

GURPS[®]

Fourth Edition

Social Engineering[™]

KEEPING IN CONTACT[™]



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When you're burned, you've got nothing . . . You rely on anyone who's still talking to you. A trigger-happy ex-girlfriend . . . An old friend who used to inform on you . . . Family, too . . . if you're desperate.

*— Michael Westen,
in **Burn Notice** season 1 opening*

INTRODUCTION

The list of all possible Contacts – and their skills – would fill an entire book.

– *GURPS Basic Set*

GURPS Social Engineering: Keeping in Contact covers the Contact advantage and its related traits in greater depth and detail than ever before. Contacts are an extremely valuable part of the roleplayer's toolkit. For the player, Contacts provide their characters with access to useful or secret information and helpful favors that can make or break a mission. For the GM, a Contact is an interesting NPC who the players *want* to interact with regularly, connecting their characters to the setting and facilitating classic plot elements around protagonists' friends and associates.

Contacts have sometimes been seen as not worth the points. **Keeping in Contact** addresses this, explaining the major benefits of Contact-type advantages, and covering the various ways they can be modified and customized to fit concepts. This supplement goes into detail on what sorts of information and favors are available. It also covers a variety of Contact types, explaining what skills are available to each and the type of knowledge and assistance they can provide. Additionally, examples describe popular individuals and groups.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Keeping in Contact is an optional expansion for the *GURPS Basic Set*, and doesn't require *GURPS Social Engineering*. However, *Social Engineering* can be useful,

with its extensive rules on using reactions and Influence rolls to win people over who could become Contacts. **GURPS Social Engineering: Pulling Rank** includes numerous favors that organizations can do, several of which have been used in this book as well. **Pulling Rank** is a great source for other ideas of what a Contact could do. **GURPS Boardroom and Curia** gives stats for a wide range of organizations, and offers more details on what they can provide as Contact Groups. Finally, **GURPS Social Engineering: Back to School** presents rules for teaching that are referenced here (see *Teaching*, p. 39).

PUBLICATION HISTORY

This is the first edition of *GURPS Social Engineering: Keeping in Contact*. It expands on the rules for Contacts and Contact Groups in *GURPS Basic Set*, and draws the rules for Contacts! from *Trusted Assistants* on p. 65 of *GURPS Supers*. Many of the categories of Contacts have been inspired by *Type* (*GURPS Boardroom and Curia*, pp. 11-13).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kelly Pedersen lives and works in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, in Canada. He's played *GURPS Fourth Edition* for almost 15 years now, using it for a variety of settings and genres. He's written numerous articles for *Pyramid* magazine, but this is his first *GURPS* book. He figures serving as a Contact (Games (Tabletop RPGs); Skill-15) for his friends qualifies him to write this.

ABOUT GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of *GURPS* players. We can be reached by email: info@sjgames.com. Our address is SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Resources include:

New supplements and adventures. *GURPS* continues to grow – see what's new at gurps.sjgames.com.

Warehouse 23. Our online store offers *GURPS* print items, plus PDFs of our books, supplements, adventures, play aids, and support . . . including exclusive material available only on Warehouse 23! Just head over to warehouse23.com.

Pyramid (pyramid.sjgames.com). For 10 years, our PDF magazine *Pyramid* included new rules and articles for *GURPS*, plus systemless locations, adventures, and more. The entire 122-issue library is available at Warehouse 23!

Internet. To discuss *GURPS* with our staff and your fellow gamers, visit our forums at forums.sjgames.com. You can also join us at facebook.com/sjgames or

twitter.com/sjgames. Share your brief campaign teasers with #GURPSHook on Twitter. Or explore that hashtag for ideas to add to your own game! The web page *GURPS Social Engineering: Keeping in Contact* can be found at gurps.sjgames.com/keepingincontact.

Store Finder (storefinder.sjgames.com): Discover nearby places to buy *GURPS* items and other Steve Jackson Games products. Local shops are great places to play our games and meet fellow gamers!

Bibliographies. Bibliographies are a great resource for finding more of what you love! We've added them to many *GURPS* book web pages with links to help you find the next perfect element for your game.

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Errata pages for *GURPS* releases are available at sjgames.com/errata/gurps.

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

CHAPTER ONE

WHO'S

CONNECTED?

No one is an island, and our heroes are no exception. Everyone has connections with others, and often it's these bonds that make characters come alive. Even gruff loners need someone around – whom else could they grumble to?

A variety of traits in **GURPS** represent these links, but Contacts are particularly appropriate, providing connections outside the circle of the player characters, but not requiring too much spotlight-dominating scene time.

CONTACT ADVANTAGES

Take the Contacts advantage if you want to have a connection to an NPC. Several other traits build on it or modify it.

CONTACTS

see p. B44

A Contact is an NPC you have positive relationship with, who will provide information and do you favors. A Contact should have campaign-wide utility: anywhere you can get in touch with that person, you can ask for assistance. If this is not the case, use limitations (pp. 7-8) to reduce their scope.

Your Contact has an *effective skill level*, measured in steps – the standard levels of 12, 15, 18, and 21. Whenever this supplement refers to increasing the skill's step for a Contact, it means by one of these increments. If a modifier moves the step above or below the standard levels, simply follow the pattern: each step is +3 or -3 to effective skill.

A Contact rolls their skill whenever they are asked for information or to do a favor, to see if they come through. A Contact's effective skill is an *abstraction*. It represents the Contact's ability to acquire information and help you out. It is largely a measure of their resources, rather than raw skill level. Well-connected individuals might not even have the skill themselves at all, relying entirely on underlings. When deciding whether something falls into a Contact's wheelhouse, consider the skill as their primary job, and assume they have the knowledge and resources to do it.

Since Contact skill is an abstraction, it need not be a skill already listed, or even a skill at all. At the GM's option, the skill for a Contact may be defined with some other category, as long as it's similarly broad.

Example: In a superhero game, a Contact with Teleportation Power-15 could offer information about teleporters and teleporting, or offering to warp their friend to someplace convenient.

Contacts suffer penalties for multiple "questions" in the same session, but this should be taken to mean a topic, not a literal single question. Directly related follow-up questions and clarifications don't count against the number of questions asked. Follow-ups generally shouldn't require a new skill roll, just a bit more roleplaying. Doing favors also count as "questions," with the attendant penalties for repeated requests: -2 per request or question past the first.

Information is one of the main uses of Contacts. Thus, they have access to knowledge that they need to use their skill. A fixer with Streetwise knows the local suppliers of illegal items, a business executive with Market Analysis has inside information about sudden booms or busts, a CIA snoop with Intelligence Analysis knows about military buildups, and so on. Information like this is *not* automatically available with a simple skill roll on your part; Contacts make accessing it more convenient (see *Inside Information*, pp. 11-12).

Favors are the other significant benefit. Contacts can help with things that are at least two of nonhazardous, quick, and inexpensive. As *Do Me a Favor*, pp. 13-14, explains, that covers a wide range. Favors are related to the Contact's skill, but aren't limited to what rolling that skill yourself could provide. A Contact can give you access to the tools, resources, and authority they need to use their skill.

Unusual Connections

Add 1 point to the base cost of a Contact if they can acquire information or provide favors through "supernatural talents." In order to qualify for this, the Contact should be unusually capable *for the setting*. If every noble has warding against scrying, or an anti-clairvoyance field is available from the electronics store, then a diviner or esper shouldn't cost extra.



However, even “mundane” technology can qualify, if it’s unusual enough. Technology that passes Clarke’s Law – indistinguishable from magic in the setting – usually counts. A Contact with the only spy satellite orbiting Yrth, unknown to and unblockable by everyone else, would certainly be worth the extra cost!

CONTACT GROUP

see p. B44

A Contact Group is a whole selection of people who would qualify as Contacts individually, united by membership in a group or class, which defines which skills they can provide.

A Contact Group mostly functions like individual Contacts in terms of frequency of appearance, reliability, etc., but there are some differences. Contact Groups can help more often: The penalty for multiple-requests is only -1 per question or favor, and they can be contacted multiple times per day (though apply the accumulated multiple request penalty to the frequency of appearance). These penalties can be completely eliminated if you accept an inconvenience level (see *Contact Convenience*, p. 19) one worse than usual, to speak to a different member of the group – someone new won’t be so impatient with repeated requests.

Many Contact Groups, as large organizations, can also provide more resources or information. See *Organized and Disparate Groups* (below) for more on which groups this applies to.

Organized and Disparate Groups

When defining a Contact Group, decide whether it’s *organized* or *disparate*. An organized group is one that exists as a defined entity – its members think of themselves as united, and usually communicate readily with each other and form a hierarchy. A disparate group is more loosely defined – members share certain characteristics, particularly in skills and resources, but they aren’t necessarily linked otherwise.

There are two critical differences between these types. First, an organized Contact Group can bring more resources to bear on a problem, while a disparate group is typically limited to whatever individuals have. However, you can get things from a disparate group that are simply a matter of numbers, rather than the benefits of organization, by increasing the inconvenience of connection by two steps (see *Contact Convenience*, p. 19) and reducing effective skill by one step. This represents contacting a bunch of individuals and asking them each to contribute.

Second, an organized group is more vulnerable to attack by your enemies, and will turn against you *en masse* if you betray their trust. Without an obvious connection between constituents, a disparate group is harder to eliminate, and

burning your bridges with one member won’t automatically anger the rest. Also, since a disparate group’s members are not connected with one another, you can call on them more often – the full -2 penalty for repeated requests to individuals applies per visit because of this, but it doesn’t apply to frequency of appearance when you try again that day. The penalty also does not apply on to new requests, since you’re talking to someone different.

The benefits of being harder to destroy and easier to call upon are why the restrictions in size of a Contact Group (“one particular town”) apply to disparate groups but not organized ones. Your opponents could potentially take out an organization, or all your relationships could sour at once, so having it cover more than a small area is balanced.

CONTACT, ALLY, OR PATRON?

These three traits overlap: they all give the hero a guaranteed-friendly NPC who’ll help them out on occasion. Here are some guidelines to determine which one is which.

An *Ally* is someone who’s reasonably competent and willing to participate in adventures regularly. While they might not have the skill set to do everything that’s asked of them, they’re willing to try, and they can develop new areas of competence as they grow.

A *Patron* is a powerful individual or group who looks after one or more adventurers and who will help out proactively. They’ll continue to help for the duration of an adventure, without treating new requests as particularly onerous. However, they assume, probably correctly, that they’re a social or administrative superior, and are prone to treating their charges in a *patronizing* fashion, including supplying what they think is best instead of what is asked for, or peevishly explaining that the requester isn’t their only concern. Many protagonists also have a Duty to their Patron, although this isn’t mandatory.

A *Contact* is a friend or associate, but on more limited terms than an Ally or Patron. They’re willing to help, but only within the area defined by their skill, and only to a certain extent. The relationship is less official than with a Patron, and less visible than with an Ally. This imposes limits, of course, but also has advantages: if a Contact is attacked or gets in trouble, their associates won’t get dragged down with them.

To summarize: A character is an Ally if they have full game stats and they come along with on adventures. They are a Patron if they’re significantly more powerful and provide major assistance. They are a Contact if they give some information, some favors, and some benefit from their skill, but with less enthusiasm or not all the time.

CONTACTS!

Variable

This advantage exists as a middle ground between Contacts and Contact Groups. A Contact! represents a single person, or perhaps two or three closely associated individuals, who have the breadth of skill and resources of a Contact Group. Their skill is defined like a Contact Group, or with a wildcard skill (see *Optional Rule: Wildcard Skills*, p. B175, and *GURPS Power-Ups 7: Wildcard Skills* for more details and examples of wildcard skills).

Contacts! are cinematically competent and have larger resources than a regular Contact, but they are still individuals.

Thus, they don't have quite the same pull as a Contact Group, and their patience wears thin like any individual. A Contact! can be called on multiple times a day, but additional questions or favors are at -2 past the first. This full penalty also applies to the frequency of appearance, and accepting more inconvenience cannot eliminate the penalty. Their resources allow them to provide information or favors closer to the level of a Contact Group. See *Inside Information*, pp. 11-12, and *Do Me a Favor*, pp. 13-14, for more details.

Contacts! offer access to a new resource, Connection Points (ConP), representing their larger resources and impressive skills. Starting at skill 12, each step of effective skill provides one ConP. The player who bought the Contact! can spend ConP in a variety of ways. One ConP guarantees the Contact! appears at a convenient time – effectively, automatic success on the frequency of appearance roll, with about the same level of plausibility as the Serendipity advantage. They must still make a skill roll to actually assist once they arrive, however.

Alternatively, if the Contact! has already appeared and made a successful roll to assist the hero in some way, you may spend ConP to buy success on your *own* rolls, or to otherwise influence the plot of the game in a way, as long as the Contact!'s skill could plausibly assist. This costs the same number of ConP as it would to buy success or exert player guidance (see *Optional Rule: Influencing Success Rolls*, p. B347). A GM interested in expanding this option should consult **GURPS Power-Ups 5: Impulse Buys** – a ConP can be spent to similar effect as a character point on appropriate options from that book. A Contact!'s ConP refresh at the start of each new

adventure, or at the end of three or four sessions of play, whichever comes first.

To calculate the cost of a Contact!, determine the base cost, frequency of appearance, and reliability of a standard Contact, then multiply this by 3.

MODULAR ABILITIES

see p. B71

This Modular Ability follows the guidelines from *Modular Abilities* (**GURPS Powers**, p. 63).

Friend of the Week: You have a cinematic or outright supernatural ability to find someone to help out. The points in a slot can only be used to buy Contacts, Contact Groups, or Contacts!. To rearrange points, spend 1d hours carousing, schmoozing, or otherwise socializing, and spend (1d)% of the campaign starting wealth buying drinks, offering bribes, giving gifts, and so on. At the end of the time, make a roll using an appropriate skill – usually one of the standard Influence skills, but the GM can allow others in appropriate circumstances: Law to impress a lawyer or judge, for instance, or Merchant to convince a shopkeeper you're a profitable acquaintance. The skill rolled colors your relationship: Someone talked into helping with Diplomacy is more polite, but less willing to fully commit, than someone terrified with Intimidation. The GM can set restrictions on the details of Contacts (such as reliability) that you buy, based on which skill you used to convince them. *Cost per slot: 4 points base + 2 points per point of abilities.*

CHEAPER CONNECTIONS: BUDGET OPTIONS

Contacts, and especially Contact Groups and Contacts! can add up to a lot of points at higher levels. Here are some options for getting connected on a budget.

Sharing the Load

Several heroes may share a relationship – all know the same people, worked for the same organization, and so on. The price of such a Contact can be shared as well. The cost of the Contact advantage can simply be split among the PCs as they wish. Frequency of appearance is rolled just once for the Contact – if it comes up, they appear and are helpful; if it doesn't, no one can reach them that day. Similarly, any penalty for multiple requests applies to *everyone* who took the Contact, regardless of who makes them.

Alternatively, everyone can buy the Contact at full cost. With this method, add +2 to the frequency of appearance for each purchaser after the first. This approximates the probability of rolling multiple times for frequency of appearance. Roll frequency of appearance once, but for every point of success, give the heroes one "free" request before applying the multiple-question penalty.

Example: The whole party has decided to buy Baroness Bronwyn of Durham as a Contact. She provides Politics

at skill 18, is Usually Reliable, and appears on 6 or less. Since five heroes are buying her at full price, her effective frequency of appearance is actually 14 (6 + 8). If the frequency of appearance comes up 10, Lady Bronwyn will listen to five requests before applying any penalty.

Favors

Favors (p. B55) are an excellent way to get Contacts cheaply for those who don't intend to use them often. The GM may permit a player to buy Contacts as Favors who owe more than one boon. To calculate the price of such assistance, divide the cost of the Contact by five and then multiply by the number of favors that can be claimed. For example, a Contact who owed three services would cost 3/5th as much as the full-price advantage. Obviously, it's never worthwhile to have five or more favors owed – just buy the full Contact!

Taking a Contact as a Favor also *establishes a relationship*. It means you have already done something for them, and they are aware of you and willing to speak to you. If the GM permits, and you then do them *more* services, you may spend earned character points to increase the number of Favors they owe you. If you build enough credit, you can buy them as a full Contact, and no longer worry about using up their services.

CHEAPER CONNECTIONS: OPTIONAL RULES

These two optional rules make Contact advantages cheaper and work together well.

Low-Skill Contacts

Sometimes, a Contact doesn't need skill even as high as 12. Easy-to-acquire information and simple favors might be all that's needed, and various options can improve the effective skill if desired (see *Boosting Skill*, p. 18). Contacts with skills lower than 12 have a base cost in fractional points:

Effective Skill:	3	6	9
Base Cost:	0.25	0.5	0.75

To calculate a low-skill Contact's cost, multiply the base cost for frequency of appearance and reliability, and

for either Contact Group or Contact!, as usual, and round the price up to the nearest whole number. For instance, a Completely Reliable Contact with skill 6 and frequency of appearance 15 would cost 4.5 points, rounded up to 5.

Friends in High Places

In very high-powered games, to ensure Contacts are competitive with other traits, raise effective skill by one step for PCs built with 500 points, and another step for every additional 500 points.

Example: Divine Grace, built on 1,000 points, buys cub photographer Judy Owlson as a Contact with Current Events (Headline News)-12 for 1 point. However, Judy's effective skill is raised to 18 due to Divine Grace's point total.

CONTACT MODIFIERS

Most of the following can be applied to any Contact, Contact Group, or Contact!, unless noted in their description.

New Special Enhancements

Broad Scope: This is only applicable for disparate Contact Groups (see *Organized and Disparate Groups*, p. 5), and expands the area they cover. This is worth +50% if it covers a significant fraction of the campaign setting, or +100% if it includes almost everywhere, like a typical Contact.

Disparate: This enhancement only applies to Contacts, not Contact Groups or Contact!s. Rather than a single person, your Contact is a number of similar-but-unconnected individuals, spread out over a wide area. Use this when it doesn't make sense for one person to have broad influence, but you still want to access your Contact throughout the setting. Losing one individual (due to social blunders or enemy action) doesn't affect the others. Also, in an area that could contain more than one example of your group, the benefits of disparate groups apply (calling on the Contact more than once a day, with no repeated request penalty if you reach a new person; see *Organized and Disparate Groups*, p. 5). +25%

Highly Accessible: This enhancement comes in two levels. The first level makes it one step more convenient to reach the Contact than normal (see *Contact Convenience*, p. 19). At the second level, you can *always* reach your Contact, even in extreme circumstances with no normal way of communicating, and it will never be worse than mildly inconvenient. The second level is usually only appropriate for supernatural Contacts. +25% per level.

Patient: Your Contact is particularly willing to put up with you. Each level of this enhancement either lets you make one additional, distinct request without a penalty per day, or permits you to contact them more frequently. Choose which benefit applies when you buy the Contact. One level of Patient enables you to call on a Contact once every 12 hours, two levels allows once every three hours, three levels permits once an hour, and four levels (the maximum for

these purposes) lets you call every 15 minutes. Frequency of appearance is rolled each time you try to get in touch, and if it fails, the Contact is unavailable until the time period indicated by your level of Patient passes. +20% per level.

*Did you think I was going
to run all around the city
desperately trying to save
everyone all by myself?
I'm not Batman. I have friends.
– Red Robin,
in Red Robin #12*

New Special Limitations

Convince Me: Your Contact always needs some persuasion. Each time you call on them, you must roll an appropriate skill to talk them into helping. If the roll fails, your contact refuses to help this time. Choose when you take this limitation whether this is always the same skill, or if it varies based on circumstances. If it varies, the GM has the final call on which skill is appropriate. It is usually an Influence skill (though not a Quick Contest – Will is not rolled to oppose it), but others may be used as appropriate: Soldier to convince a captain that you've got a valid military concern, Psychology to pull the right levers on a stubborn personality, and so on. -10% (or -5% if you always roll a Will- or Per-based skill).

Inaccessible: This is the opposite of the Highly Accessible enhancement, above – you cannot take both! For each level of Inaccessible (to a maximum of three), the convenience level of getting in touch is one step worse than it would otherwise be (see *Contact Convenience*, p. 19). -10% per level.

THE PERKS AND QUIRKS OF CONNECTIONS

The following are appropriate for those with Contacts, or the well-connected in general.

Perks

Friend on the Inside: This requires a Contact Group as a prerequisite. Within that group, you have a special friend willing to go the extra mile. When dealing with them, the Contact Group either has effective skill one step better, or is one step more reliable (choose when you take this perk). If you take this perk twice, both benefits apply. You can guarantee you reach your friend if you accept a convenience level one worse than normal (see *Contact Convenience*, p. 19). If you don't, you still get in touch with them if the frequency of appearance roll succeeds by 3 or more.

Secured Channel: Choose one Contact (or Ally, Patron, or other NPC associate), and a means of communicating with them. For that specific person, when using that channel, your communication is secure (perhaps you have a device that scrambles any phone line, or a secret set of code phrases). This means security concerns never makes talking to them less convenient (see *Contact Convenience*, p. 19).

Single-Purpose Contact: You have a Contact who *only* offers you with a single favor or single type of information: a taxi driver who only provides free rides, or a colonel who only give you information about maneuvers her unit is on. A favor should always be at least two out of quick, nonhazardous, and inexpensive. The Contact has effective skill 12, a frequency of appearance of 12 or less, and is Usually Reliable.

Quirks

A Friend in Need: One of your Contacts regularly calls on you for minor favors – helping them move, teaching them how to use this darned computer, and so on. This is effectively a Nonhazardous Duty to your Contact, coming up on a 9 or less. If it comes up, you have 20% less time available for training, enchanting, or other personal background activities. You can refuse, but for every two no-shows on your part, reduce your associate's reliability by one step. These remain "on the books" until you do something to make it up to them.

I Owe You One: You owe someone something, but only once. Choose a social disadvantage representing an obligation (a Duty or Debt are good choices) normally worth 5 points or less. You must fulfill this once, at which point this quirk is removed from your sheet. The GM rolls disadvantages with frequency of appearance rolls once per adventure to see if they should be called in. Disadvantages like Debt, however, wait until the most dramatically appropriate moment to appear. This quirk is effectively a Favor (p. B55) applied to a disadvantage.

Impatient: Your Contact won't put up with much. This is the reverse of the Patient enhancement, p. 7, and you can't have both. Each level of Impatient either increases the penalty for additional requests during a given session by -1, or applies -1 to the frequency of appearance roll after calling on them, which goes away at -1 per day you don't bother them. Choose which applies when you buy the Contact. Impatient Contacts can be taciturn, abrupt, or otherwise difficult to get information out of, though they still treat all discussion of a topic as a single question. Getting all the details might just require some prying. An Impatient Contact! or organized Contact Group can never be called on more than once a day, even in exceptional circumstances. -10% per level.

Less Helpful: Your Contact does less for you than usual. This is worth -10% if they have -3 to provide a particular type of information or if they treat a single type of favor as more difficult, dangerous, or costly than normal; -20% if they won't provide a significant category of information or favors at all, or have a narrower range of both of information and favors than normal; -40% if they won't provide one of either information or favors at all; -60% if they only provide a single category of information or favors out of those they normally would; and -80% if they only offer a single, specific type of information or favor.

Limited Scope: Your Contact is useful in a smaller area than normal. -50% if a Contact, organized Contact Group, or Contact! is only useful in a significant fraction (roughly a half to a quarter of the area) of the campaign, or a disparate Contact Group is useful in a large neighborhood or small town, or -75% for a disparate Contact Group that is only useful in a very small neighborhood or village, or for any other type to only be available in a single city.

Reciprocal: Unlike most Contacts, yours demands a "fair exchange." Each time you call upon them, if they successfully deliver, you are asked to provide a service of roughly equal value. If you refuse, or fail in your mission, the Contact cuts you off and won't help until you make up the loss. (Alternatively, the GM may choose to have them continue to help, but reduce their reliability by one step.) This limitation effectively turns your Contact into a relationship you could achieve with most NPCs, so be careful to apply it only to Contacts who still bring something unique to the table. -50%.

You scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours.

– Traditional saying

Secret: Your Contact is unwilling to reveal themselves, even to you. You might have a good guess as to who it actually is, but they'll never confirm it (it's assumed that you've established you can trust them, however, at least within their area of expertise). You can't call a Secret Contact. Instead,

the GM rolls the frequency of appearance at the start of the adventure. If they are available, then they reach out in some way, providing useful information or helpful favors – but not necessarily what you might have *asked* for, if given the opportunity. -50%.

OTHER CONNECTED TRAITS

Contacts and its related advantages are central to connected characters. But they're not the only traits such heroes should take! Several others help represent the links they have with people.

ADVANTAGES

Allies and Patrons are good advantage choices. They represent similar guaranteed positive relationships – in the case of Allies, ones willing to go even further in helping out, while Patrons can put more institutional clout behind their assistance. Rank and Status represent direct support of organized groups or society in general – see *GURPS Social Engineering: Pulling Rank* for a system that treats Rank as a “leveled Patron.” Traits like Clerical Investment and Tenure cover special standing within a group. Claim to Hospitality is redundant with many Contacts or Contact Groups – what associates will provide should be worked out before taking it, to avoid overlap.

Advantages that explain *how* someone gains friends in the first place are also good. Anything with a reaction bonus qualifies, but more-general modifiers are better. Charisma is especially appropriate. Positive Appearance, Voice, Reputations, and Social Regard are also common, as is the Networked perk (*GURPS Social Engineering*, p. 79).

DISADVANTAGES

While advantages can amplify or justify Contacts, it's really *disadvantages* that define a connected character most. They shape relationships, determining whether the protagonist treats associates as friends, valued servants, or barely trusted mercenaries. Three are particularly important: Dependents, Duty, and Sense of Duty. If any of these apply *only* to Contacts, the GM may permit the advantages and disadvantages to be combined into a meta-trait. This effectively reduces the cost of Contacts by the value of the disadvantages, and only counts against disadvantage limits if the total value added together is negative.

Dependents and Sense of Duty are similar – both represent a hero's personal feelings toward people. The adventurer makes sure their friends are protected and safe. Failing to do so has consequences, either as additional disadvantages representing guilt and depression, or as lost character points for poor roleplaying. There are differences. Dependents (My

Contacts) asks the GM to put them in danger on a semi-regular basis. Sense of Duty (My Contacts) means that, although Contacts won't be put in harm's way regularly, the protagonist must help if a Contact does get in trouble. (See *Contacts in Distress*, p. 21, for discussion on how and when Contacts should get in trouble.) With either trait, the associate should *definitely* not ask a Contact for dangerous favors or information, and should try to mitigate the risk of any that don't count as nonhazardous. (See *Do Me A Favor*, pp. 13-14, for guidelines to determine the danger level of favors.)



A Duty to Contacts means that they can call on their associate's time and resources, whether officially or informally. Taking such a Duty implies more, and more significant, obligations than the standard minor tasks required to maintain a relationship (see *Tit for Tat*, p. 21). If a relationship with a Contact is explicitly based on exchanging services, take the Reciprocal limitation (p. 8). Duty without Reciprocal means that Contacts won't cut off a friend if they shirk or fail a task. However, the GM can use other means of enforcing the Duty, including worsening a Contact's effective reliability.

A sibling who might have reported the protagonists to their parents on a critical failure, for instance, could instead report them to the *police* after the protagonist fails to do what the sibling requested.

Several others disadvantages can affect relationships. Codes of Honor and Fanaticism can have restrictions much like Sense of Duty, if the associate falls under the purview of a Code or belongs to a group the protagonist is devoted to. Charitable compels the hero to help Contacts who ask, while Selfless bars the adventurer from requesting dangerous favors. Chummy and Gregarious imply maintaining an active friendship, rather than keeping it “strictly professional.”

Honesty prevents the hero from asking for illegal favors or information – they can’t get around the law by asking someone else to break it!

Disadvantages with reaction penalties are not automatic disqualifications from having Contacts. It’s assumed that, if player paid points for them, the Contacts have managed to overlook or adjust to personality flaws. However, this tolerance isn’t infinite. Contacts still have believable relationships with you, and if you abuse them too much, they leave. See *Managing Relationships*, pp. 20-22, for a discussion of how to treat the relationship between protagonist and Contacts, and how bad behavior could sour it.

CONNECTIONS WITHOUT CONTACTS

Several traits in *GURPS* provide some benefits similar to Contacts. Before buying a Contact, make sure what it isn’t adequately covered by something else.

- Claim to Hospitality provides simple shelter and meals and a limited degree of safety through obscurity.
- Positive Reputations or other reaction bonuses can get favors, information, or other benefits, with a positive reaction or successful Influence roll.
- High Status can act as a Contact Group, with reliability determined by comparing the effective skill level granted by Status to the effective skill level of the person being asked for help; see *The Benefits of Status*, *GURPS Social Engineering*, p. 59, for more details on how this works. Double the penalties for dangerous information or for favors that don’t meet some or all of the “cheap, quick, and nonhazardous” criteria. See *Secret Information*, pp. 11-12, and *Do Me a Favor*, p. 13-14.
- Wealth opens a lot of doors, including simply *buying* information, favors, and the services of skilled professionals. Doing so requires spending money (of course), finding sources or employees, and determining their loyalty. See *Hirelings*, pp. B517-518 and *Searching for People*, *GURPS Social Engineering*, pp. 22-24.
- The perks Better (Gear), Cheaper (Gear), and Friend (*GURPS Power-Ups 2: Perks*, pp. 8-9 and p. 18) all give some of a Contact’s benefits.
- Someone with a settled lifestyle (see *Starting Wealth*, p. B26) and a job can treat it as a limited Somewhat

Reliable Contact Group, with a frequency of appearance of 9. Effective skill is 12 for a freelancer or someone low in the hierarchy, or 15 for those who are higher up, for the most common skills of a group of its type (see pp. 24-38), including common group skills (p. 23). Most jobs also have Less Helpful or Limited Scope (both p. 8), since they won’t help outside the context of employment.

A person with one of these traits should avoid acquiring an overlapping Contact. However, if it absolutely fits the character concept, the GM may permit the player to pay the difference: work out the cost of a Contact that would provide the benefits already there, and subtract this value from the cost of the desired Contact.

Example: Sharon has a job in a high-power financial firm, which counts as a Contact Group (Business/Commercial), with skill 15 and frequency of appearance 9 or less, and with Limited Scope, -50% (p. 8) because it won’t help with non-work activities, for a final effective cost of 5 points. She recently saved the board of directors from vampires and wants to take the company as a Contact Group to represent their gratitude. The GM rules that the whole company counts as Usually Reliable, with skill 18, and a frequency of appearance of 12. The GM also rules that it doesn’t need Limited Scope, since it’s large enough to exert influence throughout the whole campaign setting. This comes to a final cost of 40 points, but Sharon only pays 35, since she’s still got her old job with its benefits.

Han Solo: Look, I ain’t in this for your revolution, and I’m not in it for you, Princess. I expect to be well paid. I’m in it for the money.

Princess Leia Organa: You needn’t worry about your reward. If money is all that you love, then that’s what you’ll receive.

– *Star Wars: A New Hope*

CHAPTER TWO

HOW TO

CONNECT

Handling Contacts can take finesse. This chapter gives guidelines for that, including details on what sort of information and favors Contacts can provide, advice on managing

the relationships between the heroes and their associates, and some optional rules for various aspects of Contacts.

THE BENEFITS OF CONTACTS

As suggested in *Contacts*, pp. 4-5, there are two main benefits: supplying information and doing favors.

INSIDE INFORMATION

The knowledge Contacts provide should always be more than what a simple skill roll would give. Contacts can offer three broad classes of information (though not all Contacts have the same degree of access): *secret information*, *convenient information*, and *information synthesis*.



Secret Information

When most people talk about “asking my contacts,” they’re looking for hidden knowledge. This is the most common type of information a Contact can provide. An associate’s nature is more important than the skill they’re defined with when deciding what they know. A consigliere knows things about *la Famiglia* whether his skill is *Savoir-Faire* (Mafia) or *Streetwise*. The skill “flavors” the information, however – the wiseguy with *Savoir-Faire* puts details in terms of the relationships and social power of various Mafia members, while the *Streetwise* guy talks about which underworld source they heard it from, and how it affects the larger criminal scene.

Contacts definitely know and can share more than the average person, but they aren’t omniscient, either. That short-circuits too many good plots! Available information

is divided into four broad categories, corresponding to skill level.

- *Common knowledge* (skill 12). Known to most members of a group, though restricted from the general public. *Examples*: the identity of the head of a crime family, the general layout of a military base, a privately traded company’s annual performance report.

- *Restricted knowledge* (skill 15). Limited to people who give orders (Rank 1 or higher), or shared with the rank-and-file only when it’s relevant to their tasks. *Examples*: broad plans for criminal activity within a locale, the tactical objectives of a battle, the company’s business plans and objectives for the next quarter.

- *Secret knowledge* (skill 18). Limited to only leaders who need to know, and significant steps are taken to keep it confidential. *Examples*: specific targets and plans for upcoming criminal activities, troop strengths and planned movements over a whole theater of battle, a company’s hostile-takeover and market-manipulation strategies.

- *Absolutely confidential knowledge* (skill 21). Confined to only the highest leaders, usually related to their ultimate plans or future goals. *Examples*: the don’s plans to get into drug smuggling as well as distribution, the ultimate strategic goals and plans of a whole army, a corporation’s scheme to control all their major competitors and dominate the market.

A Contact can be asked about information above their “pay grade,” at -3 to skill per level this exceeds what’s normally available. Additionally, requesting information *personally* dangerous to the Contact is another -5, whether because it would be obvious who released it, or the information’s use would involve harming them. To avoid these penalties, ask for rumors instead. Hearsay is less certain, however. The GM should provide two or three *possible* answers per level the information exceeds the Contact’s skill, each of which requires legwork by the adventurers to verify or dismiss (Intuition is very handy to narrow this down!).

Example: When quizzing a Mafia goon with skill 12 which bank the Mob will rob next (secret knowledge), the lackey might offer four to six locations that he's heard suggested.

Convenient Information

Convenient information covers things that someone could learn themselves, but they want to get at *faster* and to avoid using channels that might subject the person to unwanted scrutiny.

Example: Divine Grace wants to find out who the major players in the Los Angeles underworld are. She *could* use Streetwise, Carousing, etc. to poke around, but that might take a week, and criminals get word that someone was asking questions. Or, she could just go to "Weasel" Wilhelmina, the best information broker on the West Coast, and get it all in an afternoon, confidentially.

Skill rolls for this category are modified by the convenience of the data. *Common* knowledge is something you could find out for yourself quickly, by consulting publicly available sources, and gives +5. *Mildly inconvenient* information would require a few hours or day to track down, or be noted that you were inquiring, and gives no modifier to Contact skill. Finally, *highly inconvenient* facts take several days or weeks to acquire, or require official, bureaucratic permission to access, and apply -5.

Information Synthesis

Synthesis involves giving the *Contact* information, and then having them tell you what it all *means*. The GM should handle this more carefully than other sorts of knowledge. It's easy to give out too much and deprive people the fun of figuring out a mystery themselves. At the same time, a Contact shouldn't be useless, and sometimes *players* don't want to solve puzzles. The GM and the player need to be on the same page about regularly providing information synthesis. Talk to the GM and fellow players to ensure everyone is all right with an NPC solving the occasional conundrum.

Don't dismiss this useful tool out of hand, however. Some groups *like* running around finding clues during exciting scenes, then having someone else put it all together – this is the plot of many action movies, after all! If this is the expectation for the campaign, the players can share the cost of the Contact supplying them answers (see *Sharing the Load*, p. 6), or the GM can even offer it for free. If a Contact is regularly solving cases or directing the heroes to more clues, the GM should be more lenient about calling on the associate – allow more than once a day, as long as the calls involve *different* cases.

When a Contact is putting the pieces together, the GM decides how complex the question is and assigns a skill modifier:

- *Extremely simple:* +5 ("We have a man here with a blood-covered knife and a victim with a deep stab wound. What's the connection?").
- *Moderately complicated:* +0 (usually those that further the plot without solving the problem, like "Which train will the Hole-in-the-Wall Gang try to rob next?").

- *Tough:* -5 (these give a major clue toward completing an adventure, like "Was an American group behind the conspiracy to assassinate the President?").

- *Extremely difficult:* -10 (answers that make substantial contributions to an entire *campaign's* progress, such as "Which organization is sending supplies to Antarctica that correlate with the UFO attacks plaguing the world?").

The heroes can provide bonuses by supplying clues and evidence. Award +1 for decent clues, like a confirmed or disproven alibi, financial records, etc.; +2 for a major clue, such as footage of a suspect at the crime scene at the time in question or a top-secret Air Force report on "Unknown Aerial Contact Propulsion Systems"; or +3 for a significant piece of the entire puzzle – a signed confession, for instance, or a highly placed defector ready to tell their story. These bonuses only apply if a source is actually *legitimate*, so the protagonist should still check on leads and verify information. If the Contact's roll succeeds, they give you an answer to the puzzle. If the Contact would have succeeded but didn't because of a penalty, they don't know the answer yet, but can point the way to new information they'll need to try again. Only if they fail by more than the penalty do they simply not have anything. (Critical failure still has its usual effects based on reliability; pp. B44-45.)

GURPS Monster Hunters 2: The Mission, pp. 9-11, has more extensive rules for solving cases by using clues and running down leads. The GM is encouraged to use those rules if they want more detail on Contact information synthesis, having the heroes' associate make deduction rolls for various questions the party is trying to answer.

We have a man here with a blood-covered knife and a victim with a deep stab wound. What's the connection?

Organized Knowledge

A Contact Group (or a Contact!, with their cinematic resources) provides more and deeper information. This takes two forms: more data for a single request, and access to institutional information. More data is easily handled by the GM – just volunteer more when asked. For instance, asking the NYPD about a license plate could produce not only the name and address of the vehicle's owner, but also any criminal record they have, names and descriptions of known associates, and so on. Disparate Contact Groups can generally provide this level of information, although with the usual reduction in convenience of connecting and effective skill (see *Organized and Disparate Groups*, p. 5).

Institutional knowledge, however, is something only an organization can easily get, using its status as a recognized group. Secret information about the group's own organization is never limited by skill level, while information about organizations the Contact Group is connected to or part of a hierarchy with only has -1 per level the information exceeds the group's skill (see *Secret Information*, pp. 11-12). Again using the NYPD (a Contact Group with skill 15) as an example, there would be no penalty to asking for even absolutely confidential information regarding the NYPD itself, and only -1 when asking for secret information from a related group, like the FBI.

DO ME A FAVOR

Favors cover everything else a Contact can do for you besides telling you things. They should be at least two of *quick*, *nonhazardous*, and *inexpensive*. The three criteria also have inverses, *taxing*, *dangerous*, and *costly*. If a task falls into any *one* of these negative categories, the Contact rejects it, even if it meets the other two positive criteria (unless the GM allows a penalized roll – see *Alternative to Rejection*, below).

Quick vs. Taxing

It should take less than a day for a Contact to perform a *quick* favor, and shouldn't take up more than a couple of hours of actual work within that. Even if the Contact can delegate, they don't want to tie up all their help either, so a job that uses the majority of an associate's assistants must take less than an hour to be quick. *Taxing* tasks, meanwhile, take a week or more to complete, even with all assistants on board, or take an unusually large amount of work in less time (anything more than eight hours of actual work typically counts).

Organized Contact Groups and Contacts! can employ their people more officially. Thus, while a day and a week are still the time thresholds, someone can be working full-time during that period, and teams of people are available for shorter periods (up to four hours a day).

If a task can be broken down into small, independently accomplished parts, disparate Contact Groups are effective, with the usual modifiers to convenience and effective skill (see *Organized and Disparate Groups*, p. 5). Doing such a task takes twice as long, but remains a quick favor for a week, and only becomes taxing if it requires a month or more of work. Disparate groups use the same standard as individual Contacts for tasks that can't be broken down, however.

Nonhazardous vs. Dangerous

A favor qualifies as nonhazardous if it doesn't put the Contact at serious risk of physical, mental, or social harm. Physical harm refers to any injury that causes any amount of HP loss, losing 50% or more FP, or exposure to threats like disease, poison, or radiation. Mental harm includes Fright Checks or other sources of mental disadvantages, temptations the Contact wants to avoid, or questionable actions according to their morality. Social threats encompass anything that could damage relationships, such as putting them in a bad light with their employer or making their spouse angry with them.

A favor becomes *dangerous* when the likelihood of harm is certain, or if the level of harm is higher: a good chance of *death* rather than just physical damage; a definite violation of moral codes; potentially altered traits (adding new mental disadvantages from a failed Fright Check, losing social traits like Status, or gaining a negative Reputation); the destruction of relationships entirely; and so on. "Serious risk" of harm means it is *likely* to occur while granting the favor, not merely possible – most Contacts have typical risk-assessment standards. Someone whose job or lifestyle regularly involves the chance of harm is also more willing to risk it when helping – treat favors that fall into their typical

experience as one step less hazardous, such as a front-line soldier accompanying someone into a live-fire zone.

Contacts! and disparate Contact Groups judge danger at the same level as regular individuals – they are just as susceptible to it, after all. Organizations also treat *physical* danger similarly (a group willing to regularly risk members being hurt or killed is not long for the world). Social and mental danger, however, are assessed more leniently by organized Contact Groups. A favor only counts as harmful in these situations if it has consequences for a significant fraction of the membership, or damages the social standing of the group as a whole.

Inexpensive vs. Costly

Expenses falling under this criterion include money, other resources such as property, and the potential of gain (e.g., a chance at winning money gambling). A favor is *inexpensive* if the cost is under a percentage of campaign starting wealth: less than 1% for Contacts with skill 12, 2% for skill 15, 5% for skill 18, or 10% for skill 21.

The inverse of this, *costly*, is any favor that costs 10 times the above values or more. Multiply these thresholds by 10 if the expenditure is a very short-term loan that will be returned or repaid within a week.

Example: In a TL8 setting, a corporate executive with skill 15 could spend about \$400 of her own money and consider it inexpensive. If the heroes convince her that they'll have it back within a couple of days, it could go as high as \$4,000.

Contacts! and Contact Groups have greater resources. A Contact! can generally offer $\times 3$ the above values, while an organized Contact Group can provide $\times 5$. A disparate Contact Group can muster up to 10 times the above, at the cost of reduced convenience and effective skill for asking many unconnected individuals (see *Organized and Disparate Groups*, p. 5).

A favor might involve a commercial transaction. A Contact selling something or providing a service at a discount of 10% or less, or buying something for 60% of standard price counts as inexpensive. Giving a 50% or higher discount or buying something for 100% or more of the usual price is costly. If they are selling something they didn't pay to get, 50% less than list price counts as inexpensive, while an 80% or better discount is costly. When buying illegal items, an associate assesses the price based on what they can expect to sell it for. The expected resale value is lower than list for stolen-but-legal items, but can be much higher for inherently illegal items like weapons, drugs, and so on. Thus, 15% of the expected value is inexpensive, while offering 50% or more is costly. Organized groups and Contacts! generally adjust the above thresholds by 10% in the hero's favor.

Alternative to Rejection

Rather than rejecting favors outright if they don't meet two out of three criteria, the GM may roll the Contact's skill with a penalty. If the favor only falls into one of the basic categories, apply -3, or -6 for missing all three; for each of taxing, dangerous, or costly that the favor counts as, apply an additional -3. If this option is used, it's only fair to give +3 as a *bonus* for favors that meet all three of the basic criteria.

Example: If Divine Grace asks her friend, Judy Owlson, for a favor that's not quick or inexpensive, and is dangerous, that's -9: -6 from missing all three basic criteria, and an additional -3 for being dangerous.

Alternatively, instead of penalizing effective skill, some favors could reduce the Contact's effective reliability. Every full -3 from above translates to reducing reliability by one level. Being asked to put themselves at risk is likely to provoke resentment, bad feelings, and possible betrayal, making reducing reliability particularly appropriate for dangerous favors.

Repeated Requests

The penalties for repeated requests apply equally to favors. Badgering Contact for multiple favors produces diminishing returns. Moreover, the penalty for a request remains as long as the Contact is actively working to perform a favor. If the protagonist asks them to do something that takes a week, any other requests during that week also suffer the penalty. Besides the penalty for multiple requests, repeated favors of the same type generally add together when deciding if they are inexpensive, quick, and nonhazardous. For example if a adventurer borrows \$50 a day for a week, the associate treats the seventh favor as though they were asking for \$350.

Unexpected Difficulties

If something turns out to be less quick, safe, or cheap than originally predicted, a Contact's reaction depends on reliability. An Unreliable Contact simply drops the task. They roll their effective skill again, betraying or otherwise harming the hero on a failure. For Somewhat Reliable and Usually Reliable associates, roll their skill again (at -3 for Somewhat Reliable). Failure means refusing to complete the job, but completing it anyway on a success, plus the consequences for future favors explained below. Completely Reliable Contacts complete the job, but again with consequences.

When the protagonist actively *lies* about the difficulty, risk, or expense, and this becomes obvious, treat the Contact as one step less reliable when determining if they complete it. Unreliable contacts drop the job and *automatically* do something to harm the protagonist.

If a favor turns out less quick, cheap, or safe than a Contact thought, this affects how they assess jobs in the future. Tasks of the same general type are treated as one step worse in whichever criteria the past favor was a problem in. This is effectively the first level of the Less Helpful limitation (p. 8), and represents a permanent change in the value of the Contact.

Example: Divine Grace's sometime associate Speedfreak has a colonel Contact, who granted him access to a military base. Unfortunately, Speedfreak was caught and gave away the Contact's name, putting her at significant risk of social harm. In the future, the colonel will treat all favors involving using her authority as one step less safe, never counting as nonhazardous and frequently as dangerous.

TYPES OF FAVORS

A variety of favors are available. Several categories are provided below, but these are not comprehensive, merely

common examples. If a task seems like it would be reasonable, and meets at least two of the usual tests, allow it.

Authorization

Favors in this category involve permission – whether to do something, be somewhere, or otherwise take actions normally restricted. An individual can generally only lend authorization to do what they can do, such as a security guard letting someone into the facility they watch. Organizations can provide more-official access to their premises and equipment, and grant official legal recognition within their jurisdiction (like a sheriff's department deputizing a hero and giving them effective Legal Enforcement Powers for some time). Some types of Contacts can provide false authorization – forged licenses, fake security badges, and so on.

Covert Assistance

This covers sneaky, underhanded, or outright criminal tasks. It includes bribes and payoffs, cover-ups, “vanishing” people without due process, false identities and the documentation to back up the identities, safe houses, quiet insertion into or extraction from places the PC is not supposed to be, and other clandestine services like hacking, brainwashing, or “enhanced interrogation.” These are usually the provinces of criminals or of government agents breaking the rules. Other sorts of associates can offer some of them, however. A journalist, for instance, could pull off a cover-up, or a group noted for international travel might be able to swing false ID.

Assembling a Group

Gathering a crowd of people counts as “covert” because the people themselves usually don't know why they're there, and because a crowd can cover a lot of underhanded actions by the protagonists. Even so, the motivation needn't be nefarious. Making a friend feel special, ensuring as large a crowd as possible witnesses some impressive event, having a big batch of guinea pigs to test a new power on, and similar activities are all reasonable possibilities. If simply having a big crowd present would impress someone, this favor can provide a complementary bonus (see *Complementary Skills*, p. 15) to relevant rolls.

A Contact with skill 12 can collect 2d+3 people, skill 15 gets 5d+3, 7d+2 for skill 18, and 6d+5 for skill 21. Multiply these numbers by 3 for Contacts!, or by 5 for Contact Groups.

Note that this only produces a group. Getting them to *do* anything specific is another favor, or requires the protagonists' own skills.

Material Aid

This always involves *stuff*: money, equipment, or other tangible, transferable assets. Individuals can generally offer personal funds, or supply equipment that is a standard part of their lifestyle or job and won't be missed there. Organized groups and Contacts! can provide more-restricted equipment (generally no more than two LCs lower than the local CR, however). Organizations can also supply objects or property that, while not legally restricted as such, would generally require more paperwork or bureaucracy to transfer.

Protection, Rescue, and Warning

This involves overt assistance with dangers and information about upcoming threats. It includes posting jail bonds or paying ransoms, evacuation from unsafe locations, providing medical treatment, or bodyguarding. Individuals can give warnings, but personally helping in dangerous situations is only reasonable if it is within the scope of their job. Organizations, however, can afford to employ people whose job it is to defend or rescue others.

Contacts supply warnings proactively – one you have to ask for specifically isn't much good! When there is a threat covered by the Contact's skill, the GM makes a frequency of appearance and skill roll for the Contact. If both succeed, the Contact reaches out and give the person a heads-up. This doesn't count as an attempt to call the Contact or impose penalties for repeated requests later.

Skilled Help

Sometimes, you just need some skill. Almost all associates can assist by rolling against their skill, with the same results as if the protagonist had rolled it. For lower point-value characters, it can actually be cheaper to buy a Contact with a high level in a rarely rolled skill than buying it outright.

Several other advantages are possible for having someone else roll a skill besides simple level. First, there's the question of *who's* rolling. Someone with an official position can make rolls that a hero couldn't – a medical examiner pronouncing someone dead, for example. Second, there's the matter of time. Sometimes it doesn't matter how good a roll is, just that it gets done, but doing so takes up time the heroes don't have. A Contact with the right skill can handle paperwork, watch an experiment, or otherwise free the PC to do other activities. Finally, the right skill can help with one's own tasks. Someone competent to hold the light just right and who knows which wrench to select is a big benefit – see *Complementary Skills* (below) for more on this. A group, whether organized or disparate, can also help by simply providing more warm bodies to throw at a job. For many large-scale projects (such as building a structure), dozens of extra sets of hands can get more done than a single pair, no matter how skilled.

Besides the defining skill itself, a Contact has the traits necessary to use that skill effectively. A translator has multiple Language advantages, while a spiritualist, in a setting where the supernatural is real, probably has Channeling or Medium. They can extend the benefits of such traits to their associates as a favor as well.

Social Privilege

Social privilege leverages the Contact's "soft power." Introductions to people that they know, invitations to social events, finding jobs or people to hire, or providing their own services more cheaply or quickly are all possibilities. This

also encompasses brokerage, buying from or selling at favorable prices, and keeping the transaction secret if necessary. Most associates can offer *some* favors in this category – at the very least, introductions, invitations, and doing their regular jobs on the protagonist's behalf.

COMPLEMENTARY SKILLS

Complementary skills are a strongly recommended optional rule, especially in games with many Contacts. A complementary roll lets one skill boost another. Before rolling against a skill (the "master"), the character rolling it (or others with the character) may attempt rolls against "complementary" skills that would logically assist, one roll per person. A complementary skill can sometimes be the same as the master, if the GM agrees that more expertise would be useful (the person rolling the master skill can never roll the same skill to gain a bonus, however).

Example: A general is trying to determine the enemy's likely battle plan. He uses Strategy as the master skill. He could aid himself with rolls against Intelligence Analysis, Tactics, or Leadership, and any assistants could roll against those skills or Strategy itself.

Usually, every success rolled on a complementary skill gives +1 to the master, or +2 for a critical success, while failure inflicts -1, or -2 for a critical failure (due to useless interference and distraction). The bonuses can be increased or adjusted if the GM thinks the assistance would logically be more helpful. In particular, if a complementary bonus would only cancel out a penalty of some sort, rather than providing an overall bonus, increasing the bonus to the margin of success on the complementary roll is a good idea. The penalties for failure, however, should rarely exceed those listed – doing so discourages cooperation and participation.

The bonuses from complementary rolls can be extended over multiple master rolls, if that would be appropriate. A roll against one skill representing sound advice could give a bonus to several different skills in a situation, for example. Generally, such complementary rolls give +1 to a number of master rolls equal to the margin of success, or *all* rolls that qualify on a critical success. The hero making the master roll chooses whether to apply a bonus *before* they roll. Alternatively, a complementary bonus can apply to every roll of a single type made by a group working together – someone with Carpentry, for example, could roll once to aid all the rolls of a group of people building a barn.

Maybe You Know My Friend?

Dropping a Contact's name in an appropriate setting, where it could be recognized and respected, is a common trick. Roll frequency of appearance first to see if the name is recognized, and then roll against effective skill to see if it makes an impact, as a complementary roll to a reaction roll or Influence roll, providing +2, or +4 on a critical success. The effect of a failure depends on the Contact's reliability: an Unreliable Contact provokes an automatic Bad reaction, while a Somewhat Reliable or better one merely has the usual result of the reaction or Influence roll. This doesn't count as a favor for repeated request penalties.

Employment Opportunities

An associate can often find *the protagonist* a job in the Contact's own field. This replaces any job search rolls (*Finding a Job*, p. B518), though the person must still meet any qualifications (usually). The effective wealth level and thus pay rate depends on the Contact's skill: Struggling for skill 12, Average for skill 15, Comfortable for skill 18, and Wealthy for skill 21. A Contact! or organized Contact Group provides one Wealth level higher at the same effective skill, or gives a job at a lower Wealth level that the person *doesn't* qualify for (though which is typically lost the next time the Contact rolls a critical failure).

Contacts can help find employees within their field of expertise. The Contact's skill roll replaces any rolls required for *Finding a Hireling* (pp. B517-518). The loyalty of such a hireling is set by the Contact's effective skill: Neutral for skill 12 or 15, Good for skill 18, and Very Good for skill 21. Contacts! and organized Contact Groups can supply larger groups of employees (1d×3 is a good average), and increase their loyalty by one step (that is, from Neutral to Good and Good to Very Good) for skill 15 and 18.

Personal Attention

A Contact who can choose their assignments can agree to prioritize the protagonist's request for assistance – for example, a lawyer taking someone's case. Organized groups are even better for this, since they have more staffing control. For such favors, assess time and danger based on the difficulty of shuffling the hero to the front of the line, rather than the job itself. Such jobs still *cost* as much as normal, unless the hero asks for a discount, which changes how expensive the favor is.

Getting in the Door

Most associates can get their friends into simple social events that they'd be invited to themselves (if nothing else, as their own "plus one") on a standard roll. Access to more prestigious events with limited guest lists are trickier, and always restricted to Contacts in the appropriate field. The GM should decide what social advantages would be required for an invitation to the event without any help: Status for high-society balls, Merchant Rank for a meeting of powerful executives, Tenure and positive Reputations for academic brilliance for a scientific conference, and so on. Total the number of points such traits would cost, and compare them to effective Contact skill, using the following ranges: skill 12, 5 points or less; skill 15, 6-15 points; skill 18, 16-25 points; skill 21, 26 points or more. If the point range covered by the Contact's effective skill is lower than the number of points in traits required to attend, apply -2 to their roll for every skill step it is below, while if it's higher, apply +1 for every step better.

Example: To get an invitation to a high-level diplomatic summit between the great powers of Europe requires some combination of Status and Administrative Rank that totals 25 points. Thus, a diplomat Contact with skill 12 would be at -4, a skill 15 one would have -2, a skill 18 associate would roll at no penalty, and a skill 21

Contact would have +1. A Mafia don couldn't get the hero in at all, although he might be able to get that person invited to the big meeting between rival syndicate leaders instead.

Surveillance

This involves watching people, places, or things, and reporting anything discovered. Criminal or investigative types provide general surveillance, while others can prove useful within their fields. Contact Groups (including disparate ones) supply more comprehensive observation; appropriate organizations can use legally restricted equipment that can obtain much more useful information.

Technical Assistance

These favors involve giving access to tools and facilities so that a person can accomplish tasks themselves. Unlike material assistance, this a short-term loan, meaning your associate won't worry about the cost of the equipment (unless you damage or destroy it). A Contact has access to the tools needed to use their skill at a competent level. For technical skills, this means basic equipment for skill 12, good quality at skill 15, fine quality for skill 18, and the best equipment possible at skill 21 (see *Equipment Modifiers*, p. B345).

For non-technical associates, this means furnishing gear or other items necessary for success. For example, a fashion designer with Connoisseur (Clothing) could lend their latest outfit, guaranteed to make a splash at a formal event. This usually takes the form of a complementary bonus to a relevant skill (see *Complementary Skills*, p. 15).

In addition to individual tools, organized groups and Contacts! can supply whole facilities, like labs or workshops, allowing several people to work in tandem, or permitting a wider range of tasks. The social equivalent is offering the use of whole spaces (like a ballroom to host an event) or reserving an entire restaurant for just two people.

Transportation

This involves moving things from here to there and, if necessary, concealing this. Transport is an essential part of daily life, so many Contacts can provide at least limited service in this department, but the real standouts are commercial entities devoted to it (for diversity of destinations and means of getting there) and criminal ones (for hiding the facts about the travel). Organizations can generally conceal your movement by including the protagonist among official journeys.

Both organizations and disparate groups can transport larger quantities of people or goods.

Violence

These favors involve hurting people, either threatening harm or actually carrying through, though threats are *far* more common. Someone with an inherently violent lifestyle or job is more willing to commit real brutality, however.

Violent individuals come in three broad categories: *thugs*, *professionals*, and *experts*. A thug can help with intimidation or get in a brawl, but not much more; they typically have 11 or less in relevant combat skills.



A Contact can call on thugs based on their effective skill: one or two for skill 12, three or four for skill 15, five to nine for skill 18, and 10 to 15 for skill 21. A professional has combat skills in the 12-14 range, and knows how to work with their comrades. If a Contact can supply professionals at all, they come in groups half the size of thugs. An expert is always a single person, but they have better skills (equal to the Contact's skill level) and bring equipment to match it.

Contacts! and organized groups can command more thugs or professionals: three times as many for a Contact! and five times for an organization. Disparate Contact Groups can supply 10 times as many thugs (though with the usual penalties to convenience and effective skill), but they are less cohesive and trained to work together than those from formal organizations.

Situations involving fighting or its potential are stressful, so there are greater restrictions regarding time when combatants are being supplied. For thugs or professionals, treat any time longer than an hour of readiness as a non-quick favor, and more than four hours as taxing. An expert is even busier, and they treat 15 minutes or more of combat readiness as non-quick, and an hour or more as taxing.

Artillery Support

Artillery support is generally limited to organized military or paramilitary groups, and is only available from them in extreme circumstances. If arranged beforehand, calling it in

just requires sending a prearranged signal. If not previously prepared, it takes at least 1d minutes and requires a Forward Observer roll from someone to precisely target.

Riots

Riots are one sort of violent favor that more Contacts are willing to arrange, since they involve less risk that their own friends or associates will be harmed. A riot requires a group to be present at the location already, whether naturally or supplied by another favor (see *Covert Assistance*, p. 14). Sparking a riot generally requires 50 people or more – a Contact's skill is at -1 per full 10 people below this, and five or fewer people cannot be incited at all. If your associate's roll is successful, the crowd breaks out in mass violence.

Controlling this frenzy is a different matter. Rioters typically follow the first general directive the inciter gives them ("Attack that guard station" or "beat up everyone belonging to this group," for instance), but they randomly choose their own actions after that. Organizations can afford to seed a crowd with multiple agents and better direct its fury, though this is by no means guaranteed. A group directing a riot can provide multiple directives to the mob, one directive per two points of margin of success, but their margin of success is reduced by 1 for every doubling of riot size past 50 (this never turns a successful roll into a failure, but it can prevent the organization from controlling the rioters past the first command).

PUTTING NUMBERS ON A RELATIONSHIP

Three critical elements define a Contact mechanically: effective skill level, frequency of appearance, and reliability. Each of these can mean different things, depending on the relationship.

SKILLS, EFFECTIVELY

A Contact's effective skill level and name defines what sort of help they can offer.

What's in a Skill Name?

Defining who a Contact is and what they can provide with their core skill is the most important step in creating a Contact. This step sets what sort of knowledge and assistance they can supply. Not all Contacts with the same skill are identical! The player and the GM should discuss before the Contact comes into play how the associate could use the skill, to make sure everyone agrees. A newshound who's done extensive research into criminal activity will provide different information and favors than the gutter-punk who grew up among the lowlifes, even though they both have Streetwise.

Inevitably, the question of knowledge or favors that weren't originally discussed will come up. When this arises, the GM should keep in mind what information, tools, resources, and traits the Contact needs to use their core skill, and then decide whether the unusual request could be handled by those

supporting aspects. (See Chapter 3 for numerous examples, divided by category.) For example, that newshound, above, has access to information relevant to journalism and can do favors involving releasing or suppressing the news, while the punk knows more related to actually *living* on the street and can do favors involving connecting with and applying leverage to other street residents.

A Contact isn't confined to providing assistance strictly in the area defined by their skill. Contacts are people, and people have more than one skill. Since they're a friend, they may be willing to use their other abilities to help out. Their listed skill is what they are primarily good at, however, so their ability to help out in other areas is limited. For requests under the purview of other skills that the Contact would logically have or their resources would reasonably help with, treat their effective skill as one step lower. Skills that default from their main skill, are prerequisites for it, or are considered common skills that all Contacts share (see *Common Skills*, p. 23) are two steps lower, and are capped at effective skill 12.

Example: The reporter Judy Owlson has Streetwise at skill 18. She could provide assistance based on *Savoir-Faire* (Mafia), such as an introduction to the local *capo*, at skill-15, since her resources for Streetwise would logically help with that as well. If asked to identify a graffiti tag from another city, she'd roll against skill-12, since Heraldry (Graffiti Tags) defaults to Streetwise.

It's Not What You Know . . .

. . . It's who, as the old saying goes. Contacts with high effective skill level demonstrate this – their skill largely represents connections and associates rather than raw ability. An associate with skill 12 probably has that level personally, and knows a few people who can help them out, while one with skill 21 might not *personally* have much higher skill, but a veritable army of underlings and sources.

The skill level of a Contact involved in an organization corresponds roughly to their Rank, with every skill step equaling about a quarter of the Rank levels available in the hierarchy. This doesn't need to be formal, though, merely *de facto*. The corporate CEO's personal assistant is a skill-21 Contact, with effectively the highest Rank in the company, as long as everyone assumes the aide is speaking for the boss. However, the associate's nature still affects the relationship and what can be asked for. A personal assistant can't throw the full weight of a corporation behind someone's schemes – something *that* big involves too much paperwork to pull off illicitly. Meanwhile, the CEO might be able to ask her corporation to do more, but she can't really do anything big *secretly*, potentially alerting opponents that something unusual is going on.

Effective skill level of an organized Contact Group depends primarily on how much power they have in the setting. The guidelines for the Patron advantage (p. B72) are useful for setting Contact Group skill level as well: a "fairly powerful" organization is skill 12, a "powerful" one has skill 15, a "very powerful" group rates skill 18, and an "extremely powerful" one is a good candidate for skill 21.

Boosting Skill

Since Contact skill is an abstraction that represents their resources, it already takes many sorts of bonuses into account. However, a few ways can be used to reliably boost their associates' rolls: *bribery*, *time spent*, and *complementary rolls*.

Bribery

"Money talks," as the Contacts advantage mentions. Spending extra money increases a Contact's reliability, and then their effective skill once reliability reaches Usually Reliable. A cash bribe should be worth one day's income for a one-step increase in reliability/skill, one week for a two-step improvement, one month for three steps, and one year for four, the maximum. A Contact's Wealth level, and hence their income, generally depends on their skill level: Average for skill 12, and increasing by one wealth level for every step higher (though the GM can adjust this when it makes sense – a beggar typically doesn't have above Poor, and a corporate CEO could easily be a Multi-Millionaire).

Bribing a whole group or organization is more expensive. When asking for favors or information that would take a group's resources to provide, the expenditure must be much more – generally five times as much. If the requester can only afford to spend the regular amount, the increase to reliability or skill only applies to things a single individual could do.

*A friend in
need is a friend
indeed.
– Traditional
saying*

Time Spent

Letting an associate take extra time can give a better result. Conversely, when in a hurry, they can be rushed, at the risk of inaccuracy and mistakes. The *Time Spent* rules (p. B346) apply to a Contact's skill. Use a base time of an hour or however long a task would normally take, whichever is longer. For Usually and Completely Reliable Contacts, apply the same adjustment to how long before they can try the task again as well.

Example: Divine Grace gives her Usually Reliable information broker eight times the normal amount of time to find information for her, which provides +3 to the Contact's roll. If the information broker failed his initial roll, he'd take 1d×8 days before he got back to the hero again.

Complementary Rolls

While it's usually the Contact who's giving the complementary boost, the protagonist can help *them* in certain circumstances. This works like any complementary roll: choose an appropriate skill to assist with, and the Contact gets a bonus if it's successful or a penalty on a failure (see *Complementary Skills*, p. 15). They already have assistants, though, so the GM should be stricter about which skills can complement. Additionally, the level with any skill the Contact could already access must be at least three higher than their effective level, to provide something unique. However, a skill that's related to the task but *really* not in the friend's wheelhouse is less restricted.

Example: Speedfreak's medical examiner Contact is doing an autopsy on an alien corpse with Surgery-15. Speedfreak would need Diagnosis or Physiology skills at 18 or better to help, but he could roll Engineer (Robotics) at any level to help analyze the alien's implants.

Penalties

Penalties to a Contact's skill should happen less regularly than bonuses. Typical skill penalties are ignored as part of the abstraction and assumed to be compensated for. For standard Contacts, it is reasonable to apply -1 or -2 if they are handling something their skill would cover but their description suggests they wouldn't be familiar with – someone with Mechanic (Automobile) is going to struggle somewhat when asked to repair a submarine. But Contact Groups and wildcard Contacts! cover all specialties within a skill and won't take even this penalty.

GETTING IN TOUCH

Setting frequency of appearance is the next step when defining a Contact.

Now Appearing . . .

Frequency of appearance determines how often a Contact is willing to talk. Someone who can call their Contact's mobile phone at any hour, but who gets an abrupt "Not now, I'm busy" 90% of the time, has a Contact with a low frequency of appearance. Conversely, if the Contact has all calls go to voicemail, but they faithfully return every message and are happy to help, then the frequency of appearance is high.

With someone under the hero's direct command, this approach doesn't necessarily fit. A subordinate won't give their boss the brush-off! In such circumstances, consider simply buying Rank – formal position in a hierarchy allows many of the same favors and assistance as a Contact would (see *GURPS Social Engineering: Pulling Rank* for more extensive rules for leveraging Rank). But sometimes it makes sense for a formal subordinate to also be a Contact, especially if they have skills or resources separate and distinct from the organization. In these cases, frequency of appearance decides how occupied the associate is with another task – they're busy on a failure, and they're free on a success. On a failed frequency of appearance roll, the protagonist can still ask for help, but doing so means the Contact must abandon or delay other projects. This has consequences, whether punishments for both parties from superiors, or tasks not being accomplished.

The GM should not modify the frequency of appearance directly. Arbitrarily declaring a Contact is harder to reach will lead to player unhappiness – they've paid points for a specific frequency, and reducing it without warning isn't fun. It's best to let players choose how they want to adjust the advantage.

The GM can instead use the frequency of appearance roll to account for the vagaries of a Contact's person life and so adjust the *convenience* of getting in touch with that person (see *Contact Convenience*, below). On a critical failure, the Contact is unavailable now, and their convenience level is two steps worse than usual for the rest of the adventure. An exact success means one level less convenient than usual. Succeeding by 1 for a frequency of 6 or less, by 3 for 9 or less or 12 or less, or by 5 for 15 or less, means a convenience level one better than default. Critical success means convenience improves by one step both for this use and for all subsequent uses during this adventure. All adjustments apply on top of whatever convenience level is appropriate for the circumstances of a particular scene. Further critical failures or successes in the same adventure aren't cumulative, and don't modify the convenience of connection. If an adventure lasts longer than three or four sessions, or if more than a week passes in game, reset the Contact to their usual convenience.

Contact Convenience

How easy it is to reach the Contact is an important consideration. This varies depending on circumstances and the associate's personality and behavior. It typically falls into one of the following levels.

- *Extremely Convenient*: Reaching the Contact requires only a few (1d×5) seconds, and the call is very difficult to block or intercept, like a prayer to a deity.
- *Very Convenient*: The Contact can be reached in a few (1d) minutes at most, through any reasonable communication channel.
- *Reasonably Convenient*: The associate can be contacted in about half an hour (1d×10 minutes), through any reasonable means.
- *Mildly Inconvenient*: Getting in touch requires either a while (1d hours) or a half-hour and a specific, somewhat difficult channel (encrypted email, a secure phone line available in any government office, leaving a mark in obscure thieves' sign in a dark alley, etc.).

- *Seriously Inconvenient*: Connecting requires either a very long time (1d×10 hours), using an extremely difficult communication channel (e.g., calling from a military-grade secured line, giving a code phrase to a specific shady individual in the rough part of town, performing a ceremony in a particular mystic grove), or both the extra time and difficult means of communication from the Mildly Inconvenient level.

- *Massively Inconvenient*: To reach the Contact, either the person must take a very long time and use an extremely difficult communication channel (see *Seriously Inconvenient*, above, for ideas about both), or they must take 1d days and use a somewhat difficult communication channel (see *Mildly Inconvenient*, above, for suggestions).

- *Incredibly Inconvenient*: Getting in touch requires either an extremely difficult communication channel (see *Seriously Inconvenient*, above, for ideas) and 4d days of waiting, or 4d+10 days with any reasonable means of communication. This is the most inconvenient level reached.

If the protagonists must wait *patiently* for the Contact, rather than doing something else during that time, treat the connection as one step less convenient. For example, if getting in touch with a fixer requires sitting around without making a scene in a dive bar for 30 minutes, that's "Mildly Inconvenient" rather than "Reasonably Convenient."

Contacts default to "Reasonably Convenient," but the GM can alter this, either up or down, based on the circumstances of the current scene. Reaching out to a CIA analyst isn't too difficult when calling from the United States, and positively easy when actually *in* Langley, but becomes a lot trickier when phoning from Azerbaijan. Various modifiers to the base advantage also can adjust the default (see *Contact Modifiers*, pp. 7-8).

If an adjustment due to circumstances or a modifier would move the convenience level either above or below those provided here, treat each such step as +3 to the frequency of appearance for more convenient, or -3 for less convenient.

*You can trust us to stick to you
through thick and thin – to the bitter end.*

– J.R.R. Tolkien,
The Lord of the Rings

TRUST ISSUES

Reliability defines how strong the relationship really is.

Move Along or Move Bodies?

When choosing a reliability level for a Contact, understand what each level means. An Unreliable Contact is a fair-weather friend at best, ready to sell out an associate at any provocation, though it can also mean someone who's just slipshod and does poor work. A Somewhat Reliable person does an average job, and won't generally betray anyone unless a significant benefit is in it for them. Usually Reliable means someone who maintains good working relationships and who generally puts forth an above-average effort.

Completely Reliable defines a person who gives tasks their best effort, every time, and would never betray associates.

A Contact's reliability level should influence *all* interactions with them, not just critical successes or failures. An Unreliable associate might fish for more details of the protagonist's business than they need, building up a dossier to eventually turn over to their enemies. A Completely Reliable friend regularly volunteers useful information the heroes haven't thought to ask for, or offers favors spontaneously.

Lower reliability doesn't always imply treachery, however. Sometimes, it just means incompetence. In that case, treat critical failures as some other kind of harm, as long as the damage is about the same as betrayal. Plausible but critically flawed information (which they honestly believe, so Detect Lies and similar means won't catch it) is a good substitute. Another possibility is to put the Contact in danger – especially if the hero has a personal attachment. (However, unless the PC also has Dependent for that Contact, this shouldn't happen too often or put the Contact in too much peril.)

Example: In a game of high-school monster hunting, the 10-year-old super-genius hacker happens to be the protagonist's younger brother. The hacker might decide to personally spy on the vampires after coming up empty on useful information online, requiring rescue.

Reliability is also a guideline for how the Contact reacts to a person outside of their established relationship. Associates rarely make new reaction rolls, but it *can* come up, especially when the protagonist asks them for something outside the norm. In these cases, an Unreliable Contact has an overall "Bad" reaction, a Somewhat Reliable has a "Poor" one, a Usually Reliable is "Neutral," and Completely Reliable equates to "Good." Assume that any reaction modifiers from traits or previous actions, whether the adventurer's or the Contact's, have already been taken into account for this, so only situational modifiers apply.

Managing Risk

A Contact's reliability can be adjusted (or accounted for) through various means in play. *Bribery* is easiest, if money is available (as explained on p. B44 or *Boosting Skill*, p. 18). *Exchanging favors* is also possible – offering to do something of about the same level of difficulty as what's being asked is good for a one-step improvement in reliability, while offering significantly more is worth two steps.

Threats might work, but they have long-term consequences. Threatening a Contact requires a roll against a skill like Intimidation (or Acting, for specious intimidation) in a Quick Contest with their effective skill. If the adventurer succeeds, treat the Contact's reliability as one step better (or two steps if the margin of victory was 5 or more) for *this* request. Their reliability subsequently *drops* at least one step for future interactions unless the protagonist keeps threatening them. If the hero loses the Quick Contest, the Contact acts as they would after failing a roll (betrayal, lying, etc.), based on their new lowered reliability. If the Quick Contest was lost by 5 or more, treat this as a critical failure by the Contact instead.

Instead of increasing an associate's reliability, the protagonist can try to anticipate or even *rely* on their betrayal instead. Skills like Body Language, Detect Lies, or Streetwise can be used to assess whether a Contact is being honest. Roll such skills as a Quick Contest against the Contact's effective skill – victory reveals whether they are lying, intend to perform a favor poorly, or plan a betrayal. With someone whose betrayal is anticipated, the associate can lie to *the Contact* and hope they spread the false information. This requires an Acting or Fast-Talk roll (possibly Propaganda or Public Speaking when dealing with a whole group), in a Quick Contest against their effective skill. If the adventurer is victorious, the Contact conveys what was told them to the relevant people (opponents may get other rolls to spot the information's falsity, at the GM's option).

CONTACTS IN PLAY

This section provides some guidelines for how to run a Contact, keeping them useful while not bogging the game down or unbalancing play.

MANAGING RELATIONSHIPS

Handling Contacts properly is essential to everyone having fun. Most critically, *a Contact is a character*, not just a mechanical source of information and favors. Not every associate needs a full character sheet, but there should be a clear picture of each one's personality, preferences, and background. When creating a Contact, work this out first, and *then* define them mechanically. The benefits a friend provides flow from who they are, and two Contacts with the same rules details can nonetheless supply different types of assistance.

To the GM, Contacts are excellent opportunities – introducing interesting NPCs that the players want to interact with can be one of the trickiest parts of running the game. The player taking a Contact is doing the work of imagining

a character, and indicating they want to talk to them regularly! To encourage this, Contacts should be routinely useful. A player paid points for them, and they should get a fair value. If a hero's associates are too-frequently unwilling or actively hostile, people will stop buying Contacts, and this valuable tool for connecting to the setting will be lost.

Players must remember that Contacts shouldn't be abused or taken for granted, either. Accept that sometimes, a friend can't do everything that's asked of them. Sometimes, the answer is "no," or at least "Sorry, can't do it. But what about . . ."

Be ready to roleplay interactions as well. A Contact is an NPC with whom the protagonist has a friendly relationship. Reinforce that by establishing the nature of the friendship: Does the PC buy them a nice dinner to thank them for their help? Ask them about their family whenever they get in touch? Play chess in the park? Describing little details like this creates a more vivid image of the relationship, and counts as social reciprocity (see *Tit for Tat*, below).

While a guaranteed-positive relationship means a Contact has adapted to someone's flaws, this doesn't mean they can be treated like dirt. Controlling negative traits like Bad Temper, Bully, Kleptomania, and so forth (rather than forgoing self-control rolls) when interacting with associates isn't bad roleplaying. Sufficiently bad behavior can still sour a Contact – if actions would generate a reaction penalty of -6 or more, the Contact's reliability is reduced by one step, and an additional step for every extra -3 to reactions. If this would push them below Unreliable, treat this as an automatic critical failure on the next roll they make. Repeated cases of this may permanently lower the Contact's reliability, at the GM's option. This effectively reduces the Contact's point value, with no compensation.

If a Contact is a Dependent or someone a hero has a Sense of Duty toward, and they are left in peril or deliberately placed in danger, the GM may choose to reduce the value of the Contact advantage – lowering reliability or frequency of appearance, or applying limitations like Impatient or Less Helpful (both p. 8), in lieu of docking points for poor roleplaying.

A final note for both players with Contacts and for the GM: Roleplaying interactions between adventurer and their associates should not dominate the campaign at the expense of the other players! Sitting in silence watching a scene play out isn't that interesting for those not involved. Keep one-on-one sessions brief, and allow other party members to join in. Contacts should accept "they're with me" freely and answer questions from anyone in the party, with no more than a glance at their main friend for confirmation.

*No man is an island entire of itself;
every man is a piece of the continent,
a part of the main . . . And therefore
never send to know for whom the bell
tolls; it tolls for thee.*

– John Donne, *Meditation XVII*

Tit for Tat

How reciprocal should the relationship between Contact and hero be? How often should "you've got to do *me* a favor first" be an associate's response? The answer is "not often." A Contact should provide their knowledge and other benefits without much haggling. If the player wanted to pay money or give favors in exchange for what they need done, they'd take Wealth or Claim to Hospitality instead. If they're constantly being asked for something in return, the protagonist won't take advantage of a Contact that often.

It's reasonable for a Contact to ask for something *occasionally*. A little relationship building is reasonable, to maintain the friendship: take them out to dinner, invite them to a concert, and so on. This sort of thing can be roleplayed as part of the interaction with the Contact when the PC gets in touch, or it can be assumed to happen during downtime between

adventures. Requests that are more significant should happen only rarely, perhaps once or twice per campaign – having something come up the first time the appearance roll is 18 makes a good guideline.

Of course, a player might *want* this sort of reciprocal relationship. In that case, buy the Contact with limitations such as Reciprocal (p. 8), and take disadvantages like Duty (My Contact) or quirks like A Friend in Need (p. 8).

Contacts in Distress

The GM should be cautious about endangering a standard Contact. Someone who's regularly calling for help is draining the hero's resources, not providing them. That's going to make players ask why they bothered with a Contact. Try to put an associate in danger only once or twice in the campaign, on a roll of 18 for frequency of appearance. The GM can even combine the Contact asking for a favor and being threatened – the assistance is "*Get me out of this!*"

This doesn't apply, however, if the *hero* puts a Contact at risk. If they drop a Contact's name at the wrong time, mention the source of information or favors to people who don't need to know, or (worst of all) give them up to enemies to deflect consequences, they have no one to blame but themselves when their associate is threatened, imprisoned, or even killed. Except in *egregious* cases, it's best to give the protagonist a chance to save their friend. If they fail, or don't even bother to try, however, the Contact is lost, with no refund of points. Even if the consequences aren't deadly or permanent, someone who gets in trouble due to the PC's actions should drop a level or two in reliability.

The exception, again, is if the player wants this to happen by taking appropriate disadvantages. Defining Contacts as Dependents is asking the GM to endanger them, requiring the protagonist to help. Having a Sense of Duty that includes Contacts means helping them when they get in trouble on their own, trying not to put them in danger, and when that happens, quickly aiding them. Failing to do so means being docked character points for poor roleplaying, or getting reductions to the Contact's reliability (see above).

Building Connections

As a hero grows and develops connections with people, it's reasonable to acquire and improve Contact advantages. Positive reactions from NPCs are an excellent start for possible new associates. The potential reliability level of a new Contact depends on their initial reaction – a "Good" or better reaction creates a Completely Reliable associate, "Neutral" means Usually Reliable, "Poor" implies Somewhat Reliable, and "Bad" suggests Unreliable. Once the person is bought as a Contact, assume that, in the context of their standard relationship, they effectively have a "Good" reaction, only expressing different reaction levels outside of it.

The GM may require Contacts generated through Influence rolls to include the Convince Me limitation (p. 7), which means the skill to get them is needed to maintain the friendship. The GM may also allow a PC to gain a Contact without limitations on a high "natural" (non-skill-based) reaction. The GM interested in detailed rules for developing relationships and loyalty in play should check out *Building Trust* in *GURPS Social Engineering*, pp. 40-41.

Of course, simply roleplaying the process of developing a relationship is a perfectly acceptable way of gaining a Contact. A good guideline is that establishing an Unreliable Contact takes less than a day of interaction, a Somewhat Reliable one needs a week, a Usually Reliable associate needs a month, and a Completely Reliable Contact takes at *least* a year of positive interactions.

The GM should let a player know when they've got a sufficiently high reaction roll to develop a Contact, and which skill the Contact provides, offering the option to buy the advantage. If the party doesn't know the NPC very well yet, their frequency of appearance, skill level, and reliability can be kept secret, but a bit of successful vetting should give more details.

Another way of handling new Contacts is to award them in addition to or instead of bonus character points. At the end of a session where someone sufficiently impressed an NPC, the GM simply tells the player "You've got a new Contact." There are two important considerations here. First, make sure the player is all right with it! It's best to ask before the campaign begins if everyone is okay with this, allowing those who prefer a regular point award to accept that instead. Second, to make up for the lack of choice, it's best if the Contact is worth more than the points that would have been awarded, up to twice as much. For example, if the normal reward would be three points, a Somewhat Reliable Contact with skill 18, who appears on a 12 or less [6], is a reasonable alternative.

These methods apply to gaining individual Contacts in play (or Contacts! for sufficiently impressive individuals). Acquiring entire Contact Groups is more difficult. Even if someone impresses an individual member, the whole organization won't necessarily warm to that person. The best approach is to require gaining several members of a group as Contacts (or Allies). Then, once enough have been established, allow the Contacts or Allies to be "converted" into a Contact Group (typically after their total value equals the cost of the desired Contact Group advantage). For disparate groups, simply gathering five or more associates within it is sufficient. For organizations, requiring at *least* five members is necessary, and one or more of them must come from the higher echelons of the hierarchy, enough to gain "official" institutional approval.

Improving Contacts

Improving a Contact in play should require more work – dedicated roleplaying along with spending the points. Improving the frequency of appearance is easiest, requiring finding better methods to get in touch – exchanging private cell phone numbers, agreeing to being bothered at home, etc. – and takes 1d weeks and a couple of good social rolls to improve one level (though reaching Constantly should be much harder, if possible at all).

Increasing reliability requires roleplaying stronger connections. Use the roleplaying timeframes under *Building Connections* (pp. 21-22) when trying to enhance reliability with existing Contacts.

A Contact's skill is the hardest element to improve, since that's a function of what resources and abilities they have. It requires significant investment of time, money, and energy, dedicated to boosting the friend's standing. This requires social rolls to convince others of their value, helping them complete projects, eliminating rivals, and so forth, requiring at *least* a full adventure devoted to improvement. However,

if a Contact rolls a critical success on their skill, the GM can say an opportunity to advance through sheer good luck has arisen, if the player is willing to pay the points.

The GM may permit someone who spends a *significant* amount of time and effort developing their relationship with a Contact to use the rules in *Improvement Through Study* (pp. B292-294) to enhance them without spending character points. In all cases, the time spent with the Contact precludes doing any other activities during it. Simply socializing and being around an associate provides points at self-teaching rates (400 hours equals one point), while every 200 hours actively helping them with their job or general life improves the Contact by one point. The intensive training rate (100 hours for one point) is only accessible for those aiding in extreme circumstances and not asking anything in return. Opportunities for this sort of relationship building are rare. Points earned in this way can increase a Contact's reliability or frequency of appearance, but rarely their effective skill, unless the activity being engaged in with them was explicitly about developing the Contact's resources.

*Hey, I just met you and
this is crazy*

*But here's my number,
so call me maybe*

– Carly Rae Jepsen,
"Call Me Maybe"

From Contact to Ally or Patron

Friends sometimes make the jump from Contact to Ally. If they are someone the party enjoys interacting with and they've come along on an adventure or two as favors, then the player can be offered the option of buying them as an Ally. Count any points invested in the Contact toward the cost of Ally. The GM needs to make up a character sheet for the NPC to determine the cost of the Ally. Make sure to give them traits (advantages such as Rank, or appropriate skills) to ensure they can still provide similar assistance as when they were a Contact, bringing them to at least 25% of the PC's point total.

Whole Contact Groups shouldn't become Allies – they're too diverse to qualify, and they'd be expensive in terms of points anyway. Instead, a Contact Group is a good reason for an adventurer to gain a new Ally, who is also a member of that Contact Group. However, if someone is willing to make their relationship with the organization more formal, a Contact Group *can* become a Patron instead. Just as with converting a Contact to an Ally, apply the Contact Group cost to the price of the Patron, and only pay the difference. Similarly, when defining what abilities the Patron provides, ensure that it covers the same ground the Contact Group did. If they demand a Duty or similar disadvantage as the price of their patronage, the points gained should count toward the cost of the Patron as well.

CHAPTER THREE

WHAT MAKES A CONTACT

While the range of potential Contacts is infinite, certain generalizations can be made. This chapter presents descriptions of the most common categories Contacts could fall into, plus some special rules that apply when an associate has certain skills.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTACT CATEGORIES

While a Contact is an individual, it's still convenient to categorize them according to groups or organizations, which help define the skills they have available, the information they provide, and the favors they can offer. Many of the categories in this chapter are from *GURPS Boardroom and Curia*, which provides more details on them as organizations and on the sort of resources a group as a whole can access.

Each category begins with a brief description of its members or purpose, and then details categories that frequently overlap or are found together with it. Any special rules that apply to Contacts or Contact Groups from that category appear here as well.

Next, the *Skills* section lists those typically possessed by individuals in that category; Contact Groups possess most of them. Skills are listed in order of commonness – virtually all groups have the first set of skills listed, while access to later skills in the list depends on the exact nature of the group. A Contact may be built with any one of the skills from the category or any crossovers. Contact Groups that straddle categories have the skills defined as universal to all of the types they fall into. Less-common skills apply at the GM's discretion. Some skills have additional effects; see *Special Cases* (pp. 38-39 for more details).

The *Individuals and Groups* section covers likely examples, listed in ascending

order of likely skill level (skill 12, skill 15, skill 18, and skill 21), with individuals first and then groups.

The *Information* section suggests specific types of knowledge a Contact can provide. This isn't exhaustive nor does the list apply to every version of a Contact from that type – a Contact should supply the information that makes sense for them as a character. Almost every Contact can provide gossip and rumors they hear in the course of their daily lives. Assume such information is included in every category. In the case of crossover, information should come from the main category, not the others.

COMMON SKILLS

Rather than list certain almost-universal skills among Contacts and Contact Groups repeatedly, they're provided here.

Common Individual Skills

Most Contacts have some level in certain skills, no matter their defined skill. Treat these as two levels lower than their effective skill, maximum 12.

- Area Knowledge and Current Affairs (Regional) for where they live and work.
- Current Affairs (Headline News and People), Heraldry, and History, with specialties in the latter two specifically for whomever they work with.
- Connoisseur, specialized in the tools and other equipment the Contact needs for their job.
- Research, specialized in information about their organization.
- Savoir-Faire, if a specialty exists for their group's subculture.
- Any professional or technical skill needed for their job or to use common equipment.

Common Group Skills

Contact Groups have all the skills listed above, at *full* skill level. Additionally (and again, at full skill), they regularly have Current Affairs, Heraldry, History, and Law covering their general field (not just their specific organization). Virtually every Contact Group that's a formal organization rather than ad hoc has Administration, and most organizations have Accounting to manage their financial situation.

Unusual and Supernatural Contacts

Contacts with “supernatural abilities” increase their base cost by 1 point. Almost any of the categories presented here can qualify for this, if they’re composed largely of supernatural beings or simply have access to resources that aren’t otherwise common in the setting. For example, a Religious group in a setting with interventionist deities would qualify if they can call on divine power with any regularity.

Finally, typical *favors* are listed. In addition to specific tasks described in the category, Contacts can provide authorization to enter their own private spaces, material assistance for cash loans or gifts at the personal level (see *Material Aid*, p. 14), social privilege in the form of introductions to other members of the group, and transportation to and from locations of specific interest to that category. Practically every type of Contact also can supply some sort of skilled assistance, usually taking the form of complementary bonuses (see *Complementary Skills*, p. 15).

THE CATEGORIES

In addition to the specifics listed in each category, Contacts can provide general assistance. See *Understanding the Contact Categories* (pp. 23-24) for suggested information and favors that almost anyone could supply. See *Special Cases* (pp. 38-39) for additional effects of some of the skills.

ADVOCACY

These Contacts promote an agenda, whether legislative, social, or otherwise. Advocacy overlaps with many other categories, depending on what they’re agitating for.

Skills

- One or more Influence skills, and Propaganda to win public approval or Politics to get elected.
- Common group skills (p. 23).
- Law, Philosophy (usually a political specialization, such as Marxist), Public Speaking, and Writing.
- Other skills appropriate to their purpose (Veterinary for animal rights, Biology for an environmentalist agenda, etc.).

Individuals and Groups

A local protester, a courtier to the local baron, the President of the NAACP, the head of the Interstellar Health Organization; the mayor’s campaign office, the Black Panthers, an abolitionist group known throughout the Empire, the International Council of Women.

Information

Personal information relating to their focus: who’s for it, who’s against it, who publicly opposes it but indulges in secret.

Favors

- Covert Assistance: Gathering groups of protesters or simply angry oppressed.
- Protection, Rescue, and Warning: Bailouts or otherwise escaping official legal trouble; warning that you are being targeted by groups they are politically opposed to.
- Skilled Help: Complementary bonuses on getting the ear of politicians or the public to further *the PC’s* agenda, or assistance designing propaganda campaigns.

- Social Privilege: Introductions to people in power.
- Violence: Advocacy groups willing to use violence to achieve their ends or defend their charges make the following available: thugs (willing to back up intimidation or indulge in actual violence against those cruelly opposed to their cause) and riots (with groups of angry people lashing out against their opponents).

AID

This category is devoted to providing assistance, sometimes to the disadvantaged, or more generally to all of society. They often cross over with Advocacy (above) groups, if they want to change society or law to benefit their charges, and Medical (p. 32) if they provide such services. Cultural/Ethnic (pp. 26-27) to provide assistance to a specific group is common. Frequently, these Contacts are Government (pp. 28-29) or Religious (pp. 36-37) as well.

Skills

- Skills necessary to provide help (First Aid and Physician for medical aid, Finance for monetary, and so on).
- Common group skills (p. 23).
- Technical skills to operate equipment that comes up in their work – Paramedics have Electronics Operation (Medical), many tools firefighters use call for Forced Entry, and so forth.
- Current Affairs (Headline News).
- Accounting and Influence skills for contributions, if not publicly funded, or Market Analysis if the group invests.

Individuals and Groups

A local public defender, a firefighter, the *praefectus annonae* who distributed the grain dole in Republican Rome, Mother Teresa; a shelter for indigent spacers, a Coast Guard station, Amnesty Interstellar, the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Information

Statistics and other data relevant to their social issue; details on who opposes them, either by creating more work or interfering.

Favors

- Authorization: Permission to enter places where people might need help (often broader than any other state agent's authority!), or to carry otherwise-restricted tools for rescue purposes.
- Material Aid: Whatever assistance they provide to their charges: clean clothes, warm food, shelter, etc.
- Protection, Rescue, and Warning: Bailouts, if their protected group often has legal trouble; medical treatment, particularly things like drug-addiction programs.
- Skilled Help: Complementary bonuses when providing the same sort of aid or dealing with the hazards they handle.
- Social Privilege: Introductions to and name-dropping with people impressed by their good deeds.
- Technical Assistance: Lending rescue equipment for personal purposes.
- Transportation: Smuggling someone places in the guise of being a legitimate aid worker.

ARTISTIC/ENTERTAINMENT

These Contacts are devoted to producing and promoting something people enjoy: physical art and permanent media, more ephemeral works like dance or theater, or entertaining physical activity like professional sports. Overlap with Business/Commercial groups (below) is extremely common. Those avoiding "selling out" often count as High Society (p. 29), while Government (pp. 28-29) might sponsor some public entertainment. Technical/Trade (p. 38) is another crossover, if the process involves a high degree of technical skill. Other overlaps depend on who's being entertained.

Skills

- Those required for what they produce – Dancing and Group Performance for a ballet company, Artist (Sculpting) for a sculpture studio, Electronics Operation (Media) and Public Speaking for a TV studio, etc. – and Connoisseur for the same.
- Common group skills (p. 23).
- Current Affairs (High Culture, Popular Culture, and Sports), Public Speaking (if not already a primary skill).
- Enthralment skills, if available.

Individuals and Groups

A street artist, a professional gladiator, Sappho of Lesbos, Louis B. Mayer; a small country-music studio, a minor professional hockey team, the musical and artistic collective of Fernando de Medici, the Galactic Empire's Joy Guild.

Information

Who's a collector, a connoisseur, or just a fan, and what their tastes are; the provenance and history of particular pieces; what sort of art is popular or critically acclaimed; who's who in the industry, including their personal lives and scandals.

Favors

- Covert Assistance: Gathering a group of fans, viewers, art connoisseurs, etc.

- Material Aid: Original pieces for gifts or bribes, or convincing forgeries.
- Skilled Help: Complementary bonuses to a wide range of social situations, including deceptions to pass off someone as cultured, personal attempts to entertain, or trying to do something sneaky if a big show could distract people; prioritizing commissions of art pieces from the PC.
- Social Privilege: Introductions to or name-dropping with art-lovers; buying works the PC has acquired or selling to them original pieces; finding jobs that pay well without high prerequisites ("Associate Producer").
- Technical Assistance: Studios or workshops to create personal pieces of art; concert halls, galleries, or other facilities for social functions.

Let's do lunch, babe.

*– Traditional saying
in the entertainment
business*

BUSINESS/COMMERCIAL

The Contacts are dedicated to selling things and turning a profit. This overlaps with *many* other groups, but there is a particularly strong crossover with Criminal/Street (p. 26), Artistic/Entertainment (above), and Technical/Trade (p. 38).

Skills

- Merchant, Finance, Market Analysis, and Propaganda.
- Common group skills (p. 23), especially Administration and Accounting.
- Current Affairs (Business).
- Influence skills to convince buyers, especially Diplomacy, Fast-Talk, and Savoir-Faire (High Society and Servant particularly, but any subculture that they sell to is reasonable).

Individuals and Groups

A convenience store owner, the head of a merchant caravan, the CFO of a national corporation, John D. Rockefeller; a small interplanetary import-export business, a clique of merchants selling grain to a Roman province, one of the guilds in the Hanseatic League, the British East India Company.

Information

What's selling and what isn't; details of who bought what recently, the price, and how desperate they were; activity within the commercial community, like buyouts, mergers, or broken partnerships.

Favors

- Authorization: Legal permission to conduct trade.
- Covert Assistance: Cover-ups of transactions, money laundering; gathering groups of customers.

- **Material Aid:** Free samples of their stock; cash, either drawn from operating funds, or, in the case of Finance, legitimate loans and investments.

- **Skilled Help:** Complementary bonuses to personal attempts to buy and sell, to social rolls for those impressed by wealth, and to attempts to deceive other merchants or financiers; acting as an agent when attempting to buy or sell from someone else.

- **Social Privilege:** All forms (money talks), but especially buying and selling, plus getting jobs.

- **Surveillance:** Observing who buys or sells their products.

CRIMINAL/STREET

This category covers people with mainly illegal employment or activities. Many, though not all, are Business/Commercial (pp. 25-26) and, of course, Secret (p. 37). Organized crime often overlaps with Cultural/Ethnic (below) and Fraternal (pp. 27-28), depending on why its members turned to crime and why they trust one another. In settings with working supernatural powers, Occult (pp. 33-34) may cross over.

Skills

- Skills required for their style of crime (Forced Entry, Observation, and Stealth for burglary; Intimidation for extortion; etc.).

- Common group skills (p. 23).

- Connoisseur for various illegal goods, Savoir-Faire (Mafia), and Streetwise.

- Law (Criminal).

- Criminology.

Individuals and Groups

A purse-snatcher, a noted cat burglar, a Mob lawyer, Ching Shih; a local gang, the Thieves' Guild, the Corleone family, SPECTRE.

Information

Who's been committing what crimes; good targets for nefarious activity; the politics of local organized crime; whether law enforcement is asking about things *the PC* has done.

Favors

Criminals provide a wide range of favors, but they're almost all *illegal*, which causes problems with authority and is incompatible with disadvantages like Honesty or some Codes of Honor.

- **Authorization:** Falsified permissions or licenses for a variety of things.

- **Covert Assistance:** Almost all types (except those that require specialized techniques like brainwashing).

- **Material Aid:** Illegal goods; twice the normal amount of cash for those willing to accept stolen funds and become complicit.

- **Protection and Rescue:** Bailouts or even rescue from prison; warnings of attention from law enforcement or other criminals.

- **Skilled Help:** Complementary bonuses on attempts to commit crimes or to impress criminals socially.

- **Social Privilege:** Invitations to social events through theft or corruption; buying or selling illegal goods; providing jobs to those willing to do illegal activities.

- **Surveillance:** Casing potential targets of crime.

- **Technical Assistance:** Equipment and facilities for criminal activities, or legitimate facilities if corruption could get access.

- **Transportation:** Adding someone to pre-existing smuggling routes.

- **Violence:** Either several thugs or a single expert in assassination; criminals often count as having violent lifestyles or jobs, and are thus more willing to engage in actual violence rather than just the threat of it.

*And I gotta introduce you to some people.
Some really skilled people.*

– Luis, in *Ant-Man* (2015)

CULTURAL/ETHNIC

People or organizations with close ties to a specific cultural or ethnic group all into this category. These are often Fraternal (pp. 27-28). The category frequently overlaps with Advocacy (for promoting their own issues; p. 24) and Aid (if they are persecuted or otherwise marginalized; pp. 24-25). They may cross over with Criminal/Street (above), High Society (p. 29), Low Class (pp. 30-31), Martial Arts (p. 31), Occult (pp. 33-34), Religious (pp. 36-37), or Technical/Trade (p. 38).

Skills

- History (Ethnic Group), Savoir-Faire for their culture if a specialization exists, and any language spoken by the group.

- Common group skills (p. 23).

- Occult and Religious Ritual, specialized in the subculture's distinct beliefs and practices.

- Area Knowledge, Current Affairs (Regional), and Geography, all focused on the group's homeland.

- Current Affairs (People).

Individuals and Groups

An Italian grandmother, a respected Cuban community leader, a dwarf lord, David Ben-Gurion; a Mexican family, a tribe of Romani, the Navajo, the Sparrial diaspora.

Information

The culture and history of the group; information about members, especially prominent ones; if the culture has a particular societal role it traditionally occupies, knowledge about practitioners and customers of it.

Favors

- **Authorization:** Permission to move through the group's territory; allowance to perform jobs traditionally and legally restricted to the culture.

- Covert Assistance: Gathering group members in one place.
- Material Aid: Ranging from ethnic cuisine to cultural artifacts.
- Protection, Rescue, and Warning: Offering shelter against authorities or majority who attack them, as long as *the PC* is not one of the oppressors; warning of dangers that particularly afflict the ethnicity.
- Skilled Help: Complementary bonuses on reaction and Influence rolls for members of the ethnicity, and rolls to act like one of them, plus full margin of success to eliminate cultural familiarity penalties; translations for any languages used by the group.
- Social Privilege: Attending the group's social gatherings safely; dropping names with other members of the ethnicity, or to those who respect or revere them; discounts on ethnic goods (including traditional ethnic costume and weapons); jobs in "traditional" occupations.
- Surveillance: On any member of the group or those who live near them.
- Transportation: Traditionally nomadic groups provide good cover for moving goods and people, while others just seem to find work as taxi drivers, who are good for free rides; oppressed groups might have an "underground railroad" moving people to safety.
- Violence: Some thugs for intimidation purposes, or even to do some actual violence, if the particular group is violent or has a history of fighting oppression; oppressed minorities may be willing to riot.

ENFORCEMENT/SECURITY

These Contacts enforce laws, protect property, and ensure public order. This category includes much of what **GURPS Basic Set** (p. B45) classifies as "Police" (the remainder is in Investigative, p. 30). Many such organizations are Government, while private security is Business/Commercial (pp. 25-26). Voluntary (p. 37) "vigilance committees" also occur. Investigative functions frequently overlap, and Aid (pp. 24-25) has a lot in common as well. In some societies, these groups may recruit heavily from Military (pp. 32-33) or Martial Arts (p. 31).

Skills

- Combat skills (more to restrain and subdue, though outright lethal ones are certainly in use, too) and Influence skills, particularly Intimidation and Streetwise.
- Common group skills (p. 23).
- Law (Criminal).
- Current Affairs (Headline News).
- Skills required to go where trouble is (Boating, Driving, Piloting, Riding, etc.).
- If involved in punishment or correction, skills to adjust behavior like Diplomacy, Intimidation, or Psychology (more coercive ones could have Brainwashing).

Individuals and Groups

A beat cop, the sheriff in these parts, Sergeant Sam Steele, Kimball Kinnison; an informal vigilance committee, the District Attorney's office, the Untouchables, a league of powerful superheroes.

Information

Present and future police actions, and how enforcers would *likely* react to hypotheticals; what sort of criminal activity has been making waves, and what the police know about criminals currently.

Favors

- Authorization: Permission to possess legally restricted equipment; some versions can plausibly provide permission to use lethal force; much like Aid, safety- and health-focused ones have broader permission to enter private premises.
- Covert Assistance: Cover-ups, disappearances, and other misuses of their legal power.
- Material Aid: Money or illegal goods confiscated from criminals; police equipment (organized groups can issue some very impressive gear, including low LC weapons and vehicles).
- Protection and Rescue: Bailouts from the custody of other enforcement officers; rescue from criminal forces; warning of the attentions of the enforcement group they represent.
- Social Privilege: Introductions to others connected to the legal system; name-dropping of people who have been assisted in the past by them.
- Skilled Help: Complementary bonuses when fighting or otherwise dealing with criminals; assistance convincing others that *the PC* represents legitimate authority.
- Surveillance: Watching people suspected of being criminals; reporting on activity within areas they guard.
- Technical Assistance: Access to crime labs and interrogation rooms; loans of police equipment.
- Transportation: Secret movement, by virtue of other police or security organizations not questioning colleagues.
- Violence: Squads of armed officers, giving the (apparent) backing of the law, or actually attacking criminals; national law enforcement organizations *might* provide fire support within their own nations.

*Happiness is having a large,
loving, caring, close-knit family
in another city.*

– George Burns

FRATERNAL

These Contacts are focused on socialization, whether within a family, a neighborhood, or simply their circle of friends, though some also want to meet *new* people. Sometimes overlap with Aid (if they have a substantial philanthropic component; pp. 24-25) or Hobby organizations (if they have a particular activity they focus on; pp. 29-20). Technical/Trade (p. 38) people also frequently form such groups, with traditions dating back to medieval guilds or earlier. High Society (p. 29) is another common overlap – just about any modern order of knights qualifies – as is Cultural/Ethnic (pp. 26-27), whose members often maintain solidarity this way.

Skills

- An Influence skill, usually one acceptable in polite company: Diplomacy or Savoir-Faire.
- Common group skills (p. 23).
- Carousing, Cooking, and Housekeeping.
- Current Affairs (People).
- If family focused, any other skills needed to maintain a household at the appropriate TL (Gardening in largely agricultural societies, or Computer Operation in highly automated ones).
- “Good advice” skills like Philosophy or Theology.

Individuals and Groups

A sorority sister, the leader of the local Mithraeum, the head of Skull and Bones, the Secret Master of the Rosicrucians; a private drinking club, members of a fraternity that covers several campuses, the Cult of Cybele in the Roman Empire, the Freemasons.

Information

Plans for future events or meetings; details on secret handshakes, passwords, or other identification symbols for members.

Favors

- Covert Assistance: Assembling a group of friends or family members.
- Material Aid: Items and curiosities the group has collected over the years.
- Skilled Help: Complementary bonuses for socializing with members (often doubled bonuses), and to non-skill rolls when being calm or happy would help, or to which good advice applies, such as Fright Checks or self-control rolls for disadvantages like Bad Temper or Greed.
- Social Privilege: Buying objects of interest to the members at reasonable rates; sponsoring someone for membership in the group; some individuals can hire a person for jobs that they otherwise don't qualify for.
- Technical Assistance: Use of club facilities for social events.

GOVERNMENT

These Contacts are focused on running a section of society, passing laws, and administering justice. Government Contacts frequently overlap with Aid (pp. 24-25), Enforcement/Security (p. 27), Investigative (p. 30), and Military (pp. 32-33) categories, and have associations with High Society (p. 29) organizations.

There's not a city in the world without its Loyal and Ancient and Justified and Hermetic Order of little men who think they can reap the secrets of the ancients for a couple of hours every Thursday night and don't realize what prats they look in a robe.

– Terry Pratchett, *Going Postal*

Skills

- Administration, Current Affairs (Politics), Expert Skill (Political Science), and Law.
- Common group skills (p. 23).
- Finance, Politics, and Savoir-Faire (High Society).
- “Society management” skills, depending on department, like Economics, Expert Skill (Epidemiology), Mathematics (Statistics), or Sociology.
- Other Savoir-Faire specialties, depending on the segments of society they manage: Military if they handle the army, Police for law enforcement, and so on.

Individuals and Groups

The mayor of a small town, a baron or other noble, a Cabinet Secretary, Indira Ghandi; a city council, the Althing, the Department of Energy, the Imperial Parliament.

Information

Data known to the government on any area it touches (which is a *lot* in most modern societies); what sort of programs the government is planning to implement; information about cover-ups and secrets the government *doesn't* want anyone to know.

Favors

- Governments can provide *many* favors. Their agents are under more scrutiny, though, so the threat of social or legal censure ramps up faster.
- Authorization: Virtually everything that's not specifically the private domain.
 - Covert Assistance: Cover-ups that fall under their department's jurisdiction; vanishing people; false identities and documentation (often the best available!); retrieval from various places someone shouldn't be.
 - Material Aid: Cash; official equipment and property (including parcels of land).
 - Protection and Rescue: Making imprisonment by its own agents just *go away*, without even paying bail; services devoted to protecting the public turned to someone's benefit; warnings of government scrutiny or actions in advance.
 - Skilled Help: Complementary bonuses for dealing with other government bodies, or to the specific area that the department covers.
 - Social Privilege: Arranging supply contracts; selling “government surplus”; extending government discounts; providing a government job.
 - Surveillance: Can involve legitimate authorities with the right to watch private citizens.

- Technical Assistance: Facilities or tools used by the government department.
- Transportation: Practically anywhere within an official's demesne.
- Violence: Official, state-sanctioned warriors with legal rights to fight, which can include groups of competent back-up or skilled specialists.

High Society

The “upper class,” whether that status is inherited, gained through social success, or simply randomly bestowed. These Contacts have heavy overlap with Government (pp. 28-29), though they aren't all *officially* in charge. Many groups resemble Fraternal (pp. 27-28) ones, though with membership that is more exclusive. The category also overlaps with Artistic/Entertainment (p. 25), Hobby (below), Martial Arts (p. 31), and others, depending on the sorts of activities seen as “high class.”

Skills

- Current Affairs (High Culture and People) and Savoir-Faire (High Society).
- Common group skills (p. 23).
- History and Law.
- Connoisseur (for high-status goods and art) and Current Affairs (Travel).

Individuals and Groups

Country club member, the host of popular soirées, the patriarch of a noble house, Madame de Pompadour; the local “squires,” the Jockey Club, a network of concierges of the great hotels of Europe, the residents of the Palace of Versailles (c. 1670).

Information

The various activities, interests, and scandals of the “great and good”; which fashions or activities are considered upper class or cultured; what sort of things the upper class are doing to maintain and improve their status.

Favors

High Society Contacts can provide a variety of favors. The catch is, they're under more scrutiny, so social danger is more of a concern. Also, whether from snobbery or simple failure to understand the problems of the less-privileged, they have a penalty to effective skill equal to the difference between their Status (skill 12 is Status 2, 15 is 3, 18 is 4, and 21 is 5) and the person contacting them, if that person's is lower (Social Chameleon eliminates this).

- Authorization: Permission for activities or equipment legally restricted to the upper class.
- Covert Assistance: Covering things up or disappearing people.
- Material Aid: Useful items “they just have lying around” or even family heirlooms; double the usual amount of cash.
- Skilled Help: Complementary bonuses on social interactions with other high-status people, or on impressing or intimidating those in the “lower orders” who are inclined to

respect the upper class; might apply traits like Legal Immunity by taking someone into their retinue.

- Protection and Rescue: Putting up bail or ransom; sending private security forces to the rescue; warnings of dangers from other upper-class types or of official government activity.
- Social Privilege: Practically unlimited – anything in this category can probably be managed.
- Surveillance: Sending private security to watch things; using social pull to get into places otherwise off-limits.
- Technical Assistance: Facilities for social events on an almost-unlimited basis; loans of tools and weapons from private collections, inherited from ancestors, and so forth.
- Transportation: Almost any destination, with the good name of the transporter avoiding security entanglements.
- Violence: Private security people, who can be thugs or professionals.

*I didn't spend all those years playing **Dungeons & Dragons** and not learn a little something about courage.*

– Blaine Faulkner,
in *The X-Files* #3.20

Hobby

People in this category are devoted to doing something purely for enjoyment's sake, whether collecting, appreciating art or entertainment, or recreational activities like sports or games. If they produce what they enjoy, they are Artistic/Entertainment (p. 25) as well. Selling to other hobbyists is Business/Commercial (pp. 25-26). Specific hobbies may overlap with other groups as well – a specialist in ghost-hunting TV shows would be Occult (pp. 33-34), for example, while one indulging in fights for fun would be Martial Arts (p. 31).

Hobby Contacts might seem niche, but they have a knack of coming up with something unexpectedly useful. Roll frequency of appearance at the start of an adventure. If successful, the hobby should somehow help in the course of the narrative; e.g., a prominent NPC is a hobbyist, or a clue references the hobby. Alternatively, if the heroes get stuck, the GM can remind the party about the Contact: “Your friend Sarah mentioned researching Japanese swordwork for that campaign she was running a couple years ago . . .”

Skills

- Connoisseur focused on their interest.
- Supporting skills covering extensive knowledge about the hobby's topic – Literature for a science-fiction/fantasy fan, Games (Roleplaying Games) for a tabletop nerd, and so forth.
- Common group skills (p. 23).
- Savoir-Faire specialized in the “fandom” subculture, if the hobby has developed one.

Individuals and Groups

A poodle enthusiast, an obsessive wine collector, Bobby Fischer, a Secret Master of Fandom; a local roleplaying game club, a college athletics department, the MIT Tech Model Railroad Club, the Galactic Space-Chess Federation.

Information

Significant events in the hobby's subculture; everything anyone has ever wanted to know about the hobby itself; information on practitioners' strengths and weaknesses, training routines, etc.; good bets on competitions or games; various weird facts that are only obscurely related to the hobby, but the Contact researched at some point.

Favors

- Covert Assistance: Staging gatherings of fans.
- Material Aid: Stuff from the hobby; training equipment or performance enhancers, for interests with a significant physical training component.
- Skilled Help: Complementary bonuses on socializing with similar hobbyists, performing physical feats related to a sport, and sometimes some *very* unusual tasks, based on obscure knowledge.
- Social Privilege: Introductions to or dropping names with prominent fans, even those who aren't directly engaged in the "fandom"; buying or selling hobby-related paraphernalia; admission to hobby or sporting events.
- Technical Assistance: Locations suitable for holding a gathering of fans; loans of training equipment or facilities; obscure hobbies might come through with some unusual tools.
- Transportation: Secret movement involves making someone look like part of the subculture – security tends to leave those alone when who are *too* weird but apparently harmless.
- Violence: A surprisingly wide swathe of hobbyists can be incited to riot; activities that involve performative combat (the SCA) or physical activity (football teams) can provide thugs for intimidation purposes *only*; hobbies that involve actual combat (karate) might produce some professional-class individuals as well, and be willing to indulge in actual violence, though they'll probably have an idiosyncratic approach such as treating it as a tournament match and trying to score points.

INVESTIGATIVE

These Contacts ferret out secret information, whether from foreign governments, private citizens, or criminals and other nefarious folks. This covers the elements of the "Police" group from *GURPS Basic Set* (p. B45) that Enforcement/Security (p. 27) doesn't. These are usually Government (pp. 28-29), though private investigators exist as well. In the modern day, official investigative groups targeting criminals overlap heavily with Enforcement.

Skills

- Criminology and Forensics if focused on high-level policing; Observation, Search, and Streetwise for more street-level; or Intelligence Analysis if espionage-centered.

- Common group skills (p. 23).
- Detect Lies and Interrogation.
- Other Influence skills, especially Fast-Talk and Intimidation.
- Brainwashing or Brain Hacking, if available and the organization is dark enough.

Individuals and Groups

A police detective, an information broker, a CIA analyst, Sherlock Holmes; a private investigation agency, Anonymous, Interpol, the FBI.

Information

Investigations and their targets, past and present; common investigative tactics; what makes someone stand out or go unnoticed.

You know my method. It is founded upon the observation of trifles.

– Sir Arthur Conan Doyle,
"The Boscombe
Valley Mystery"

Favors

- Authorization: Entering crime scenes or other targets of active investigations; using weapons or tools restricted to the police.
- Covert Assistance: All types, though questionable methods like brainwashing are only available to Contacts with skill 15 or higher.
- Material Aid: Cash or equipment from the evidence locker; law-enforcement gear.
- Skilled Help: Complementary bonuses on personal attempts at investigating or spying, or for improving social interactions with anyone they have dirt on.
- Protection, Rescue, and Warning: Bailouts from legitimate authorities; directing law enforcement at specific criminals; notifications that *the PC* is under suspicion.
- Surveillance: Their strong suit – can usually be directed at anyone, almost anywhere.
- Technical Assistance: Lending tools for interrogations or some questionably legal technical activities ("enhanced interrogation" or outright brainwashing).
- Violence: Some heavy types borrowed from the Enforcement side, if there's overlap, or simply some tough guys the investigator knows and who owe them a favor.

LOW CLASS

These Contacts come from the lower echelons of society (Status 0 or lower, or certain Social Stigmas). Crossover with Criminal/Street (p. 27) is common, as is Fraternal (pp. 27-28).

Cultural/Ethnic (pp. 26-27) overlaps when an ethnic group is impoverished. Advocacy (p. 24) and Aid (pp. 24-25) apply if they seek to alleviate the suffering of the poor. Hobby (pp. 29-30) groups for stereotypically lower-class pastimes (football hooligans!) are another possibility.

Skills

- Savoir-Faire (Servant), Scrounging, and Streetwise.
- Panhandling and Urban Survival, if homeless.
- Common group skills (p. 23).
- Area Knowledge and Current Affairs (People, Popular Culture, and Regional)

Individuals and Groups

The servant of a *petite bourgeoisie*, a seasoned tramp, the Queen of the Beggars, Emperor of the United States Norton I; the residents of a homeless shelter, the servants of a great household, the enslaved gladiators of Republican Rome, the Beggars' Guild of Ankh-Morpork.

Information

Almost anything that occurs on the street or in public – people tend to overlook the lower classes, and do many things in front of them; information about their higher-status employers' activities.

Favors

- Covert Assistance: A surprisingly wide range, as long as it doesn't require large resources to pull off – particularly, distractions and sabotage campaigns; there are more low-class people than anyone else, so double the size of any group assembled.
- Material Aid: Cash values are halved; objects stolen from employers or overlords are possible, but never nonhazardous.
- Protection, Rescue, and Warning: Assistance with surviving the dangers of low status and poverty; warning of threats from the street or from specific upper-class employers.
- Skilled Help: Complementary bonuses when dealing with other poor people or surviving on the streets.
- Social Privilege: Introductions to other low-status people; name-dropping to poor people or those who feel solidarity with them.
- Surveillance: Almost unlimited potential, as long as it is within public space – no one notices the poor, so they can watch without interference; watching within private spaces, as long as they are employed or otherwise authorized to be there.
- Violence: Groups of thugs to back intimidation is readily available, and lower-class people often have the violent lifestyles needed to consider actual violence a reasonable favor; riots over poor conditions or resentment of those above them are easily arranged.

MARTIAL ARTS

Martial Arts Contacts focus on pure skill at arms (or *un-armed*) beyond being effective on the battlefield (unlike Military ones, pp. 32-33) – they find it more appealing philosophically or spiritually, or just lack the discipline and

foresight. Nonetheless, there is heavy overlap between Martial Arts and Military. The category also crosses over with Hobby (pp. 29-30) and Teaching (pp. 37-38) organizations, and sometimes Religious (pp. 36-37) groups, for more esoteric arts. A style associated strongly with a particular culture may also be Cultural/Ethnic (pp. 26-27). In settings with supernatural martial arts, Contacts can overlap with Powered (p. 35) or Occult (pp. 33-34).

I'm not big on social graces

...

Oh, I've got friends in low places.

– Garth Brooks,
“Friends in Low Places”

Skills

- Combat skills and Combat Art/Sport skills.
- Savoir-Faire (Dojo).
- Common group skills (p. 23).
- Other athletic skills to practice their preferred style.
- Tactics.

Individuals and Groups

A barroom brawler, a Merry Man, a Knight Templar, Yim Wing Chun; the Warriors, a prominent kendo dojo, the 47 Ronin, the Teutonic Knights.

Information

Who's good at fighting, and what style do they use; where to find training; secret tricks and tactics of particular schools; who's been fighting lately and about what.

Favors

- Authorization: Permission to fight, if they have legal standing.
- Material Aid: Training equipment and preferred weapons.
- Protection, Rescue, and Warning: Bodyguarding; posting bail for violent offenses; warnings about being the target of other violent people.
- Skilled Help: Complementary rolls that help with combat when fighting in the Contact's style or with impressing other martial artists.
- Social Privilege: Putting you in touch with masters of the style; dropping names to impress other stylists, including those belonging to rival schools, or simply those impressed by martial prowess.
- Technical Assistance: Access to training facilities.
- Violence: Thugs, professional fighters, and highly skilled individuals are all available, and *by definition* have a violent job or lifestyle, making them willing to indulge in actual combat as well as intimidating – the more skilled they are, though, the more likely they have unusual restrictions like Codes of Honor, Disciplines of Faith, or some variety of Pacifism.

MEDICAL

These people are focused on healing, both individually and on a broader societal scale. The category overlaps heavily with Aid (pp. 24-25). In societies where health care is considered a state responsibility, Contacts cross over with Government (pp. 28-29), while in those where it's a private matter, it is either Business/Commercial (pp. 25-26) or Voluntary (p. 37). This category is often regarded as a form of Technical/Trade (p. 38). If supernatural healing is available, it may overlap with Occult (pp. 33-34) or Powered (p. 35).

*Doctors? Those Muggle nutters
that cut people up?*

– J.K. Rowling,
*Harry Potter and
the Order of the Phoenix*

Skills

- Diagnosis, Esoteric Medicine, First Aid, Pharmacy, Physician, and Surgery.
- Psychology if mental health is included, Physiology if dealing with unusual bodies, or Veterinary if *animal* health is a focus.
- Common group skills (p. 23).
- Support skills like Driving (Automobile) for an EMT, or Electronics Operation and Electronics Repair (Medical) for a lab tech.
- Current Affairs (Headline News and Science & Technology).
- Area Knowledge and Geography (Regional), specialized in the areas they care for.

Individuals and Groups

A village herbalist, a county medical examiner, the best surgeon in the country, Paracelsus; a small veterinary practice, the staff of a hospital, an order of holy healers, the Red Cross.

Information

Details on diseases or injuries they have encountered; information about patients, if doctor-patient confidentiality isn't a big concern.

Favors

- Authorization: Licensing as a physician, if that's a controlled profession; permission to use substances and tools restricted to medical specialists.
- Covert Assistance: Secretly slowing the healing process, administering various drugs or poisons, or causing deaths under the guise of "medical accidents," all only for people already in their care.
- Material Aid: Medical supplies and drugs; cybernetics, biomods, and other augmentations that require medical skills to apply, where available.

- Protection, Rescue, and Warning: Providing antidotes and vaccines; pulling someone out of dangerous situations under the aegis of "medical emergencies"; warnings about upcoming medical emergencies like plague outbreaks.

- Skilled Help: Complementary bonuses to personal rolls to heal people, administer drugs, and reaction bonuses with people in need of medical care; performing medical procedures.

- Social Privilege: Name-dropping with people who have been healed or otherwise benefited from medical assistance in the past; giving priority and discounts for healing and other medical procedures.

- Surveillance: Keeping an eye on patients.

- Technical Assistance: Access to medical equipment (which can often be used for non-medical purposes).

- Transportation: Movement to and from medical sites, or in the guise of responding to emergencies – no one stops an ambulance with its lights on! Biohazard warnings or plague quarantine markings can ensure a vehicle isn't searched even if it is stopped.

MILITARY

These Contacts are people dedicated to fighting battles and winning wars, including standing "official" armed forces, and organized paramilitary ones. They might lack the individual combat prowess of Martial Arts (p. 31), but they have discipline, organization, and strategy, which are what wins battles. They do overlap heavily with Martial Arts, though (usually serving as recruitment pools). They're often Government (pp. 28-29), and sometimes used as Enforcement/Security (p. 27). When they take up training their own people, they become Teaching (pp. 37-38). Paramilitary groups might be Criminal/Street (p. 26), if they're illegal.

Skills

- Leadership, Soldier, Strategy, and Tactics.
- Combat and support skills, depending on the branch – Hiking and Guns (Rifle) for infantry, Seamanship for naval forces, etc.
- Common group skills (p. 23), *definitely* including Administration (this may be more common than Leadership in peacetime) and Savoir-Faire (Military).

Individuals and Groups

An infantry grunt, a militia sergeant, Hua Mulan, Dwight D. Eisenhower; a mercenary band, Easy Company, the Praetorian Guard, the Department of Defense.

Information

Troop movements and battle plans; details on previous exercises and battles, and how both the top brass and troops on the ground thought engagements went.

Favors

- Authorization: Permission to possess and use military-grade (LC 2 or lower) weapons.
- Covert Assistance: Insertion into or extraction from war zones; carrying out exercises as a distraction.

- Material Aid: Diverted or “surplus” hardware.
- Protection, Rescue, and Warning: Armed rescue from a battlefield.
- Skilled Help: Complementary bonuses to win battles and lead troops, and on social rolls with military personnel.
- Social Privilege: Introductions to government officials and others who might be involved with the military; buying military supplies; invitations to social gatherings, or events where the military serves as an honor guard.
- Technical Assistance: Loans of military hardware.
- Transportation: Moving someone into, out of, or through war zones.
- Violence: Professionals or individual specialists and front-line troops count as having a violent lifestyle and hence are willing to engage in combat, though usually within the “laws of war”; full-on artillery support if in a war zone.

- Skilled Help: Complementary bonuses to improve interactions with the subjects of the news and with personal attempts to dig up current information; in some societies, “freedom of the press” may rise to the level of Legal Immunity, which they can extend to others.
- Social Privilege: Introductions to people of all sorts – reporters get around.
- Surveillance: Watching anything or anyone who might be news soon.
- Technical Assistance: Facilities and tools to create broadcasts or a newspaper or magazine.
- Transportation: Sneaking into places as part of a news crew.
- Violence: Riots sparked by releasing incendiary information to the right group.

NEWS

This category is devoted to spreading information – they know what’s going on, and they want everyone else to know it, too. If they’re doing it for profit, they’re Business/Commercial (pp. 25-26), while some states consider informing the public to be a Government (pp. 28-29) duty. Revealing the news requires finding out what is happening, so there’s heavy overlap with Investigative (p. 30) and Research (p. 37). Commercial news sources frequently do Arts/Entertainment (p. 25) as well.

Skills

- Current Affairs of all types, and Detect Lies, Interrogation, Propaganda, Research, and other skills to get the news.
- Common group skills (p. 23).
- Technical and artistic skills to present the news, such as Electronics Operation (Media and Communications), Public Speaking, or Writing.

Individuals and Groups

The neighborhood gossip, a town crier, an investigative journalist, Walter Cronkite; an informal rumor network, a city newspaper desk, the priesthood of the God of Messengers, CNN.

Information

Practically anything that’s headline news, including “deep background” and other details they can’t print; which news stories have been promoted, suppressed, or diverted; who’s snooping around and about what.

Favors

- Authorization: Press passes.
- Covert Assistance: Cover-ups (by withholding a story from publication, even late in the process).
- Protection and Rescue: Warnings about big events coming up that might affect *the PC*.



OCCULT

These Contacts focus on the supernatural – learning about it, dealing with it, and exploiting it. They double as Business/Commercial (pp. 25-26) if making money off magic, Religious (pp. 36-37) if there is a significant spiritual element, Research (p. 37) if they’re focused on exploration, or Teaching (pp. 37-38) if educating is their main interest. They can be Government (pp. 28-29) if the occult is known to exist and the state makes it official. In some settings, most Occult groups are Secret (p. 37), and even when that’s not the case, it’s still common – “occult” *means* “secret” after all!

If the supernatural exists, but is secret (or true information isn’t common), then add the extra 1 point for gaining information through unusual means to such Contacts’ base cost.

Skills

- Occultism, and if the supernatural actually exists, Expert Skill (Psionics), Ritual Magic, Thaumatology, or others that cover the mechanics (possibly including spells).
- Hidden Lore if the supernatural exists but is kept secret.
- Common group skills (p. 23).
- Influence skills for dealing with unnatural entities.
- Area Knowledge and Current Events (Regional) for any supernatural “otherworlds” that exist.
- Alchemy, Engineer (Psychotronics), or other skills to produce supernatural items.

Individuals and Groups

A lone nutcase running a ghost-hunting website, a parapsychologist, a respected wizard, the “omega-class” psychic Marvelous Woman; the crew of a spirit-hunting TV show, a Psionics Institute, the Thaumaturgy Department of the University of New Mexico, the Faerie Queen’s court.

Information

Various supernatural creatures and phenomena, such as what they are attracted to or repelled by, weaknesses, strengths, etc.; what the public is concerned about and believes regarding the supernatural.

Favors

Several of these favors are only available if the supernatural exists in the setting. These are marked with an asterisk (*).

- Authorization: Access to supernatural spaces like Faerieland*; permission to use controlled magical items*.
- Covert Assistance: Sending spirits or other supernatural beings to secretly assist someone*; staging hauntings or other phenomena.
- Material Aid: Magical items*; devices or materials to detect or ward off supernatural beings; untraceable cash from supernatural sources*.
- Protection, Rescue, and Warning: Assistance with thwarting curses, hauntings, and stalking monsters*; notification that a curse or hex is removed; warnings of future supernatural threats*.
- Skilled Help: Complementary bonuses when handling supernatural threats and socializing with non-humans*; often has traits like Spirit Empathy available and can extend their benefits to others*.
- Social Privilege: Introductions to and name-dropping with supernatural beings* or to mundanes impressed by the occult; buying or selling paranormal equipment.
- Surveillance: Magical scrying*; observing areas suspected of supernatural activity.
- Technical Assistance: A variety of supernatural tools and facilities like enchanting laboratories, psychotronic enhancers, and so forth*.
- Transportation: Movement to different planes of reality*; secret transport by supernatural (but not always *comfortable*) means*; mundane transport can be made secure by making it *appear* haunted (scaring off observers).
- Violence: Thugs, professionals, or individual specialists with actual supernatural abilities, often willing to commit actual violence since the mortal authorities can’t catch them, but vulnerable to being warded off by supernatural means*.

OUTDOORS

These Contacts are centered on wilderness, or at least the part of the world not roofed over. This includes extremely hostile areas such as the bottom of the ocean, the poles, and even the void of space. Associates of this type promote survival skills, guide people through wild terrain, or just work outdoors. If they help those in need, they’re Aid (pp. 24-25). If they do it for money, they’re Business/Commercial (pp. 25-26). Those who do it just for fun are also considered Hobby (pp. 29-30). Governments (pp. 28-29) create official services for these purposes. This category crosses over with Regional (p. 36) for wilderness areas.

Skills

- Survival for the environment they focus on, and movement or vehicle skills necessary to get around in it (e.g., Boating, Hiking, or Riding).
- Common group skills (p. 23).
- Fishing, Meteorology/Weather Sense, Naturalist, Navigation, and Tracking.
- Area Knowledge and Geography (Regional) covering the areas where their preferred environment appears in, and Current Affairs (Travel).
- Other Survival specialties.

Individuals and Groups

A hobbyist hiker, a hunter-gatherer tribeswoman, an Antarctic explorer, Kit Carson; a Girl Scout troop, the staff of a national park, an international volcanologist organization, the Imperial Scout Service.

Information

The best routes through wilderness areas, their hazards, and the sights worth seeing there; dangers and enemies that can be encountered in outdoor settings; details about other outdoorsmen and explorers – their routes, how they were equipped, and so on.

Favors

- Authorization: Permission to enter protected or reserved wilderness areas; certification with safety or survival gear.
- Covert Assistance: Stealthy insertion or extraction in outdoor settings.
- Material Aid: Survival supplies and camping gear; extreme environment equipment.
- Protection, Rescue, and Warning: Help with natural hazards, like search-and-rescue for those who get lost; defending someone from ravenous animals.

Brute animals are the most healthy, and they are exposed to all weather, and of men, those are healthiest who are the most exposed.

– Thomas Jefferson

- **Skilled Help:** Complementary bonuses on surviving and navigating through the relevant environment.
- **Social Privilege:** Introductions to the native inhabitants of wilderness areas; selling survival gear at a discount.
- **Technical Assistance:** Loans of tools and facilities needed to survive in their environment.
- **Transportation:** Providing routes through outdoor areas that, while longer, are less well-watched or well-guarded; movement through extreme environments that wouldn't otherwise be possible.
- **Violence:** Thugs or professional fighters who willing to engage in actual violence, but usually only against natural, non-human threats; in a cinematic game, help in the form of some dangerous animals could be available in the wilderness!

What we have here is a rare opportunity for me to cut loose – and show you just how powerful I really am.

– Superman, in
Justice League Unlimited #3.13

POWERED

These kinds of Contacts don't focus around a mundane skill. Instead, they have a particular supernatural power – one that's either natural to them, or something anyone with sufficient training can acquire without concealed methods, unlike Occult. Crosses over with a variety of other groups, depending on the methods and goals of the empowered people.

The breadth of this category depends on the variety of powers available in the setting. In campaigns with only one or two sources, a Contact has only a single skill or ability within a power, and Contact Groups cover all the abilities within a single power. Contacts encompass a whole power in settings with several different sources, while Contact Groups include all powers of a single source. (For a detailed explanation of power sources, powers, and abilities, see *Powers, Abilities, and Talents*, pp. B254-255, and *What is a Power?*, *GURPS Powers*, pp. 7-8.)

Contacts in this category qualify for the extra point for “unusual abilities,” unless powers are nearly ubiquitous in the setting.

Skills

- Either a single ability (e.g. Pyrokinesis) or a power (Fire Power, for example). If a power uses the *Skills for Everyone* rules (*GURPS Powers*, p. 162), as *GURPS Psionics* does, then use the skills for the power.
- Skills devoted to understanding the power or its source, like Expert Skill (Psionics) and Psychology (Parapsychology) for psionics.
 - Common group skills (p. 23).
 - Skills for equipment that analyzes or boosts the power, such as Electronics Operation (Psychotronics).
 - Savoir-Faire if the powered have formed a distinct subculture.

- Acting if secret identities are common, Diplomacy and Fast-Talk if “mundanes” frequently need reassuring, or Intimidation if terrorizing them is a common tactic for the empowered.
- Current Affairs (Headline News and People).

Individuals and Groups

A minor talent who can find small lost items, a “street level” superhero, the head of a corporation specializing in inducing superpowers, an immortal version of John Dee; a small circle of spiritualists, a motley collection of mutants banded together for mutual protection, a psionics institute, a league of Earth's mightiest superheroes.

Information

The personalities, proclivities, strengths, and weaknesses of other people with the power; who's been using the power and for what; data on “mundanes” who are either aiding or attacking the empowered.

Favors

Many favors depend on the exact nature of the power, and the rules governing its source. Thus, the GM has the final say on what favors are appropriate for the current campaign.

- **Authorization:** Permission to use legally restricted abilities.
- **Covert Assistance:** Stealthy insertion via movement abilities; distractions using big, flashy displays; subtle-but-broad help from things like probability control; and so on.
- **Material Aid:** Devices, drugs, and other means of augmenting or neutralizing the power; equipment that duplicates some of the common abilities, like psychotronic devices for psionics.
- **Protection, Rescue, and Warning:** Protection or rescue from anything handled by their power; protection *from* other uses of the power; warnings when other users of the power are planning to harm the PC.
- **Skilled Help:** Complementary bonuses when using the abilities in the power or with social interactions with people with the same power; using their abilities on someone's behalf, like a telepath sending a message across the solar system.
- **Social Privilege:** Introductions to and name-dropping with other possessors of the power or with “mundanes” impressed by them; selling at a discount equipment that affects the power.
- **Technical Assistance:** Providing facilities to train in abilities; granting the power to someone else, if that's possible; loans of power amplifiers or other ways to boost abilities.
- **Transportation:** Being carried across the city at super-speed; a teleporter “jumping” someone to another planet; and so on.
- **Violence:** Many powers support violent abilities, so this is a common favor. Thugs, professionals, and especially individual specialists (often the Contact themselves!) are all available and often willing to commit violence; some powers can effectively provide fire support, though barring unusual legal permissions, this counts as dangerous.

REGIONAL

These Contacts are specialists in a particular region, from neighborhoods up to nations or continents. They're often Business/Commercial (pp. 25-26), if they sell their services, or Government (pp. 28-29) if they're state-mandated. If the focus is learning about the area, they're Research (p. 37), while one that wants to primarily share what they know is News (p. 33) or Teaching (pp. 37-38). If the region is the homeland or otherwise the central area for a particular ethnic group, that's Cultural/Ethnic (pp. 26-27). Regional Contacts can cross over with other types, depending on what the area contains.

Define the area covered when buying such a Contact. Apply the "area class" modifiers from *Geographical and Temporal Scope* (p. B176) to skill rolls for information regarding places either containing or within this area. Use double the distance penalties under *Long-Distance Modifiers* (p. B241) for questions regarding regions around the Contact's area; tech level never wipes these penalties out. Penalties for time only apply to History rolls, and they only take effect for questions that fall outside the period when the area has its commonly accepted identity. When calculating the penalty, divide the number of years by 10 before looking up the value (reading *years* as *miles*) on the *Long-Distance Modifiers* table.

Example: History (New York City) only has penalties on questions before 1664, when it was renamed from New Amsterdam. A question about history 100 years before that would suffer -4 (based on 10 on the *Long-Distance Modifiers* table).

Skills

- Area Knowledge, Current Events, Geography, and History, all specialized in the region.
- Common group skills (p. 23).
- Navigation and Survival skills required to travel through and live in the area if primarily wilderness, or Urban Survival if primarily urban.
- Skills related to people and the environment, with optional specialties in the region – Psychology (New Yorkers), for example – including Connoisseur covering regional specialty products.

Individuals and Groups

An average resident, a tour guide, a scholar specializing in the region, the *genius loci* of a country; a message board devoted to local issues, London cabbies, the Tourism Board, a group of immortals bound to the region.

Information

Details of the region, including inhabitants, locales, events both current and historical, etc.

Favors

- Covert Assistance: Gathering groups of local residents.
- Protection, Rescue, and Warning: Warnings of scrutiny within the area.

- Skilled Help: Complementary skill bonuses for actions taking place largely or wholly within the relevant area.
- Surveillance: Watching anyone or anything in the *public* spaces of the region.
- Transportation: Secret transport via tours, sightseeing trips, etc., with which someone could blend in.

RELIGIOUS

This category centers on the spiritual, theological, or philosophical. These Contacts overlap with Aid (pp. 24-25) if they have a mandate to help the poor or disadvantaged, and with Occult (pp. 33-34) in many settings. Where a church has significant temporal power, the group may count as Government (pp. 28-29), and may be High Society (p. 29) if membership in the hierarchy imputes Status. Conversely, where the faith is suppressed or persecuted, they may be Low Class (pp. 30-31) or Secret (p. 37), or Cultural/Ethnic (pp. 26-27) if associated with a specific minority group.

Skills

- Religious Ritual and Theology, or Philosophy.
- Common group skills (p. 23), especially Administration in very bureaucratic faiths.
- Public Speaking, Teaching, and Writing.
- Diplomacy and Savoir-Faire, or possibly Acting, Fast-Talk, or Intimidation for less-positive evangelizing.

Individuals and Groups

A deacon, a mother superior, Joan of Arc, the Patriarch of Constantinople; a local congregation, a monastery, the Temple of Jupiter in Rome, the College of Cardinals.

Information

Who's a member of the faith, and whether they're devout; what sort of sins or transgressions have been committed lately (though not necessarily *who* has committed them, if the seal of the confession applies); rumors about supernatural phenomena with religious significance.

Favors

- Authorization: Ordination, if granted by the religion (though faith might need to be proven – or faked!).
- Covert Assistance: Assembling groups of the faithful.
- Material Aid: Religiously significant items like blessed wafers, holy water, and so on.
- Protection, Rescue, and Warning: Sanctuary, if that's recognized; exorcism, if the religion has supernatural potency; warnings of spiritual or moral threats.
- Skilled Help: Complementary bonuses when convincing co-religionists to take actions based on the church's teachings; if the faith has supernatural power, use of divinely granted abilities, if the desired outcome conform to the deity's doctrine.

*Religion
is the sigh of
the oppressed
creature, the heart
of a heartless
world, and the
soul of soulless
conditions.*

– Karl Marx

- **Social Privilege:** Introductions to actual *gods*, or their divine servitors, if the supernatural can be contacted; dropping names of holy figures to co-religionists; sales of useful blessed items for cheap.

- **Surveillance:** Watching targets for signs of sin or spiritual corruption.

- **Technical Assistance:** Using religious buildings for various rituals or social functions; providing moral and philosophical guidance.

- **Violence:** Only available if the religion permits it, but some faiths can muster a squad of tough clerics or a single expert war-priest – many religions have produced people very good at killing non-believers; inciting crowds of the faithful to riot based on violations of their religious beliefs; churches with actual supernatural power might deliver fire support in the form of a well-placed lightning bolt or other display of great power.

RESEARCH

These Contacts are primarily interested in the search for new knowledge in a field (not just information; that's Investigative, p. 30) and in cataloging existing data. This crosses over with Teaching (below) quite often. Other overlaps depend on what sort of knowledge they're searching for.

Skills

- Scientific or academic skills involved in their focus (including a variety of Expert Skills) and Research.

- Common group skills (p. 23).

- Skills to present information, like Public Speaking or Writing, and technical skills related to their focus – for example, Computer Operation and Electronics Operation (Scientific) for a modern-day scientist.

- Current Affairs (Science & Technology).

Individuals and Groups

A backyard scientist, a junior researcher at an institution, a major natural philosopher, Marie Curie; a high-school science club, a corporate research lab, the Royal Society, NASA.

Information

Detailed explanations of phenomena within their purview; various theories and hypotheses that haven't been *proven* yet, but are nonetheless promising; wild speculation that the serious scholars consider *disproven* – but that might still be right, unlikely as that seems.

Favors

- **Authorization:** Permission to enter places of academic interest, or to use controlled equipment for “research purposes.”

- **Material Aid:** Scientific equipment.

- **Skilled Help:** Complementary bonuses for doing personal experiments or when socializing with other knowledge-seekers.

- **Surveillance:** Disguised as “anthropological observation” or similar scientific excuses to snoop.

- **Technical Assistance:** Lab facilities and library access.

SECRET AND VOLUNTARY

Secret and Voluntary are “overlays” for other types of groups. In both cases, they always have another category that defines their basic goals and what sort of resources, information, and assistance they can provide.

Secret groups are those that attempt to keep at least their methods and goals, if not their very existence, concealed. They have the skills associated with the category that defines their goal. They usually have some specialization of Hidden Lore that covers their own secrets and those of their rivals or peers. They can provide whatever sort of favors their core category does, and additional covert assistance favors like cover-ups or “disappearing” people. However, favors or information that risk exposing the group are considered dangerous.

Voluntary groups are composed of people who are devoted to their basic cause because they are passionate about it, not due to the material reward; group members are typically unpaid. They offer whatever skills their defining category covers, and the same information and favors. Such Contacts *double* the time before favors count as not quick or taxing (volunteers are more willing to put in the time), but can only provide *half* as much cash or material goods (since they're usually poorly funded).

TEACHING

This category is all about educating people and passing on accumulated knowledge. *What* the Contact is teaching defines any crossovers with other categories – almost any area of endeavor has people telling the next generation how to do it. Teaching for its own sake is also common, imparting basic life skills to the young.

Skills

- Teaching.

- Common group skills (p. 23).

- If they're focused on basic education, common “life skills” like Computer Operation, Housekeeping, Savoir-Faire, etc.

- If they teach other fields, the skills needed for those (including Connoisseur for any products or goods covered), but with effective skill one step lower than normal for all purposes.

Individuals and Groups

A high-school teacher, a personal trainer, the Dean of Unseen University, the Secretary of Education; a local community college, the staff at a university's School of Education, the coaching staff for a major sports team, Oxford University.

Information

What people have been trying to learn about lately; new techniques and practices in education, including tricks to learn and memorize facts better; personal information on their students.

Favors

Many favors in this category, of course, involve providing instruction. See *Teaching*, p. 39, for special rules for Teaching as a Contact skill, and *GURPS Social Engineering: Back to School* for more extensive rules on the whole subject of education.

- Authorization: Permission to learn normally restricted subjects.
- Skilled Help: Complementary bonuses for socializing with the educated and those who value learning, including full margin of success when the assistance helps eliminate familiarity penalties, cultural familiarity penalties, and so on; advantages such as Languages and the general knowledge required to remove “ignorant” disadvantages like Social Stigma (Uneducated).
- Social Privilege: Introductions to people teaching what someone wants to learn or to the best educator for a particular style of learning; dropping the name of a teacher that former students remember fondly.
- Technical Assistance: Access to facilities and tools applicable to other categories, but used for teaching purposes – treat the Contact as one skill step lower (e.g., skill 15 becomes 12) for the quality bonus provided.

TECHNICAL/TRADE

These Contacts focus on a particular craft, profession, or technical skill. They are frequently Business/Commercial (pp. 25-26), though Hobby (pp. 29-30) is also common for people doing it for fun instead of money. Other crossovers depend on what sort of work they do.

Skills

- Skills necessary to practice their trade, or the Professional Skill for their profession.

- Connoisseur for goods they produce.
- Common group skills (p. 23).
- Related technical skills, such as Computer Operation for CAD and 3D printing for a modern craftsman, or Mathematics (Surveying) for a trade that frequently involves estimating land area and elevations.
- Current Affairs (Science & Technology) if their trade is technical.
- Merchant, even for non-commercial types, if they have to purchase large amounts of expensive supplies.

Individuals and Groups

A small-town blacksmith, a lawyer in a mid-sized firm, a guildmaster, Ada Lovelace (in a setting with analytical engines); a dental clinic, the state bar association, the Teamsters, the American Medical Association.

Information

Who practices the trade in question, and their reputations for professionalism; who has been using the services of the trade lately; issues and concerns that have been affecting tradespeople.

Favors

- Authorization: Permission to practice the trade, if it's legally controlled.
- Covert Assistance: Gathering a crowd of tradesmen.
- Material Aid: The products of their craft.
- Skilled Help: Complementary bonuses for personal efforts to practice their trade or profession or when socializing with other tradesmen; using their professional skill for the PC, like a lawyer taking a specific case.
- Technical Assistance: Lending their own tools or facilities.

SPECIAL CASES

Certain skills have special effects as a Contact's main skill. These rules also apply if one of those skills is included in a Contact! or Contact Group, unless noted otherwise.

CURRENT AFFAIRS

These people *want* to spread information! If there's breaking news covered by the Contact's specialty, the GM should roll their frequency of appearance. On a success, the associate proactively contacts the hero. Then roll the skill as normal to decide how accurate the details are. Failure means an inaccurate report, with important details left out or incorrect, though the overall shape of the story remains the same. On a critical failure, a Completely or Usually Reliable Contact leaves out or misreports a critical detail, such as failing to mention that a major traffic disaster was caused by a nerve-gas attack. Unreliable or Somewhat Reliable Contacts, on a critical failure, either maliciously lie about the most critical detail of the story (claiming the traffic accident was caused by normal bad driving and assuring the heroes that no special

protective gear is necessary, for instance), or else providing some other plausible story that totally distracts the heroes from the real issue.

Proactive connections don't count against the number of times a Contact can be reached or as questions asked.

These rules *don't* apply to Contact Groups that only have Current Affairs from common group skills (p. 23), which represent a group's awareness of relevant issues, not an active interest in disseminating information.

DESIGN SKILLS

A Contact with a design skill (Bioengineering, Computer Programming, the various specialties of Engineer, etc.) can provide new inventions, as a favor. Roll against the Contact's skill. Success with any margin means they have a variant on an existing Simple device handy, a margin of 6 or more means a totally new Simple contraption, and critical success provides an Average invention (see *New Inventions*, p. B473, for invention complexity).

These are *not* bug-free – each has one major bug and 1d/3 minor bugs, to be discovered while in use. The Contact appreciates the beta testing, though!

Someone with the “Gadeteer Friend” Unusual Background (*Gadgets for Non-Gadeteers*, p. B477) can have a Contact be the gadgeteer in question. From such an associate, any success produces a new Simple invention, a margin of 3 or 4 gives an Average device, and success by 5 or more is Complex. They still have bugs, but only 1d/3 minor ones. A critical success produces either an Average contraption with no bugs, or Complex one with only one minor bug.

The protagonist can also ask a gadgeteer for something specific. Roll the Contact’s skill, applying the normal modifiers for inventions. They have facilities to produce Simple inventions at skill 12, increasing by one complexity level for each skill step. Inventions take the normal amount time to produce, which means that unless someone is paying for their time, the favor is probably taxing and costly.

EXPERT AND PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

These both cover broad areas, but shallowly. They’re good substitutes for a Contact! or Contact Group, if the adventurer can cope with the limitations.

Expert Skills can supply information with the breadth of a Contact Group, but they can never provide practical favors, only social- and knowledge-based ones.

Example: With Expert Skill (Epidemiology), a Contact could offer information like a medical organization – details on disease outbreaks, possible cures in development, and so forth – and do favors like make introductions to other medical professionals. The Contact couldn’t provide biohazard gear, lend lab equipment, etc.

Professional Skills give access to a Contact Group’s worth of information and favors, but are limited to giving *only* knowledge and help from their own organization, never those outside it, even related groups.

Example: An associate with Professional Skill (Firefighter) could answer questions about her own department’s procedures, people, or activities. She would be stumped when asked about other departments or emergency services in general. Likewise, she might help with a rescue in her department’s region, but not anywhere else in the city.

These rules don’t apply to Contacts! or Contact Groups. Expert or Professional Skills just represent the group’s general expertise or professionalism.

RESEARCH

Research Contacts can find out nearly anything that’s been recorded, whether they’re a research librarian or the Thieves’ Guild resident smart guy. This sort of digging isn’t quick, though. *All* such requests take 1d hours. If the Contact tries again after a failure, *multiply* the time it takes by 1d. For example, a Usually Reliable research librarian would take 1d hours to handle the initial request; if they failed, they would require 1d × 1d days to try again.

Additionally, modify the skill roll based on the data’s obscurity: +5 for facts commonly known to virtually everyone, taught in high school, etc.; +0 for information commonly known within a specific field (broadly accepted theories for scientists, standard forms of analysis for literary critics, etc.); -5 for details only a specialist would know; and -10 for things actively kept secret.



TEACHING

As a favor that normally takes a week, a Contact with Teaching can train someone and up to nine friends in a single skill that falls into those covered by their category. At the end of the time, roll against the Contact’s skill. On a success, the students temporarily gain a point in the taught skill, which does *not* have to come from unspent points. This skill level lasts until the current adventure or a specific task that requires the skill is completed, whichever is longer. Potential students must describe what they need the skill for in some detail to the teacher – less-reliable Contacts thus learn about their students’ plans.

Alternatively, with cinematically good teaching, a “training montage” is possible, in which students permanently learn multiple skills. This also takes a week and requires a Teaching roll. On a success, everyone involved may use unspent points (up to the margin of success of the Teaching roll) on the skills being taught, which must all come from the Contact’s category. Skills already higher than the Contact’s effective skill can’t be raised, however.

Since both these favors take up all the Contact’s time for the training period, they are taxing favors, unless those involved hire them to do the teaching at normal rates.

Both of these rules are simplified versions of rules for teaching from *Montages* on pp. 19-20 of *GURPS Social Engineering: Back to School*. The GM who wants to add more detail to Contacts with Teaching should consult that supplement.

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