free action for a character with Quick Reload. The GM might allow such a character to reload two weapons as a free action, or he might require the character to put one weapon down to reload the other, so that one hand is free to manipulate the magazine. In the latter case, reloading both weapons requires a move action to put away one gun, a free action to reload the other weapon, two more move actions to put away the reloaded weapon and draw the empty one, another free action to reload that weapon, and finally another move action to draw the first weapon again. The total time elapsed for this process is two full rounds.

 **When a 1st-level Gunslinger uses his close combat shot ability with a machine pistol set on automatic against an adjacent enemy, does it provoke an attack of opportunity? Does the Gunslinger receive any penalties or bonuses? What if he is Small or Large?**

As long as the machine pistol is the right size for the Gunslinger (see below), his close combat shot ability functions normally and does not provoke an AoO. No special bonuses or penalties apply for using a machine pistol, a sawed-off shotgun, or a Derringer, as long as the weapon is a firearm and qualifies by size.

The description of the close combat shot ability says the firearm must be Medium or smaller, regardless of the size of the Gunslinger wielding it. This rule has some good game balance reasons behind it. In an *Urban Arcana* game, the Gunslinger class would be much more attractive to a half-ogre or ogre than to a halfling if the former could use close combat shot with Large weapons and the latter had to stick to Small ones. Such an arrangement could lead to some overpowering combinations, such as ogre Gunslingers carrying around SS-77 machine guns and firing them freely, without provoking attacks of opportunity. (It's bad enough that ogres can walk around with Huge miniguns and fire them as two-handed weapons without tripods.)

However, if you as GM want to make size relevant to a Gunslinger's close combat shot ability, you're free to make up a house rule to that effect. I suggest simply restricting the ability to weapons the same size as the Gunslinger or smaller.

 **The *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game* says that Hide is not a class skill for the Gunslinger, but Move Silently is. Was Hide left off the list intentionally or was it an omission? Since the Gunslinger is essentially an extension of the Fast hero class, which does have Hide as a class skill, I suspect that its absence is an oversight.**

The Gunslinger isn't just an extension of the Fast hero class, and expecting it to have all the skills and abilities of that class is a mistake. While it's true that the fastest route into the Gunslinger class is via Fast hero, a character could easily take a different path. For example, he could take more levels of a different class, or a single level of Fast hero and multiple levels of another base class, or even levels in another advanced class.

Now let's look at why Hide is missing from the list. Like all advanced classes, the Gunslinger is more focused than the basic classes. In this case, his focus is on moving around quietly -- a common element in many gunfights -- but not on concealing himself. Thus, the lack of the Hide skill is in fact intentional.

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

Owen Kirker Clifford Stephens was born in 1970 in Norman, Oklahoma. He attended the TSR Writer's Workshop held at the Wizards of the Coast Game Center in 1997 and moved to the Seattle area in 2000, after accepting a job as a Game Designer at Wizards of the Coast, Inc. Fourteen months later, he returned to Oklahoma with his wife and three cats to pick up his freelance writer/developer career. He has author and co-author credits on numerous **Star Wars** and *EverQuest* projects, as well as *Bastards and Bloodlines* from Green Ronin. He also has producer credits for various IDA products, including the Stand-Ins printable figures.

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