



## Bullet Points

# It's All About Gear

By Owen K.C. Stephens

Welcome to the latest installment of *Bullet Points*. I'm Owen K.C. Stephens, writer of a lot of material for the **Star Wars Roleplaying Game** and the **d20 Modern** game, author of the recently released *d20 Cyberscape* book, and co-author of the *d20 Apocalypse* supplement. 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 article, 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.

## It's All About Gear

In this installment, I'm going over a number of questions that have popped up about weapons, mecha, cybernetics, and general equipment. This includes questions about things from *d20 Cyberscape* and *d20 Future*. People with just the core rules can ignore questions that don't make sense to them.

## Questions and Answers

Now without further ado, let's get down to the questions!

 **What feats are usable with mecha that are not mecha feats? Can a pilot use Power Attack, Combat Expertise, Improved Trip, Combat Reflexes, Alertness, and Two-Weapon Fighting? If so, can he also use those feats when driving a car?**


Generally, a driver or pilot can use any feats that the GM feels it's reasonable to apply when in control of a vehicle. Thus a character with Alertness gets the bonus any time he makes a Listen or Spot check (even if inside a big mecha -- he's still paying attention to the sensors and speakers), while he likely can't use Power Attack when trying to ram into someone with a car.

That said, mecha can do most of the things a person can (unlike a car), so most combat feats apply. Certainly if the mecha is making an attack with two hand-held weapons, Two-Weapon Fighting applies. I would allow a pilot in a mecha to use any combat feat he has that applies, even if I might disallow them to a driver in a car.

Also, because the sidebar on page 171 of *d20 Future* specifies that feats from the Brawl and Combat Martial Arts trees don't apply to



mecha combat, I'd be inclined to assume any other melee feats do. I do think, however, that it would be reasonable for a GM to rule a pilot must have Mecha Operation to use such feats.


 **Can mecha be affected by magic, or are they exactly like constructs in that respect? What about spaceships -- could those be affected too?**

Mecha are more like cars than constructs. Any spell that effects a typical object, including damaging spells, effect mecha.


 **The nanoaugmenters in *d20 Future*, unlike those in *d20 Cyberscape*, do not list purchase DCs. How much do these cost?**

If you plan to allow them for purchase in a campaign (which many GMs quite reasonably don't), use the following costs --

<b>Nanoaugmenter</b>	<b>Purchase DC</b>
Brain Boost	DC 31 (Res +2)
Chatter	DC 21 (Res +2)
Doppleganger	DC 25 (Res +2)
Micro Muscles	DC 31 (Res +2)
Prophecy	DC 28 (Res +2)
Soullink	DC 28 (Res +2)
20/20	DC 25 (Res +2)
Watchdog	DC 22 (Res +2)


 **In *d20 Cyberscape*, the nasal filter (page 27) has a listed location of "none" and is expressly stated to not count against a character's maximum number of cybernetic implants. The poker face enhancement on the same page also has a listed location of "none," but it is not expressly stated that it doesn't take up a slot. Does poker face count against my maximum number of enhancements?**

Although a poker face does not take up a slot (and thus allows you to have more cybernetic devices implanted in your head), it is more invasive in terms of your body as a whole. Thus it does count against your total number of cybernetics.

 **As I was looking through *d20 Future* handbook, I saw a few devices and cybernetic parts that gave characters damage reduction (such as the fortified skeleton and personal force field). These devices were designed for PLs 7 and 8, but the weapons of these PLs all do energy damage, which goes through damage reduction. This means that all these items and the Tough Hero's abilities are useless in a game at PL 6 or above. Is my analysis on this situation correct?**


The utility of DR is reduced in higher PL campaigns, but it's hardly useless. First, not everyone is going to use a pulse rifle as soon as they become available. Such things as clubs, fists, swords, and high-frequency swords will still be around. Second, it's not true that all PL 7 and PL 8 weapons do "energy" damage. That includes the concussion rifle, concussion rod, gravitic grenade, and rail gun PL 7. Even at PL 8, there is phasing ammunition,

which means somebody is using a non-energy weapon.


 **Has the official stance changed on the PL of rail gun and gauss technology, both of which (from my limited research) seem promising in the next few years. The rail gun seems could be viable as a mounted weapon system for tanks, ships, and other large types of vehicles as early as Progress Level 6, yet it is not available until PL 7. The Progress Level descriptions seem to be based on at least some general scientific rationale. Shouldn't they be updated as real technology advances?**

Obviously, the PL descriptions are guesses when it comes to what is going to be available in the future. It's worth remembering, however, that things from more advanced PLs can be allowed as cutting edge items at lower PLs. It may be that some of the first PL 7 items to be put into production will be rail guns and gauss technology, but that doesn't mean they're PL 6 items.


If you want to change the PL of anything in your own campaign, feel free. But the official position of the PL of future tech is unlikely to change.

 **I am concerned about what I feel is a clear disadvantage to single shot sniper rifles. If you are firing with a semiautomatic rifle (say, one HK PSG1) and have the Double Tap feat, you can deliver 3d10 points of damage with a single attack. This is clearly unfair, because many single-shot rifles are of larger caliber and have more hitting power than semiautomatics. Would it be possible to change this, allowing the single-shot rifles to have a wider critical span (such as 18-20 instead of 20)?**

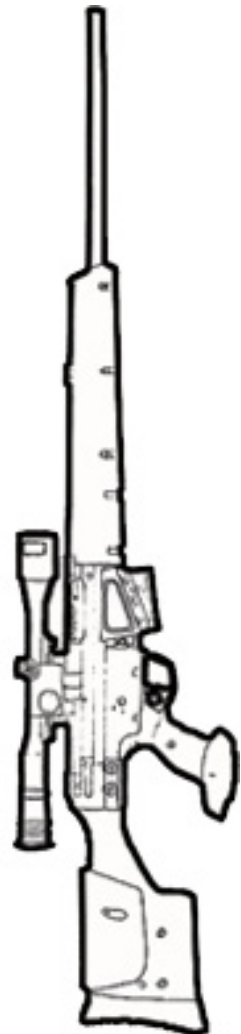
Giving sniper weapons an 18-20 threat range would make them clear weapons of choice at any range, because they'd be much more likely to deliver a telling shot at any range. The best snipers (as opposed to just marksmen) likely are going to take levels of an advanced class that gives them access to Weapon Focus and Improved Critical, but in general what they need from a weapon is a very long range increment and a masterwork bonus to attack rolls. (Or even the sniper advanced class, which can be found [here](#).)

 **In the *d20 Modern Core Rulebook*, page 113 mentions a surgery kit in the equipment list of things to buy, but its description was omitted in the following pages. The descriptions jump from Spike Strip to Survival Gear, skipping right over it. I was wondering, what exactly does it do?**

A surgery kit allows you to make a DC 20 Treat Injury check to perform field surgery, as described on page 75. Best if you also have the Surgery feat.

 **The equipment packages in *d20 Future Tech* are an awesome addition and extremely helpful in quick character creation (not to mention for slapping some gear on the unsavory individuals the heroes encounter). I have two questions about the packages though:**

**First, does a player have to take the package of the occupation he has or is that a GM call? My current interpretation is that yes, you have to take the package you have a job for, but if you have a good reason, you can get another package (i.e., being an MP in the Military and getting the Law Enforcement package or being a Dilettante but taking the Criminal package because you're a gentleman thief).**



**Second, are items switchable? I bring this up because I noticed that the Doctor Package gets at its basic level a medkit (advanced) (pg. 30 in *d20 Future Tech*), then at the next wealth step gets a surgery kit. This seems redundant since the medkit (advanced) "functions as a combined first aid kit, medical kit, and surgery kit." (*d20 Future*, pg. 70). So, since the purchase DC of the Surgery kit is 16 (*d20 Modern*, pg. 113), could I switch it for something along that price range and maintain the balance of the package?**

Certainly it is well within a GM's prerogative to allow a player to switch around equipment packages. The packages are fairly well balanced, so it's unlikely to cause trouble if you allow players to freely choose their equipment package regardless of occupation. Similarly, there's no reason for a GM to disallow players from swapping out equipment for gear of the same or lesser value and the same restriction level, if the GM is so inclined.

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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

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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