



Bullet Points

Urban Arcana II

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.

More Urban Arcana

The questions just keep rolling in on this topic. I'm glad to see that so many people are interested in this setting and using it to create campaigns!

Questions and Answers


This time around, we're continuing with questions about races and other features of the *Urban Arcana Campaign Setting*.

 **The gnoll's level adjustment is given as +1 on the table of Shadowkind Level Adjustments and as +2 in the race description! Which value is correct?**

The gnoll's level adjustment should be +2. With its extra starting Hit Dice, it's clearly too good for a mere +1. In general, when you see a conflict of this sort, you should trust the text rather than the table.

 **Do all Shadowkind creatures receive the same effects from modern medical treatment? Does a drow's body get the same pain relief from morphine as an ogre's? Can a dwarf give blood? Is a tiefling AB positive or ZX negative?**

In terms of game rules and effects, Shadowkind creatures react the same as humans do to medical treatment. In other words, a Treat Injury check or a *cure* spell works exactly the same whether it's used on a human or a tiefling.

 **The prerequisites for a Holy/Unholy Knight include Diplomacy 9 ranks, Gather Information 9 ranks, and Knowledge (any one) 9 ranks. The text, however, says the quickest route into this class is to start as a Strong or Fast Hero and then take levels in Archaic Weaponsmaster or Swashbuckler. But this path can't possibly work. Not one of those archetypes has the skill set needed to fulfill the prerequisites for a Holy/Unholy Knight. Does the description have a typo someplace? I need to make an NPC Unholy**


Knight by next Monday, so time is of the essence. Please write back.

First of all, I'm sorry I didn't get back to you in time for your game, but I really can't help out when time is of the essence. For one thing, I can't answer questions by direct email, and for another, I have to turn these articles in a good six weeks before they appear on the website.

But let's talk about your question anyway. The best way to make a Holy or Unholy Knight is to take the law enforcement starting occupation. Doing so lets you choose two class skills from a list that includes both Diplomacy and Gather Information. Thus, a Strong or Fast Hero from a law enforcement background has all the skills he needs to become a Holy or Unholy Knight. For some reason, however, the image of an ex-cop Unholy Knight is giving me the creeps.

 **I find it strange that the Archaic Weaponsmaster didn't get the top base attack bonus. Why would a Strong hero who specializes in weapons suddenly find her combat abilities slowing down upon taking this class?**


The **d20 Modern** game is very stingy with high BAB progressions. Think of the slower progression (+3 every four levels) as the baseline for characters who are good at combat -- namely the Fast and Tough heroes, the Soldier, the Gunslinger, and the Bodyguard. The only two classes in the core rules that get the higher BAB progression (+1 per level), are the Strong Hero and the Martial Artist, and they are clearly set apart as true combat specialists. They're supposed to have a slight edge over other classes in this regard, and the rest of their abilities are balanced accordingly. So the Archaic Weaponsmaster doesn't have a bad progression -- she's simply at the baseline for a combat-oriented class.

 **On page 65 of the *Urban Arcana Campaign Setting*, it says a Strong Hero 3/Archaic Weaponsmaster 5 can proceed along the path of the Holy Knight, but that character's base attack bonus (+6) is not high enough to qualify for the class according to page 36. Is one of these entries incorrect?**

Yes, the example Holy Knight is incorrect. It should describe a Strong Hero 3/Archaic Weaponsmaster 7/Holy Knight 3, who would deal an additional 13 points of damage on a successful hit with his smite attack.

 **The requirements for the Arcane Arranger prestige class include a skill called Knowledge (arcane law). Should this be Knowledge (arcane lore)?**


Yes. Sometimes the fingers just don't do what the brain tells them to, and the editors don't catch the mistake.

 **My group and I have a few questions about the Techno Mage's program spell ability. If a techno mage programs a spell into an object such that the target is "caster," does the person who activates the item become the caster for the purpose of the programmed spell?**

Yes. When a spell has a range of "personal" and a target of "you," that "you" refers to the person who activates the item.

 **If a character takes levels in the Shapeshifter advanced class from the web enhancement for the [Urban Arcana Campaign Setting](#) and is later bitten by a lycanthrope, would she be automatically able to control the change? I say no, but my player thinks otherwise.**

You are correct. (It sounds like you're the GM, so for the record, you're always correct.) The Shapeshifter's wild shape and the werewolf's alternate form are two separate abilities. While it's true that exposure to an effect such as lycanthropy can be a prerequisite for the Shapeshifter class, the Shapeshifter's abilities don't alter the way that abilities gained through lycanthropy work.

 Tables 5-3 and 5-5 in the *Urban Arcana Campaign Setting* give Purchase DC modifiers for the special abilities of magic weapons and armor. If this modifier is applied directly to the item's Purchase DC, the increase seems almost insignificant in comparison to the cost for adding another +1 to the enhancement bonus. For example, a +1 *machete* has a purchase DC of 15 (5 [machete] + 10 [+1 enhancement]) by the table. If my hero bought a +1 *flaming machete* instead, the Purchase DC would rise to 16. In the *d20 Modern Core Rulebook*, however, a +1 flaming machete has a purchase DC of 25 (5 [machete] +10 [+1 enhancement] + 10 [flaming]), implying that the flaming ability is equivalent to a +1 enhancement bonus (added separately to price).

On Table 5-3 and 5-5, replace the column header that says Purchase DC Modifier with Enhancement Equivalent. Then treat each enhancement (the weapon's total bonus and the bonus for each special ability it possesses) as a separate increase to the Purchase DC. So the purchase DC for a flaming machete becomes 25 (5 [machete] +10 [+1 enhancement] + 10 [flaming]), as you said. If you add the flaming property to a +2 *longsword*, on the other hand, the resulting weapon has Purchase DC of 30 (5 [machete] +15 [+2 enhancement] + 10 [flaming]).

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.