



Bullet Points

Urban Arcana I

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 much 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 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.

Archmage Revisited

Okay, I'll be honest: I often write this column pretty late at night. That's the best I can come up with by way of an excuse for the way I answered one question a few weeks ago. Let's take another look at the Archmage prestige class before plunging into new questions about the *Urban Arcana Campaign Setting*. Here's what I wrote in *Bullet Points* #37 (which my computer shows was saved at 12:54 AM).

Look at the Archmage in the *Urban Arcana Campaign Setting*, for example. The requirements are pretty straightforward: 12 ranks in each of three skills. My **D&D**-trained mind initially thought, "Gee, you can get into that after only 9 levels in another class and finish the class by 14th level." But that's not so -- a hero can take one of those skills -- Spellcraft -- only after becoming a Mage, and he must be at least 3rd level before he can take a level of Mage. So if your character enters the class as a Smart Hero 3/Mage 12, he's out of levels after finishing five levels of Archmage.

Wow, what was I thinking? As many of you have written to point out, that paragraph contains two painfully glaring errors. The first is that my **D&D**-trained mind was correct. A character can't start taking ranks in Spellcraft until he gets into the Mage advanced class, but once there, he can spend more than one rank per level on the skill -- in fact, he can spend up to his maximum rank (character level + 3). So when he qualifies to become a Mage after three levels of Smart hero, he can immediately spend 7 skill points on Spellcraft, or he can purchase those ranks over the next couple of levels. Then he can spend 1 more point with every Mage level he gains and have 12 ranks of Spellcraft by the time he reaches 6th level as a Mage. At that point, he's a 9th-level character.

The other glaring error is that there's no such thing as a 12th-level Mage, since the class has only ten levels. Considering that the topic under discussion was how many levels advanced and prestige classes have, that was a pretty goofy mistake. Once again, I can only point to the lateness of the hour.

So a hero can be a Smart Hero 3/Mage 6/Archmage 5 and still have six levels to go before hitting the cap at 20th level. Practically speaking, therefore, Archmage could have been a ten-level or even an eleven-level class. So why are prestige classes only five levels? Here's a better and shorter answer than I gave before: A prestige class is so tightly focused that it provides all its cool abilities in a short burst. You certainly could design a ten-level

prestige class if you wanted to, but even the **D&D** designers are starting to create more and more prestige classes that deliver everything they have to give in just five levels. In **d20 Modern**, advanced classes are about general capabilities and character archetypes; whereas prestige classes are all about focus and specialization.

There, I'm done eating crow. On to the new questions!

Questions and Answers

In this installment, we focus once again on the *Urban Arcana Campaign Setting*.



Because of her level adjustment, a PC drow without a class is effectively already 2nd level. Do such characters gain skill points to use on racial skills or hit points from their level adjustments?

No, they don't. A drow with one class level is a 3rd-level character only for the purposes of determining how many XP she needs to get her second class level and for comparing her abilities with those of other characters. She still gets feats, skills, and hit points as a regular 1st-level character.



I received permission from my GM to make a half-breed Shadowkind character with four arms. The character has three levels of Fast hero, three levels of Strong hero, and four levels of Martial Artist. In order to use his arms effectively, does he need Multiattack, Multiweapon Fighting, or both? What about Two-Weapon Fighting or Advanced Two-Weapon Fighting?

If all you want your hero to do is make unarmed attacks as a Martial Artist, he doesn't need any feat or special ability to use all four arms effectively -- any more than any other Martial Artist needs special training to use his knees, feet, and head to make unarmed attacks. He doesn't get any extra attacks from those extra arms, but when he is making multiple attacks, you can freely say that any given attack is coming from any of his limbs.

If you want this character to use weapons in all those hands, however, he does need a feat to be really effective. Without any special training, he has one primary hand (just like any other character) and three off hands. When he attacks with weapons in all four hands, he takes the same penalties with each of his off-hand attacks that a normal character does with her single off hand attack -- namely -6 with the primary hand and -10 with each off hand. If he's using light weapons in *all three* off hands, these penalties drop to -4 and -8, respectively. The **D&D** game has a feat called Multiweapon Fighting that requires three or more hands but otherwise works just like Two-Weapon Fighting -- that is, it reduces the penalty on attacks with the primary hand by 2 and on each off hand by 6. In the **d20 Modern** game, your GM can either introduce the Multiweapon Fighting Feat for you or just let you gain the same benefit from Two-Weapon Fighting. Either way, the character would take a -4 penalty on all his attacks, or a -2 penalty if he is using a light weapon in each of his off hands.

In theory, such a character could wield a two-handed weapon and two light weapons, taking a -2 penalty on all three attack rolls. I leave it to your GM to decide what combination of attacks is reasonable.



The description of the Brawl feat states that the user's attacks deal nonlethal damage. But what if a half-dragon uses it? The description of a half-dragon says that its unarmed attacks deal lethal damage because of its claws. So do attacks made by a half-dragon using the Brawl feat deal lethal or nonlethal damage?

The description of the half-dragon says, "Feats such as Combat Martial Arts may increase the amount of

damage dealt" by their natural weapons. Since the language of the Combat Martial Arts feat is very similar to that of the Brawl feat, I'd say that Brawl falls into the same category. Therefore, a half-dragon character can deal 1d6 points of lethal damage with his claw or bite attacks.

Next time around, I'll address a couple more questions about Shadowkind races, then a few that are more specific to other aspects of the **Urban Arcana** setting.

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