



Bullet Points

FX Items

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.

Magic and the d20 Modern Game


I'm still easing into the transition from **D&D** to **d20 Modern**, so I've chosen another topic that's common to both games -- magic items, or FX items as they're called in the **d20 Modern** game. There aren't as many questions on this topic as there were about magic, so I've also included one leftover question from the last installment at the end.

Questions and Answers

We'll start with some questions about the Artificer prestige class in the *Urban Arcana Campaign Setting*, then move on into other FX topics.

 **I have a question about the Artificer prestige class. The item creation class feature seems no different from the typical Mage abilities in the d20 Modern rulebook. Why isn't the Artificer the best at making items?**

Unlike a Mage, an Artificer can craft wands and make magic mastercraft items. In addition, when an Artificer gets the improved brew potion, improved scribe scroll, and improved scribe tattoo abilities, the raw materials have lower purchase DCs, and thus lower XP costs.

 **I was wondering why the abilities to craft wondrous items, rings, and staves aren't available to the Artificer. Also, the Urban Arcana book doesn't give rules on adding a special quality -- such as flaming or producing a *sleep* effect on a successful hit -- to a weapon. Are staves, rings, wondrous items, and weapons with special abilities found only as treasure? Or do we have to wait for another book to get the rest of the item creation rules?**

The **d20 Modern** game has no rules for crafting staves, rings, or wondrous items, or for adding special abilities to weapons or armor. The game assumes that such items are brought in from Shadow, not manufactured in the modern world.

However, it's quite possible to adapt the item creation rules from **D&D** for **d20 Modern**, if you wish. Here's an easy way.


1. Calculate the price for creating the item using the **D&D** rules.
2. Multiply that price by 20.
3. Find an equivalent purchase DC using Table 7-1: Purchase DCs in the ***d20 Modern Roleplaying Game*** rulebook.
4. Add 1 to that DC for a Mage (assuming that you allow Mages to make these items at all), or subtract 1 from it for an Artificer.

Artificers should have to choose forge ring, craft staff, or craft wondrous item as specific item creation talents in order to make the corresponding items. Vehicular magic items fall into the wondrous items category.


You could also rule that an Artificer can add special properties to weapons or armor using his magic mastercraft ability. To figure out the costs, just apply the purchase DC modifier to the raw materials cost.

 **I've picked through the section on magic items in the *Urban Arcana Campaign Setting*, and I can't find any mention of the purchase DC for raw enhancement bonuses.**


Check page 375 of the ***d20 Modern Roleplaying Game***.

 **Do magic firearms bestow their power on nonmagical bullets they fire? Would nonmagical bullets fired from a +2 *Glock* be able to penetrate damage reduction 15/+2, or are +2 bullets required? What is the market price on magic ammo?**

Magic firearms bestow their magical power on their ammunition. You can also buy magic ammunition using the same Purchase DC Modifier as for weapons. Such ammo comes in the same units as standard ammo, as given on Table 4-5: Ammunition in the ***d20 Modern Roleplaying Game***. Thus, you can buy 20 +1 5.56mm rounds for a Purchase DC of 14, or 50 +1 9mm rounds for a Purchase DC of 15. The enhancement bonus from magic ammunition does not stack with the enhancement bonus from a magic firearm, however.

 **A *woundinghandgun* is described on page 375 of the *d20 Modern* rulebook, and an illustration of a *shotgun of wounding* appears on page 123 of the *Urban Arcana Campaign Setting*. However, the magical effect for *wounding* on page 125 of *Urban Arcana* states that it applies only to melee weapons. Is the text in *Urban Arcana* incorrect? Can modern firearms and other ranged weapons benefit from the *wounding* ability?**


I suspect, though I don't know for sure, that the "(melee weapons only)" restriction was added to the description in **Urban Arcana** late in the game -- after the art was already done -- in order to dodge questions like the next one. From a design viewpoint, I'd say that even though the *wounding handgun* appeared first, and it's in the core rulebook, it's really better for the game if the *wounding* property applies to melee weapons only, as it does in **D&D** v.3.5.

 The description of the *wounding handgun* FX item says that multiple wounds stack. Thus, if Russell the Soldier hits a GM character in two different rounds with his *wounding handgun*, the *wounding* property would deal 2 points of damage per round. What if Russell had used the Double Tap feat, expending two bullets in the same round with his *wounding handgun*? If both hit, do they cause multiple wounds, which therefore deal 2 points of damage every round?

Now that we've established that the *wounding handgun* probably shouldn't exist, we have to figure out what to do with it if it does. Two bullets fired using the Double Tap feat don't deal as much damage as two separate bullets fired normally, and the result is really more like a single, nasty wound than two wounds. Therefore, the wounding damage is still only 1 point per round.

More Magic Mayhem!

This last question actually relates to the last column, which focused on magic.

 I'm not sure if I'm reading the Incantations section in the *Urban Arcana Campaign Setting* properly. The way I see it, if the DC is 41, the caster must make a Knowledge (arcane lore) check every 10 minutes. The help he gets from any secondary casters does not modify that check. In fact, other than manipulating the incantation, nothing reduces this number. So if the character is casting the spell with say, twelve friends, and the casting time is 70 minutes, he must make seven checks. Suppose the caster is 18th level and has an Intelligence bonus of +6. His maximum rank in Knowledge (arcane lore) is 21, and adding his Intelligence modifier gives him a +27 bonus on the check. So on a d20, he would need to roll 14 or higher seven times to get the spell off. If he fails, he and his buddies lose the money, time, and XP cost, experience the backlash, and possibly take the effects of the spell. If I'm reading the rules properly, there is no way anyone would be stupid enough to attempt an incantation, since the risk far outweighs the benefit. Please correct me if I'm wrong.

I'm not sure your conclusion is wrong, though there might be some mistakes in your assumptions. Your conclusion -- that incantations are too risky to be worthwhile -- really depends on the character making the decision. Some heroes are sure to feel that the power of an incantation is worth the risk. Others may feel that they can manage the risk successfully, and that's where I can step in and respond to your assumptions.

First off, you picked the highest DC in the book as your example. Yeah, *baleful polymorph* is a very difficult incantation to pull off successfully. If I were going to attempt it, I'd make sure I had a high-level character, as you suggest. I'd definitely use a living, helpless creature as a model for the target, which would give me a +2 bonus on all my checks. And I'd be sure to take Skill Emphasis (Knowledge [arcane lore]), and maybe Magical Affinity, for another +5 bonus. At that point, I'm rolling 1d20 + 34, so I'd need only a 7 or better on the roll.

Now, to be clear, my character doesn't need to make seven successful checks in a row. He can fail over and over again, as long as he doesn't fail two consecutive checks. The odds of failing two in a row when the character has a 30% chance of failure are not insignificant, but they're a lot better than you suggested in your hypothetical situation. And maybe that helps balance the risk in your mind.

As a final note, remember that DC 41 is as high as the examples in *Urban Arcana* get. Most of the other

incantations are significantly easier, at least by the time your hero hits those high levels we're talking about.

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

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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