GURPS Fourth Edition

# Martial Arts

By Peter Dell'Orto and Sean Punch

Steve Jackson Games

GURPS® Fourth Edition

# MARTIAL ARTS

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# About *GURPS*

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*Bibliographies.* Many of our books have extensive bibliographies, and we're putting them online – with links to let you buy the books that interest you! Go to the book's web page and look for the "Bibliography" link.

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.

# Introduction

Say "martial arts" and most people start talking about karate, katanas, and ninja . . . or kung fu (or the old *Kung Fu* TV series) . . . or Bruce Lee. Non-Asiaphiles will share their views on such sports as boxing and fencing . . . or no-holds-barred fighting . . . or good old rasslin' ("Pro wrestling is real!"). And Europhiles will bring up *pankration* in ancient Greece, English "Masters of Defence," and the deadly truth about the rapier, pausing only to lament that Europe gets short shrift with martial-arts fans – or to recruit you as a live-steel reenactor.

*Chain Whip*

Sport vs. combat, unarmed vs. armed, movies vs. reality, Asia vs. everywhere else – the truth about the martial arts can be confusing. Who's right? The answer is "All of the above."

***GURPS Martial Arts*** examines the fighting arts of the world, or at least a good-sized sample chosen from the past three millennia. It doesn't let fiction color reality or realism stand in the way of a good story – such decisions are left to the GM. Of course, because many martial arts originated with the warriors who carved out the world's great empires, and the best-kept records are those of the Asian and European powers, there *is* an almost inevitable bias toward the fighting styles of those regions. But ***Martial Arts*** does its best to venture outside that territory; to balance the historical with the modern; to give equal time to combat, sport, and art; and, especially, to dispel myths.

The biggest myth laid to rest is that the martial arts aren't appropriate for every genre and setting – that they only belong in historical games and those based on action movies. ***Martial Arts*** definitely supports cinematic games – of the Hollywood, Hong Kong, *and* Tokyo varieties – while also presenting historically accurate styles, but it doesn't assume a genre or a setting. You can use it to give fantasy warriors the depth of knowledge and ability that spells give wizards . . . or for hand-to-hand combat in a gritty modern technothriller . . . or for futuristic swashbuckling with force swords.

*Longsword*

So grab your katana, rapier, or *iklwa* – or just bandage your knuckles. Say a prayer to Allah, scream a *kiai,* or psyche yourself up with a little shadowboxing. You won't know who's out there until the arena door opens – but with ***Martial Arts,*** you'll be ready!

## Publication History

This is the third edition of ***GURPS Martial Arts.*** It was inspired by ***GURPS Martial Arts,*** *Second Edition* (1996), which itself combined ***GURPS Martial Arts,*** *First Edition* (1990) with ***GURPS Martial Arts Adventures*** (1993). Other important ***GURPS*** *Third Edition* supplements were ***GURPS Japan,*** *Second Edition* (1999) for Japanese fighting styles and equipment; ***GURPS Low-Tech*** (2001) for weapons in general; and ***GURPS Swashbucklers,*** *Third Edition* (1999) for European swords and swordplay. The authors also wish to thank Volker Bach for access to two articles originally published in *Pyramid* magazine: "The Western Way of War" and "Vechten Unde Schirmen: European Martial Arts Before The Rapier."

The current volume is a new work, not a revision of *any* of the above – they served primarily as sources of concepts, references, and terminology, not text.

## About the Authors

Peter V. Dell'Orto started roleplaying in 1981, with ***Dungeons & Dragons,*** and has played ***GURPS*** since ***Man to Man.*** He has been active as a ***GURPS*** playtester, editor, and contributing author since 1996, and has written many ***GURPS*** articles for *Pyramid* magazine. Peter is an enthusiastic martial artist who has trained in places as varied as a McDojo, a private instructor's garage, and a hardcore gym. He has practiced Goju-ryu and Shorin-ryu Karate, T'ai Chi, Kali Silat, and Wing Chun, and has trained in at least a dozen other styles. His most recent studies have been in Kachin Bando and Kendo, and fighting amateur in Shooto. His other hobbies include fitness, reading, painting miniatures, and music. Born and raised in New Jersey, he presently lives and trains in Niigata, Japan.

Sean "Dr. Kromm" Punch set out to become a particle physicist and ended up as the ***GURPS*** Line Editor. Since 1995, he has compiled the two ***GURPS Compendium*** volumes, written ***GURPS Wizards*** and ***GURPS Undead,*** edited or revised over 20 other ***GURPS*** books, and masterminded rules for dozens more. Most recently, he created the ***GURPS Basic Set,*** *Fourth Edition* with coauthor David Pulver and wrote ***GURPS Powers*** with coauthor Phil Masters. Sean has been a fanatical gamer since 1979. His non-gaming interests include cinema, computers, and wine. He lives in Montréal, Québec with his wife, Bonnie. They have two cats, Banshee and Zephyra, and a noisy parrot, Circe.

# Chapter One
# History

*"The Temple is ancient, Kai Lian," the Grandmaster lectured. "Things remain much as they were during the Wei Dynasty."*

*Kai nodded. "Yes, sifu."*

*"The theft of the Five Tigers Jade Buddha dishonors every monk who has lived and trained here over the past 14 centuries."*

*"It does, sifu."*

*"Go to America and find the thieves."*

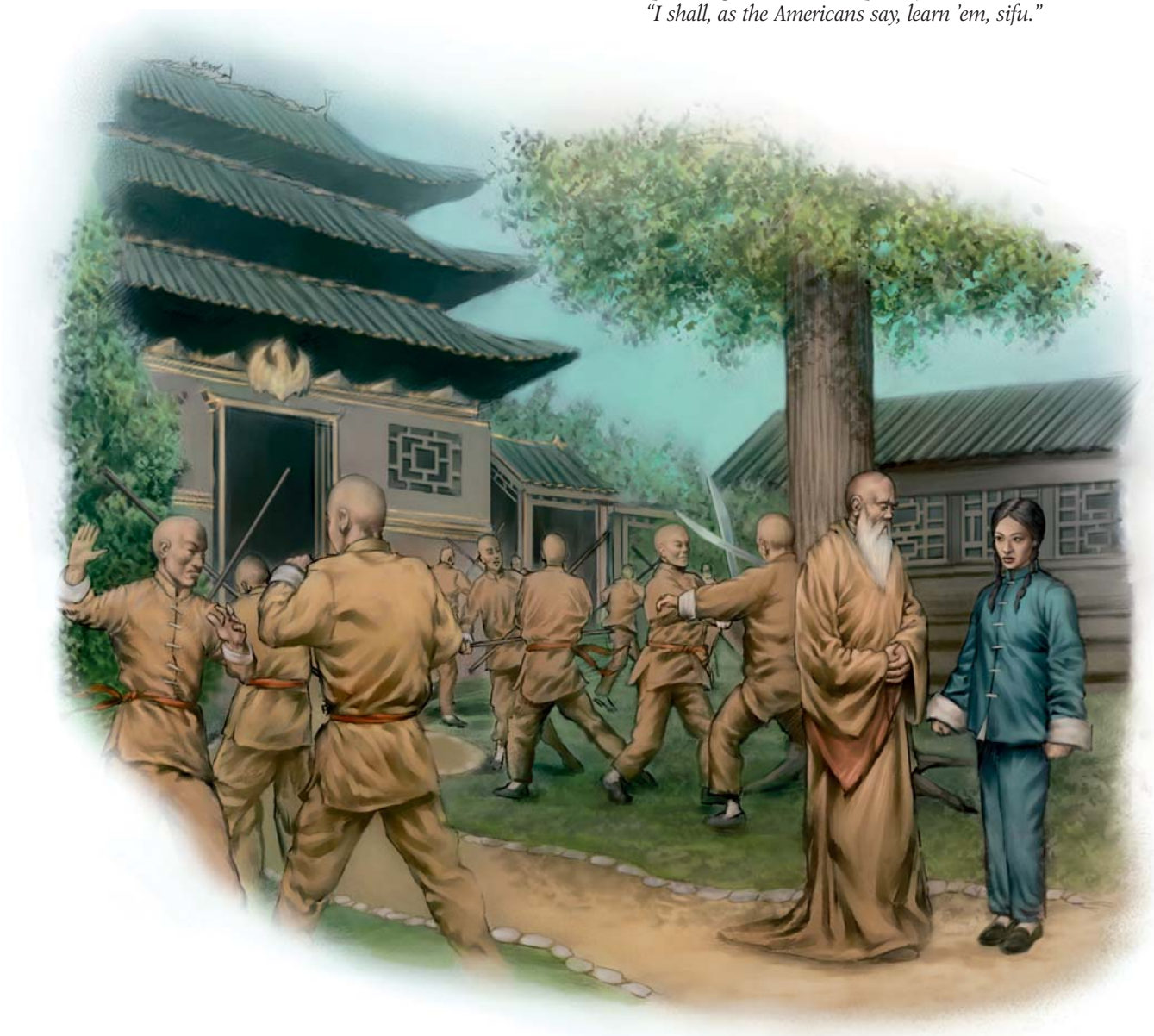
*"As sifu wishes."*

*"These devils do not respect our history because they have none of their own."*

*"Your wisdom illuminates their weakness, sifu."*

*"When you find them, deal them a blow for each dynasty that the Temple has seen fall. Even a fool should respect the Temple's long and honorable past after such a lesson."*

*"I shall, as the Americans say, learn 'em, sifu."*



The martial arts are as old as history. Ancient tomb carvings show men fighting with sticks and shields, and wrestling with holds still used in modern fighting arts. The oldest texts tell of warriors with great skill at arms, demonstrating their strength and technique.

There's no one "origin" of the martial arts – no single founding culture or style from which all systematic combat training sprung. The martial-arts world is nevertheless full of claims of antiquity, each style maintaining that it's older than the next. ***Martial Arts*** makes no attempt to settle such debates. It takes the stance that *all* cultures have their own martial-arts styles and that although they've often influenced each other, no one culture or style can truly claim to be the wellspring of all martial arts. There are only so many ways to use hands, feet, and weapons to defeat a rival, after all. (In a cinematic or mythic game, of course, all martial arts might truly have a common genesis; see *Ultimate Styles,* p. 144.)

Still, the world's many cultures have trained and continue to train in ways fascinating as much for their similarities as for their differences.

### *What Is a Martial Art?*

Broadly, a "martial art" is *any* system of physical, mental, and sometimes philosophical and spiritual training intended as preparation for combat or a combative sport, or a related form of self-improvement. The details vary widely. All such systems are "martial" in that their core physical training is at least modeled on man-to-man combat. Some go further, focusing on actual combat skills to the exclusion of sport, religion, and aesthetics. Others emphasize the "art," perhaps going so far as to be strictly noncompetitive and noncombative.

***Martial Arts*** defines a "martial art" as any systematically taught fighting style used for any purpose – combative or otherwise. Geography and ethnicity don't enter into it. Boxers, knights, samurai, African stickfighters . . . they're all martial artists. This book covers all kinds of martial arts, but emphasizes combat styles over sportive ones and sports over artistic systems. This isn't because combat styles are "real" martial arts and others aren't, but because the heroes in RPGs are more likely to be steely eyed warriors than pacifistic monks!

# Timeline

To help put everything in perspective, we'll start with a brief timeline of the martial arts and related history. Items marked with an asterisk (*) are mythical or legendary. Some contain elements of truth while some verifiable entries are colored by legend – read the entry! For more on the individual styles mentioned, see Chapter 5.

***2697 B.C. –** According to later documents, Yellow Emperor Huang Di ruled China and invented wrestling, swordsmanship, archery, and Taoism. Huang Di probably existed, but claims of his inventions are of early 20th-century origin.

***c. 2000 B.C. –** According to legend, the now *700-year-old* Yellow Emperor of China defeats a fabulous monster in a head-butting contest. Similar head-butting games continue into the modern era.

**c. 1950 B.C. –** Tomb friezes in Beni Hasan, Egypt depict the first wrestling manual, showing over 400 holds and counters.

**c. 1520 B.C. –** Wall frescos in Thera show boys boxing.

***c. 1500 B.C. –** According to the Bible, the Hebrew Jacob wrestles a spirit at the ford of Jabbok and defeats it.

***c. 1250 B.C. –** According to the legend of the Argonauts, Polydeukes (a Spartan) defeats the foreign boxer Amykos. Amykos uses brute strength while Polydeukes uses his skill to avoid Amykos' blows and pound him into submission.

***c. 1200 B.C. –** Fall of Troy. Later accounts of Greek funeral games mention boxing, wrestling, and *pankration.*

**1160 B.C. –** Egyptian tomb friezes depict wrestling and stick-fighting matches for the pharaoh's coronation.

***1123 B.C. –** Traditional date for the writing of the *I Ching.* Its three-line trigrams form the basis of Pa Kua Chuan (pp. 187-188), developed much later.

***776 B.C. –** Traditional date of the first Panhellenic games at Olympia, Greece.

**722-481 B.C. –** Spring and Autumn Period in China. According to chronicles attributed to Confucius, this period was the heyday of the *xia* (p. 8).

**628 B.C. –** First statue of an Olympic wrestling champion erected.

**544 B.C. –** First statue of an Olympic boxing champion erected.

***544 B.C. –** Buddha, himself a champion wrestler and archer, achieves enlightenment. Buddhism goes on to inform many martial-arts styles.

**536 B.C. –** First statue of an Olympic pankration champion erected.

**c. 440 B.C. –** Spartans practice the *pyrrhiche,* a war-dance involving shields and swords. The dancers executed blocks and strikes, and learned to fight in rhythm with their companions.

**348 B.C. –** Plato's *Laws* describes boxers and pankrationists wrapping their hands with padded gloves and thongs in order to strike at full force "without injury" (presumably to their hands) during practice – and using shadow-boxing and punching bags when no partner was available.

**264 B.C. –** First recorded Roman gladiatorial matches: three pairs of slaves fight to the death at a funeral.

**209 B.C. –** Emperor Qin Shi Huang of China is buried in a massive underground tomb filled with terra-cotta statues of warriors, horses, chariots, and more. Some warriors are depicted in unarmed-combat poses that match traditional kung fu postures.

**22 B.C. –** Emperor Augustus of Rome bans the use of gladiators as private bodyguards.

***141 –** Birth of Hua Duo, a Chinese physician later credited with inventing Wu Chin Hsi or "Five Animals Play," exercises based on animals' movements. Performing them supposedly strengthened the body and improved health, giving long life.

**c. 400 –** *Kama Sutra* is written. Among other things, it advises women to practice stickfighting, staff, archery, and sword in order to win the affections of men.

***530 –** The monk Bodhidharma comes to China from India and teaches the Shaolin monks exercises to strengthen them for their long meditation. This is said to be the basis of all kung fu. (Realistically, even if Bodhidharma *did* introduce these skills, combative martial arts predated his arrival by more than a millennium!)

**747 –** Traditional date of the first *sumo* match. Early matches permitted striking and many holds not used in later matches.

**778 –** Frankish knight Roland and his companions are defeated by the Moors, according to a 12th-century manuscript. This battle played an important role in the development of romantic chivalric ideals.

**780 –** Charlemagne, king of the Franks and later the first Holy Roman Emperor, grants lands to his subjects in return for oaths of loyalty, marking a crucial development in European chivalry.

**792 –** Government of Japan begins to rely more on feudal cavalry armed with bows than on conscript infantry. This leads to the rise of feudal lords – and the samurai.

**960 –** Chinese emperor T'ai Tsu sponsors a martial art known as "long boxing." The details are long lost, but it's often claimed as the origin of modern kung fu forms.

**10th century –** Japanese *kyuba no michi* or "bow and horse path" takes form. This would later become the code of *bushido*.

**Late 10th century –** Normans adopt high-backed saddles that allow the use of couched lances, as well as kite-shaped shields to protect their legs during mounted fighting.

**1066 –** Battle of Hastings. Saxon King Harold Godwinson is killed, perhaps by an arrow in the eye. The Normans conquer England, bringing with them their feudal system and martial styles.

**c. 1300 –** An unknown German author pens the manuscript later known as the "Tower Fechtbuch" (after the Tower of London, where it was kept) – the earliest surviving manual of European swordsmanship.

**1346 –** Battle of Crécy. The English slaughter the French, a victory attributed to the power and distance of the English longbow.

**1443 –** Hans Talhoffer produces his *Fechtbuch* ("Book of Fighting"), which depicts a variety of armed and unarmed fighting techniques. Its name is eventually applied to all earlier and later books of its type.

**1478 –** According to tradition, King Sho Shin of Okinawa bans the possession and use of weapons by civilians. Unarmed combat forms flourish and techniques for fighting with household tools appear. Modern historical research points to the decree being not a ban on weapons but an order to *stockpile* them.

**1521 –** An overwhelming force of Filipinos attacks Magellan's expedition on the island of Cebu. After a fierce fight, they drive off the Spaniards and kill Magellan. Modern Filipino martial artists often credit this victory to the strength of local *escrimadors*, but arrows, spears, and machetes were the weapons of the day.

**1540 –** Former soldier Ignatius of Loyola founds the Jesuits, whose exercises include fencing and meditation. Henry VIII of England incorporates the Masters of Defence of England, giving them royal patronage.

**1543 –** Portuguese merchant adventurers introduce guns into Japan. They're soon in mass production.

**1559 –** King Henry II of France dies of a lance wound received in a tournament joust, simultaneously reducing the popularity of the sport and showing that even the King took his chances with potentially lethal matches.

***1560s –** Selected Chinese soldiers are sent to the Shaolin Temple to learn unarmed and staff-fighting arts. Some scholars suggest that certain troops received training in other Chinese martial arts and even in Japanese swordsmanship.

**1568 –** Camillo Agrippa of Milan publishes his fencing manual, *Trattato di scientia d'arme* ("Treatise on the Science of Arms"). This work advocates the thrust over the slash, the use of the sword as the primary defense, and a more side-facing stance with one hand held back and high.

**1576 –** Rocco Bonetti opens a rapier school in Oxford, sparking both an immediate rivalry with local Masters of Defence and a fashionable trend toward rapier fencing.

**1578 –** Japanese warlord Oda Nobunaga organizes a major sumo tournament, or *basho*. First use of the tatami-edged clay ring (*dohyo*) and the beginning of modern sumo.

**1609 –** Japan conquers Okinawa, disarms the population, and bans unarmed fighting techniques. This drives training underground. Teachers instruct selected pupils in secret.

**1721 –** James Figg starts holding fighting exhibitions in England. Brawling, weapon play, and wrestling were already popular entertainment; Figg added women's boxing, arranged international bouts, and vigorously promoted the fights.

**1728 –** Donald McBane – soldier, pimp, gambler, and fencing master – publishes *The Expert Sword-man's Companion; or the True Art of Self-Defence*. This smallsword manual gives advice on how to use and counter dirty tricks, and deal with treacherous duelists.

**1735 –** A government army crushes the Shaolin Temple.

***1767 –** According to legend, Thai prisoner Nai Khanom Tom earns his freedom by beating several Burmese kick-boxers in succession. (Modern Thailand marks March 17 as Nai Khanom Tom Day.)

**1777 –** In China, White Lotus rebels – relying on martial arts, breathing techniques, and magical incantations to protect them from bullets – fight Manchu soldiers. The troops use guns to crush the rebels, but many kung fu practitioners continue to believe that their art can make them invulnerable to bullets.

**1827 –** Jim Bowie uses his eponymous knife to kill Norris Wright at Sandbar, Mississippi. Newspapers widely report the fight, making the bowie knife famous.

**1835 –** New Jersey outlaws prizefighting. Other states follow. Arranging prizefights becomes an exercise in bribery, secret locations, and last-minute publicity.

**1859 –** Sir Richard Francis Burton publishes his booklet on bayonet fighting. Aided by his combat experience and language skills, Burton recorded details about the many weapons and fighting arts he encountered, making him one of the first hoplologists.

**1900 –** Uyenishi Sadakazu arrives in England and begins teaching Jujutsu (pp. 166-168). One of his students, Hans Köck, goes on to introduce the art to Vienna in 1905.

**1904 –** Greco-Roman Wrestling (p. 205) becomes a modern Olympic sport.

**1920s –** Chinese immigrants open Chinese-only kung fu schools in Hawaii.

**1930s –** Judo (p. 166) clubs exist all over Europe, America, and Australia – including U.S. Army Air Force teams. Kendo (p. 175) spreads from Japan to the U.S. and Europe. Japanese students routinely receive training in both sports to "build character" and encourage physical development.

**1940s –** Allied commandos learn a stripped-down fighting style based on Eastern martial arts, taught by W.E. Fairbairn. German commandos learn an equivalent style.

**1946 –** First Karate (pp. 169-172) school on the U.S. mainland is established in Phoenix, Arizona.

**1961 –** Korean government orders the unification of all Tae Kwon Do (p. 200) schools. Three years later, TKD becomes an official Korean national sport.

**1972 –** Judo becomes an official Olympic sport.

**1990 –** Tae Kwon Do becomes an official Olympic sport.

**1993 –** In the U.S., the first Ultimate Fighting Championship pits different martial-arts stylists against one another with minimal rules, triggering the rise of modern "mixed martial arts" in the U.S. Jiu-jitsu practitioners from Brazil's Gracie family dominate.

**2005 –** City of Mostar, Bosnia unveils a statue of Bruce Lee as a symbol of peace.

# Asia

For many people, Asia and the martial arts are inseparable. Asian martial arts have a storied history stretching from antiquity to the present. Today, many if not most martial-arts schools teach styles with origins in China, Japan, Thailand, and more exotic Asian locales.

## China

Chinese martial arts have a rich history that extends back to a legendary origin almost 5,000 years ago. Tradition has it that the Yellow Emperor, Huang Di, invented the first martial arts in 2697 B.C. In 209 B.C., Emperor Qin Shi Huang was buried in grand style with a life-sized terra-cotta army, and some of the warriors were posed in stances seen in Chinese martial arts even today. A continuous lineage is difficult to trace, but it's clear that China's fighting styles have a heritage dating back at least to Qin's reign.

Most of the armed and unarmed arts of China don't seem to originate with one man, though – be he emperor or commoner. Traditions of wrestling, primitive head-butting games, and (later) systematic training in combative arts existed across China. Several periods of Chinese history are especially interesting from a martial-arts perspective.

### *Spring and Autumn Period*

The "Spring and Autumn Period" lasted from 722 to 481 B.C. During this time, China was blessed – some say plagued – with martial artists known as the *xia* (see box). The period was one of central rule, but most areas were the jurisdiction of local governors appointed by a distant bureaucracy. Some governors were just and fair; others, corrupt or cruel. Overall, the period was one of stability, and China faced no major menace from abroad. Bandits, local injustice, and corruption thrived, however, and the xia felt they must intervene.

### Xia

The *xia* were essentially Chinese knights-errant. Unlike the knights of feudal Europe, though, they were neither members of the aristocracy nor required to uphold the social order. Instead, they were wanderers who used their martial skills to maintain justice and right wrongs according to their personal philosophy.

Xia were as much like Robin Hood as like Lancelot . . . in fact, the Chinese regard Robin Hood as a xia! They weren't always popular with the bureaucracy. They could be useful, but the powerful typically saw them as one of society's plagues. The xia were often as dangerous, scruffy, and poor as the bandits and evildoers they battled, but regardless of their conduct – which at times included gambling, womanizing, and drinking – they fought for the common good. Tales of their exploits formed the basis of the *wuxia* genre of films.

In a historical game, xia PCs should take Code of Honor (Xia) (p. 53). Without it, they aren't xia – they're the ruffians and bandits the xia oppose!

### *The Shaolin Temple*

Few places are the subject of as many myths and legends as the Shaolin Temple. It's credited with being the wellspring of all martial arts. Its monks are reputed to be masters of mystical powers, yet free of worldly desires and ambitions.

The Shaolin Temple was built at the end of the 5th century A.D. There was more than one Buddhist temple in the same geographical area; legends of the Temple likely borrow from tales about all of these to some degree. All were occupied and abandoned several times.

The most famous Shaolin monk was Bodhidharma, who journeyed to the Temple from India. Tradition has it that he noticed the monks lacked the fitness needed to meditate for long periods, so he introduced martial arts to strengthen them. While these events are the legendary origin of Chinese martial arts, they actually would have post-dated many documented combative styles.

The military prowess of the Shaolin monks was first noted in 728, when a small handful of them helped win a war. A stele was erected to memorialize the staff-fighting monks. Legends spread of their ability. The Temple became a place to go and train, but spiritual development – not schooling warriors – remained its focus.

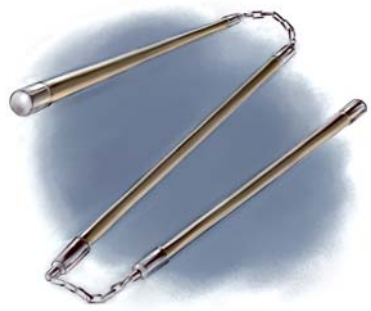
After the rise of the Manchu, the Shaolin Temple became famous as a symbol of resistance to government rule. It gave sanctuary to rebels and revolutionaries, and the Temple as a whole occasionally meddled in outside political events. This involvement was sometimes pro-government: the Temple was credited with aiding Manchu soldiers in several campaigns. In the end, playing politics led to the Temple's downfall. An army was dispatched to besiege the Temple. It fell in 1735, scattering the few survivors across China.

Legend claims that five masters survived the suppression of the Shaolin Temple. They went their separate ways, training select students met during their travels in the secrets of the Temple's martial arts. Along the way, they also founded cells of resistance to the Manchu Dynasty – the first Triads.

Monks reoccupied the Temple – and abandoned it or were driven out – several times. In 1928, it was burned. Later, the Communists came to regard it as reactionary and shut it down. The People's Republic of China eventually realized its potential as a historical attraction and rebuilt it. The modern Temple still offers training in the martial arts, and is a popular destination for tourists and martial artists alike.

## *Secret Societies*

China has a long history of secret societies. Some of these were fairly innocuous, even benign. Others were dedicated to overthrowing the Manchu and restoring the earlier dynasty. Many were also martial-arts schools (and vice-versa), and students of the school would be recruited into the secret society.



*Three-Part Staff*

In some areas, these secret societies amounted to bandits or organized criminals. In others, they became a de facto part of the local government, providing police forces, charity centers, and social gatherings. In yet others, they *were* the government!

Ironically, secret societies eventually became an ally and tool of the ruling Manchu. During the 18th and 19th centuries, the world's colonial powers – primarily European nations, but also Japan and America – were steadily carving up and trampling down China. The secret societies came to oppose the foreigners and to regard the Manchu as the lesser of two evils, if not the legitimate government.

The most famous of these societies was the I Ho Chu'an, or Righteous and Harmonious Fist, dubbed the "Boxers" by the colonial powers. They claimed that kung fu could defeat guns – that through special rituals and unblinking faith, practitioners would be immune to bullets. This wasn't a new idea; the White Lotus and the Native American Ghost Dancers also believed this. The Boxers rose up and murdered Europeans and Christian Chinese. On June 17, 1900, they besieged the hastily fortified foreign consulates in Beijing. Despite their kung fu skills and magical rituals, the boxers were unable to crack the consulates before a relief force fought its way to Beijing. Modern firepower quickly dispersed the Boxers. Shortly thereafter, the Imperial government fell.

In the chaotic post-Imperial period, secret societies such as the Triads largely degenerated into criminal gangs. Drug smuggling, gambling, extortion, and prostitution became their main sources of income. Feuds between societies over criminal territory were common. The societies' martial-arts skills became the weapons of gang warfare . . . alongside modern firearms.

### Monks and Martial Arts

Japan's warrior-monks and the monks of the Shaolin Temple are at least as famous for their fighting arts as for their faith. European monks are commonly remembered as pacifistic, but early medieval monasteries only admitted members of the nobility – many of whom took their vows after receiving martial training. By the 12th century, some dispensed altogether with the veneer of pacifism and created military orders, such as the Knights Templar. Later monks penned several *fechtbücher* and appeared in the illustrations of many more, demonstrating sword-and-shield play and wrestling moves. The Far East hardly had a monopoly on the fighting monk.

A monk might practice the martial arts for several reasons. One is that many traditions deem physical exercise vital to spiritual health: a fit body helps a monk spend hours meditating without discomfort. As well, monks sometimes had to fight to protect their monasteries from bandits, raiders, and unhappy governments that saw them as targets. And as previously noted, not every monk chose the monastic life as a youth. Former members of the warrior class often kept their martial skills sharp after taking their vows – whether due to a desire to defend the monastery, out of devotion to their art, or in anticipation of a return to the world of politics.

Eventually, the links between secret societies, martial-arts schools, and the Shaolin Temple led to all three being tied to revolutionary and antigovernment activities. The stigma remains to this day, and helps explain some of the policies of the People's Republic of China toward the martial arts.

### Northern vs. Southern Kung Fu

The Chinese often claim that Northern martial arts are "long" while Southern ones are "short" – a stereotype that isn't entirely unjustified. Many Northern styles *do* feature deep stances, lunging punches, and high kicks. Southern arts often favor narrow stances, close-in punches, and low-line kicks. Explanations offered for this include the greater height of Northerners and the cramped quarters aboard Southern houseboats.

Weapons constitute another division. Northern stylists frequently encountered military and aristocratic arms – spears, polearms, and swords – thanks to their proximity to the capital (Beijing) and the Mongolian border. Southern fighters, generally commoners, favored everyday tools: staff, knife, cleaver ("butterfly sword"), etc.

As with most style splits, adaptations to specific needs and cross-pollination between styles make the divisions more traditional than actual. Nevertheless, "North vs. South" might generate the dramatic tension that drives a cinematic or mythic campaign!

## *Communism*

The Communists were eminently aware of the historical link between the martial arts and revolutionaries – or in this case, "reactionaries." They denounced any martial art that claimed mystical powers or an ancient lineage as being "contrary to Communist ideals." Such thinking reached its peak during the Cultural Revolution, when many styles were labeled anti-Communist and their instructors deemed "counterrevolutionaries" and ruthlessly marginalized or purged.

At the same time, the Communists saw the martial arts as a source of physical fitness for the people and as a repository of cultural heritage. They adopted the term *wushu* for "acceptable" martial arts. The sports commission of the People's Republic of China went on to develop a unified style known by the same name; see *Wushu* (pp. 206-207).

Modern China downplays the internal, chi-oriented aspects of the martial arts, but these things haven't disappeared. The whole world now enjoys Chinese *wuxia* films, which feature acrobatic martial arts, improbable displays of skill, and chi abilities that defy reality. Ironically, many of these movies celebrate rugged individualists who use their mystical martial-arts skills to right wrongs or root out corruption – ideas not terribly popular with the Communist Party.

# India

Like China, India has had martial arts since antiquity, along with many myths tied to receiving and teaching them. Some historians trace Indian martial arts back to the invasion of northwestern India by Alexander the Great. This is unlikely; Alexander might have brought Pankration (pp. 188-189), but the warriors of the local princes already had a strong tradition of armed fighting and unarmed wrestling. According to myth, the *gods* handed down these arts to humans so that heroes could defeat their demonic foes!

On the teaching side, Bodhidharma supposedly passed along Indian martial arts to China; see *The Shaolin Temple* (pp. 8-9). Prior evidence of the martial arts undermines this theory, too. However, Indian religious beliefs probably contributed the concept of *prana,* which is more commonly known by its Chinese name, *chi* (see *Religion, Philosophy, and Fists,* p. 11).

Whatever the truth, the Indian martial arts are ancient. Kalaripayit (pp. 168-169) dates to the 9th century A.D. and similar arts predate that. These early styles certainly covered both unarmed combat (striking *and* grappling) and armed combat (especially bow, sword, and two-handed mace). Modern nationalists in India – like those in most places with a martial tradition – espouse the idea that practicing these historical arts makes one a better person, and push for their continued study. Hinduism continues to play a strong role, too; even today, Kalaripayit and Indian Wrestling (pp. 205-206) expect students to be good Hindus.

## *Wrestlers*

The most visible Indian martial art is wrestling (see *Indian Wrestling,* pp. 205-206), which has been a revered or at least royally patronized activity in India since ancient times. Great wrestlers were sought after for the fame they brought their patrons. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Indian wrestlers dominated the world's grappling scene, their remarkable size, skill, and endurance allowing them to defeat all comers. The greatest of these was Gama (p. 23). Their reign ended only after Greco-Roman Wrestling (p. 205) and Professional Wrestling (p. 206) eclipsed traditional freestyle wrestling.

Today, traditional Indian wrestlers train much as they did at the opening of the 20th century and in the centuries before. The training isn't based on Hinduism, but wrestlers are expected to be paragons of the faith.

## *Other Indian Martial Arts*

Martial arts of the Indian subcontinent also include the Sikh sport of *gatka* (see *Victorian Singlestick,* p. 157) and a brutal form of bare-knuckle boxing. India long regarded archery as a sport of kings and warriors; the specifics vary, but it's game-mechanically similar to Kyujutsu (pp. 179-180), although more commonly performed from a chariot than from horseback. Many arts are lost to modern knowledge, leaving behind only names and brief descriptions.

# Religion, Philosophy, and Fists

A traditional fighting art often has a philosophy that augments its martial base or even constitutes the foundation upon which it's built. For instance, the strikes, footwork, and forms of Pa Kua Chuan (pp. 187-188) are all founded on an interpretation of the *I Ching*. Stylists walk circles to stay in harmony with the Tao and practice utilizing *chi* (see below) to protect themselves and defeat foes.

Many traditional styles have strong religious content, too. The religion might be external to the art (like Christianity for European knights or Islam for those who practice Pentjak Silat, pp. 189-191); taught in conjunction with the martial art; or form its underpinning, informing how students are taught and which moves are considered "proper" even if the fighter doesn't practice the religion (e.g., Sumo, pp. 198-199, has close ties to the Shinto faith). Rarely, the style *is* the religion: Shorinjikempo is officially a religion in Japan (see *Kempo*, p. 172-173).

Only a purely combative or sportive *modern* style is likely to lack such traits. Mixed martial arts (p. 189) and Greco-Roman Wrestling (pp. 205-206) are examples of entirely sportive arts; Krav Maga (p. 183) is a wholly combative one. Styles like this don't try to make you a better person through a philosophy or set of beliefs.

*Rondel Dagger*

## Yin and Yang

Traditional Chinese beliefs describe the universe in terms of two fundamental principles: *yin* and *yang*. Yin signifies the feminine, yielding, and soft while yang represents the masculine, forceful, and hard. Together they form a harmonious, balanced state. A person who has too much yin or yang isn't in harmony with the universe and is consequently limited in potential.

The ubiquitous yin/yang symbol is a visual representation of this concept. The swirling drops of yin and yang form a circle, implying a perpetual cycle. Each color contains a spot of the other, showing that yin isn't complete without yang, and vice versa. Only the two together form a balanced whole.

## Chi, Ki, and Prana

*Chi* (also *qi*) is the Chinese character for "breath." The Japanese and Koreans use this character, too, but pronounce it *ki*. In traditional belief, chi is much more than just breath: it's an invisible force that pervades all living things. Disciplined individuals can – with proper knowledge and practice – control and manipulate it. Someone with balanced, strong chi will live long and be capable of great acts. One's chi can become unbalanced, however. Those with unbalanced chi must rebalance it or suffer ill health (in game terms, adjusting chi is a form of Esoteric Medicine, p. B192).

Proponents of traditional Chinese martial arts often claim that masters can project their chi to control students' actions, move objects . . . even kill. Such masters can also direct their chi internally to perform superhuman feats: mighty leaps, impossible lifts, running up walls, shattering objects, and so forth. In modern China, though, the concept of chi runs contrary to the state's atheistic Communist philosophy. Chi is seen as nothing more than the vitality of a body in perfect health; it's a matter of fitness, not mystical forces.

Historical Japanese styles make fewer claims about supernatural powers but still regard ki as something to cultivate and project. Ki development and the power of breathing meditation became popular in Japanese swordsmanship during the 18th century. A Japanese warrior with strong ki should have great skill and high Will – not use superhuman powers to attack foes at a distance. Modern Japanese anime hews more closely to the Chinese approach, however.

The Indian term for chi is *prana*. Prana – like chi or ki – is an invisible, subtle, yet all-pervasive force that provides life to the body. It causes respiration, keeps the heart beating, allows speech, digests food, and equalizes bodily functions. It's possible to regulate prana through breathing, using a skill called *pranayama*. Some believe that this allows superhuman feats of endurance, strength, and willpower.

The concept of "breath as life" and the importance of deep breathing aren't exclusively Asian. For instance, the great Greek physician Galen held that something could only be considered exercise if it increased respiration, and that respiration was important to health and to success in physical activities. ***Martial Arts*** refers to *any* such view of life force and the powers that derive from it as "chi," regardless of its cultural origin.

## Folk Beliefs

Many martial arts have an associated body of folk beliefs. Pentjak Silat holds that the *kris* (p. 219) can kill merely by pointing. Masters of Kalaripayit (pp. 168-169) learn magical phrases to use in emergencies. Capoeira (pp. 153-154) is sometimes linked with *Candomblé*, an African-derived folk religion. Some adherents of Chinese martial arts believed that incantations, willpower, and proper kung fu would make them invulnerable to blades and guns. The latter idea isn't uniquely Chinese – *corpo fechado* (Portuguese for "closed body") is a magic ritual, known to some Capoeira players, to become impervious to knives and bullets . . .

# Indonesian Archipelago

The Indonesian Archipelago is a chain of hundreds of islands – most of them tiny – over an area that includes Borneo, Java, Sumatra, the Malay Peninsula, and the Philippines. It has a diverse mix of cultures: the native Malay (once feared for headhunting and ritual cannibalism), plus Arab, Chinese, Dutch, English, Indian, Portuguese, and Spanish, and their many religions. Countless martial arts have emerged from this jumble – most famously Pentjak Silat (pp. 189-191) and Kuntao (pp. 178-179). It's said that at least one form of Silat exists for each island!

## *Indonesia*

During the 1940s and 1950s, Pentjak Silat grew even more prominent in Indonesia. The islands were Dutch possessions when they fell to the Japanese in World War II. Many Indonesians resisted and fought alongside the Dutch against the Japanese. After defeating the Japanese, the Indonesians turned to their fight for independence. The locals widely credited Pentjak Silat with giving them an edge over their opponents. Its role in the fighting is debatable – driving out the Japanese and the Dutch (and later defeating the Communists) depended more on the gun than on the *kris* (p. 219). Even the common claim that martial-arts training gave the fighters warrior spirit is arguable – but it's a theory to which armies worldwide subscribe, and probably the real reason why unarmed combat is taught in the age of automatic weapons and grenades!

### Ryu

*Ryu* (plural: *ryuha*) is a Japanese term for a school's collected martial-arts teachings. A ryu might be broad or extremely narrow. For example, Musashi Miyamoto's *Niten Ichi Ryu* contained one fighting style – see *Nito Ryu* (pp. 174-175). By comparison, the still-extant *Toda-ha Buko Ryu* teaches several arts: Bojutsu (p. 192), Kenjutsu (p. 173-175), Kusarigamajutsu (p. 180), Naginatajutsu (p. 186), and Sojutsu (pp. 197-198).

Ryuha have a "public" and a "private" curriculum. Outsiders are shown strictly the public techniques; only the school's students receive demonstrations of the full style. Hidden techniques, called *urawaza,* are a way to keep enemies from learning the ryu's full potential. They often deal with unusual weapons or those that work better by surprise (e.g., *shuriken* or improvised weapons). Some masters reserve urawaza for a select few students or even a single chosen successor!

In game terms, a ryu usually contains more than one style. In a Japan-based campaign, the GM might wish to assess Style Familiarity (p. 49) by ryu rather than by style. For instance, familiarity with *Toda-ha Buko Ryu* gives familiarity with its version of Kenjutsu and all of its other component styles, but not with the Kenjutsu of *Katori Shinto Ryu.* Knowledge of slight differences between your ryu and your opponent's could spell the difference between victory and death. The urawaza might be as narrow as a single skill, technique, or Style Perk . . . or as broad as an entire style. See the skills, techniques, and perks under each style's "Optional Traits" for ideas. The PCs won't necessarily have free access to these abilities!

## *Philippines*

Foreign powers have invaded the Philippines many times. The most significant of these invaders were the Spanish, who brought their language and fighting styles. The extent to which this influenced indigenous martial arts is the subject of vigorous debate. While Filipino styles use largely Spanish terminology, their techniques little resemble those of European fighting arts. The best-known local style is Escrima (pp. 155-156), a system of armed and unarmed fighting.

Filipino martial arts saw regular use in combat until relatively recent times. During the American occupation, after the Spanish-American War, the local resistance fought back using martial-arts skills. The ferocious Moros inspired the American military to beef up the service pistol from .38 to .45 caliber in order to better stop fanatical warriors. During World War II, resistance fighters against the Japanese used Escrima and Pentjak Silat alongside firearms and explosives to attack the Japanese garrison.

The Philippines have been relatively peaceful since WWII, but some regions are still infested with pirates and religious or political resistance groups. Escrima remains popular, both for settling scores and in stickfighting sporting events.

# Japan

In the popular mind, Japan is the wellspring of the martial arts. The oldest verifiable Japanese martial art is a form of combative wrestling that evolved into the sport of Sumo (pp. 198-199). This and other early arts developed locally but were influenced by the Chinese and later the Koreans. Japanese martial arts would, in turn, go on to influence the styles of both of these cultures – and the world at large.

## *The Samurai*

The samurai, or *bushi,* were Japan's warrior class. They rose to prominence during the Yamato period (c. 300-710), when the use of levied infantry gave way to warlords providing full-time mounted archers. This evolution weakened central control, leading to long periods of internecine warfare.

The appearance of the samurai marked the birth of martial-arts schools, or *ryuha.* Each *ryu* taught both armed and unarmed combat, often alongside such skills as horsemanship and strategy. A samurai was expected to learn to fight both mounted and dismounted with bow (*yumi*), sword (*tachi* and later the *katana*), spear (*yari*), polearms (*naginata* and *nagamaki*), and knife (*tanto*), and to wrestle armored and unarmored. Different schools added other weapons, including the *shuriken* (p. 223), *kusarigama* (p. 219), axe, hammer, and flail.

Initial emphasis was on mounted archery, but the samurai evolved into swordsmen as infantry tactics became more important. Armor changed to match: boxy *o-yoroi,* suitable when using and facing the yumi, gave way to suits that freed the arms for swordplay. On foot, samurai wielded spears, swords, and to a lesser extent hammers, staves, polearms, and other weapons. Firearms entered the arsenal with the arrival of the Portuguese, but like Europe's knights, the samurai absorbed the gun into their fighting methods. To bulk out their armies, they raised conscript light infantry called *ashigaru.* These troops had sparse armor (typically a helmet and inferior torso armor) and lower-grade weaponry.

With the unification of Japan and the ensuing Tokugawa Shogunate (1603-1868), Japan entered a prolonged peace. Only the Shogunate was allowed firearms. Martial-arts schools became more widespread but often more specialized – those that taught only a subset of weapons or skills (or *one* weapon) grew more common. Weapons suited to piercing armor, such as the bow and spear, were overshadowed by the sword, which was ideal for fighting unarmored foes.

With potential masters no longer becoming battlefield casualties (or indeed, needing to *prove* their skill in duels), the number of ryuha boomed. Duels were forbidden and matches between schools were discouraged. Use of *kata* as the core of skill transmission became common. This status quo inspired a backlash in favor of contact training and led to the eventual development of Kendo (p. 175).

## Ninja: Legend vs. History

Folklore portrays ninja as peasants and outcasts, scorned by the samurai. History doesn't support this. It's hard to uncover facts about such a deliberately secretive group, but reliable evidence suggests that several samurai clans were verifiably ninja or had members with ninja-like skills. Historical ninja seem to have been spies more often than assassins, secret police rather than outcasts.

### *The Chinese Connection?*

Some sources claim that the ninja learned their arts from renegade Chinese monks called the Lin Kuei, but there's little evidence of this group outside of folk tales. There's no documentation of their supposed connection to the ninja, either. However, such a link *might* exist in a cinematic campaign, in which case the Lin Kuei could be a source of opponents for PC ninja – or of masters who can train non-ninja PCs to counter the nefarious skills of NPC *shinobi.*

### *Other Ninja*

Japan's ninja – and possibly China's Lin Kuei – weren't the only ones in Asia with training in disguise, stealth, and espionage. Many other groups mixed these tactics with the martial arts to help deal with enemies.

The 7th-century Korean kingdom of Silla had a group known as the *sulsa:* commando-like warriors trained in irregular operations. Unlike ninja, it appears that the sulsa were deployed alongside other forces and used as an integrated part of the army. They were held in high esteem – much like modern special-ops troops. Like the ninja, colorful and equally unverifiable legends about their skills and prowess abound. In a cinematic campaign, any claim that's true for the ninja should also be true for the sulsa.

In Thailand, groups of monks were trained in the art of stealth, subterfuge, and survival, as well as in the martial arts. Their role is unknown, but their potential to the Siamese kings as spies, irregular troops, and scouts is obvious.

## *The Ninja*

Historically, ninja were the spies, assassins, and special agents of the warrior clans – and later the Shogunate – of Japan. They were famous for their pragmatism, using whatever methods could most efficiently accomplish the task at hand. Given the nature of *bushido* (the Japanese warrior code) and its embrace of victory at all costs, this made them quite ruthless. They were noted for their disregard of social norms, disguising themselves as monks, the opposite sex, low-caste Japanese, and so on. They studied *Ninjutsu,* the art of stealth and disguise. Included in this was the martial art Taijutsu (pp. 202-203): an unarmed combat style used to disable opponents.

The ninja probably originated with the use of specialist spying troops (called *shinobi*) by an empress in 6th-century Japan. Several clans of ninja existed, especially in the Iga-Ueno region. A modern "Ninja Festival" is held in this area – although it focuses on ninja more as depicted in folklore than as they actually were.

Like China's Shaolin monks, the ninja are awash in myth and legend. Almost every improbable martial-arts feat appears in ninja lore! They're famous as masters of disguise, weapon use, unarmed combat, acting, and technology. Modern authors have expanded on the legend; many so-called ninja tools, garments, and gadgets are actually 20th-century inventions. Notable among these is the ninja sword, or *ninja-to* (p. 221). The same authors have also wrongly designated weapons often used by samurai – such as the *shuriken* and *kusarigama* – "ninja weapons," sometimes going so far as to invent myths about samurai rejecting such armaments as dishonorable.

The ubiquitous "ninja uniform" is another modern-day creation. It looks as if it was inspired by the clothing that puppeteers and stagehands wore to blend into the darkness of a theatre. Historical ninja almost certainly disguised themselves to fit in wherever they might be. They might not have donned *any* disguise! Many were samurai in public and agents of the Emperor in private, trained to spy on subjects and root out conspiracy, or dispatched to solve special problems.

### *Okinawa*

Okinawa has always had strong ties with China, its close neighbor. Okinawan nobles sent their children to Fushin province to study literature, writing, culture, and the martial arts. Some believe that Okinawan martial arts originated in China and were brought back by returning nobles. Others claim that Okinawa had indigenous fighting systems which were influenced by Chinese styles.

In local legend, weapons were banned at several points in Okinawan history. One such instance, in the 15th century, wasn't so much a ban as a shortage. The native rulers, fearing rebellion, monopolized weapons production in order to stock their own armories. Depriving the population of weapons was a side effect – albeit one that favored those in power! The 17th-century Japanese conquerors imposed a genuine ban. The net result in both cases was that the martial arts flourished.

The Okinawans turned their tools and farm implements into weapons and developed fighting styles for using them effectively. They also honed their unarmed martial arts, or Te (pp. 169-170). The Japanese banned the practice of Te, but instructors and students survived, even thrived in secrecy. They trained to fight armed and unarmed opponents, parrying the attack and then launching a devastating counterattack with lethal intent.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Japan recognized the potential of Te as a form of military and fitness training. Japan imported instructors from Okinawa – starting with Funakoshi Gichin (p. 23) – and created the sport of *karate-do*. Karate's inventors soon changed the characters used to spell its name from "China" and "hand" to "empty" and "hand" (both pronounced "karate"), added a belt system based on the sport of Judo (p. 166), and established a formal body of instructors.

After World War II, the large U.S. military presence in Okinawa helped spread Karate in the West. Many servicemen studied karate-do in Okinawa and brought their skills home with them. Today, a wide range of martial-arts schools exist in Okinawa and many American servicemen still train while stationed there.

## Korea

Korea has a rich martial-arts history tied inextricably to that of nearby China and Japan. Many martial arts passed from China to Japan, and vice versa, by way of Korea. Prior to the 20th century, China's influence was dominant by virtue of proximity, shared history, and the regular exchange of ideas. In the 20th century, the Japanese conquest of Korea lent Korean martial arts a strong Japanese flavor that's still evident today.

### *The Hwarang*

Around 550 A.D., nobles known as the *Hwarang* ("Flowering Knights") rose to prominence as rulers, warriors, and officials in the Korean kingdom of Silla. These knights adhered to *Hwarang O Kae,* or "the Five Ethics," which stressed loyalty, filial piety, trustworthiness, valor, and justice – much like *bushido* or chivalry. They studied fighting arts, literature, administration, and philosophy. In 668, Hwarang general Kim Yu-shin completed the conquest of the region's other two significant kingdoms, Koguryo and Paekche, thereby unifying Korea.

Elite among the Hwarang were the *sulsa* ("technicians"). These warriors practiced *am ja* ("the art of shadows") and *un ship bop* ("invisibility methods"), and were used for special missions. For details, see *Other Ninja* (p. 13).

### *Modern Korea*

From 1910 to 1945, Japan occupied Korea and Japanese martial arts displaced Korean ones. When World War II ended, though, Korea asserted its proud martial heritage. Traditional styles were resurrected or came out of hiding, and new styles were formed with ancient names. Japanese influence was still great, as many Korean martial artists had training in Karate (pp. 169-172) or Jujutsu (p. 166-168).

Today, Korea is best known for Tae Kwon Do (p. 200), a sport form cobbled together from numerous punching and kicking styles. It takes its name from a much older combat art. Tae Kwon Do has become popular worldwide and is now an Olympic sport.

## Other Nations

Many other Asian countries have martial-arts traditions that extend from the distant past to the present day. Possibly the best-known of these are Burma and Thailand.

### *Burma*

Burma – now called Myanmar – is surrounded by India, China, and Thailand. Like its neighbors, Burma is home to many martial arts. The collective term for Burmese martial arts is *Thaing*. This encompasses four major subgroups: unarmed combat (*Bando*), armed combat (*Banshay*), boxing (*Lethwei*), and wrestling (*Naban*). These arts date to around the 11th century, when they played a role in local warfare.

Bando is a comprehensive system of unarmed combat. It has deep historical roots, but the Japanese invasion in 1942 helped shape its modern form – Japanese unarmed-combat systems influenced it, and guerrillas used it against the Japanese occupiers. Two major schools have emerged since then; these are quite similar in their training. For more information, see *Bando* (p. 151-152), *Banshay* (p. 176), and *Lethwei* (p. 186).

### *Thailand*

Thailand, formerly known as Siam, also has a rich martial-arts history. Unfortunately, a terrible fire during the 17th century destroyed most of its historical records, obliterating reliable accounts of the origins of Thai martial arts. The modern arts of Muay Thai (pp. 185-186) and Krabi Krabong (p. 176) can trace their origins *at least* as far back as the loss of those records; they likely go back much farther. Another style – now lost – emphasized stealth, subterfuge, and survival techniques. It was taught to a sect of monks who might have filled a ninja-like role for the Siamese kings.

Today, Muay Thai and Krabi Krabong are the most prominent Thai martial arts. Muay Thai is a form of kickboxing, world-renowned for its tough training and tougher competition. Krabi Krabong is an armed style. Originally a combat form, it's now primarily a sport.

# Europe and the Middle East

Europe and the Middle East have a martial-arts history as long and as colorful as that of Asia, although it hasn't featured as prominently in dreadful action movies. Highlights include the fighting arts of Classical Greece and Rome, the martial arts on both sides of the Crusades, the swordsmanship of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and of course the sport wrestling and mixed martial arts so popular across Europe today.

As in Asia, fighting skills also figured prominently in legend and folklore. Ancient Celtic tales – collected in the Middle Ages – told of such heroes as Cu Chulainn receiving training at swordsmanship, spear-dodging, charioteering, wrestling, breath control, and chess, and performing superhuman combat feats. Likewise, Norse myths pitted heroes and gods against supernatural foes in wrestling matches.

## Ancient Greece and Rome

Ancient Greece was home to a number of the world's earliest *verifiable* martial arts; in fact, these predate the legendary origins of many Asian styles. In the Greek city-states of the Classical age, every citizen was a soldier. Even after Greece abandoned the citizen armies of the *polis,* Greek society long held that martial skills were essential to a well-rounded upbringing for every male Hellene. For most, this meant little more than physical conditioning at the public *gymnasium* and the basics of handling the shield and spear. Dedicated practitioners went much further, however, and teachers of *hoplomachia* ("armed combat"), boxing, wrestling, and *pankration* (literally, "all powers") found no shortage of eager youths willing to take advantage of their services.

### *The Games*

The Olympic Games of ancient Greece featured three different martial-arts contests: wrestling, *pankration,* and boxing. None of the three concerned themselves with weight classes, rounds, or time limits. All were brutal contests of skill, strength, and endurance. The Romans were also fond of games and held similar contests.

Wrestling was much like modern freestyle wrestling. Victory was by submission and striking was forbidden. A match consisted of a single, untimed round. Endurance was as important as strength, since defensive tactics and stalling to exhaust one's opponent were legal. The lack of weight classes meant that heavyweights dominated the sport.

Pankration (p. 188-189) was full-contact, no-holds-barred fighting. Only eye-gouging and biting were forbidden – and the Spartans allowed even this. Many strikes common to modern Asian martial arts – chops with the hand's edge, punches with protruding knuckles, leg sweeps, etc. – saw use. One famous bout ended when a fighter aimed a stiffened finger strike (what Asian martial arts call a "spear hand") at his opponent's armpit, piercing his vital organs and killing him. Pankration matches lasted until one contestant submitted or was incapacitated. Most bouts ended with a submission from a lock or wrestling hold, although one pankrationist famously won his bouts by breaking his adversaries' fingers, and death in the ring wasn't uncommon. At least one contender won *posthumously:* he forced his rival to submit even as he was dying from a fatal blow!

### Gladiators

Through much of Roman history, gladiators provided public entertainment by fighting animals, prisoners, and each other in the arena. Most were slaves, but their ranks could include almost anyone – from the impoverished, looking to earn a living, to wealthy thrill-seekers. Because gladiators risked their lives in the arena, Roman society saw them as being above such "petty" concerns as morality and responsibility. Thus, a successful gladiator was often rich and pampered, able to indulge in his most cherished (or debauched) pleasures. It was said that all men wished to be gladiators and all women wished to be with them.

During the era of professional fighters, they or their promoters would pick their opponents from the ranks of slaves, prisoners, or (occasionally) volunteers. Most match-ups were calculated to guarantee the professional fighter a victory and the audience a good spectacle. Fights weren't to the death as a rule – at least, not between professionals. Still, some Romans found entertainment in massacres and lopsided contests where untrained fighters had to defend themselves against merciless pros.

Gladiators enjoyed treatment that would be familiar to modern professional athletes. Top schools kept a physician on staff, and masseurs, bonesetters, and coaches – all likely to be former gladiators – helped keep the fighters fit and healthy. The school's head (*lanista*) was typically politically and socially connected, and took care of the school's financial, religious, and gladiatorial affairs. The top trainer was responsible for hiring other instructors (generally former soldiers or gladiators), who might be broadly skilled or very specialized. These teachers tutored the gladiators in armed and unarmed combat, and even monitored the fighters' diet. They led their charges in daily weapons drills and exercises designed to improve strength and fitness. Legion officers sometimes regarded gladiators as useful trainers for their soldiers and had them show the troops the dirty tricks of arena combat.

The celebrated doctor Galen, whose views on medicine were long seen as infallible in later eras, was a physician to gladiators for five years early in his career. He prescribed a program of walking to improve breathing, rhythmic movements to settle the soul, and progressive weight training to build muscle.

Boxing in ancient Greece and Rome consisted solely of strikes to the head and upper body. Protective headgear existed but wasn't used in competitive bouts. Contestants wrapped their hands and wrists with leather. The original purpose of this seems to have been to protect the hand, but later wraps were twisted – some sources claim *edged* – to increase the injury from punches, and the Romans sometimes boxed wearing the *cestus* (p. 214), a studded or spiked glove. Bouts lasted until one of the fighters submitted or was incapacitated. Disfigurement was common: legendary Greek boxers withstood enormous punishment, and period texts depict cauliflower ears, broken noses, and marred faces.

Men competing in both boxing and pankration would occasionally request that the pankration events be held first – a reversal of the usual order. Boxing was held to be so brutal that competitors worried about being too injured to compete in pankration, even if they won! A pankration bout could end with a submission hold or choke, but a boxing match ended only when one boxer was too injured to continue.

## Medieval Europe

Medieval knights fought with a pragmatic ruthlessness that seems quite at odds with modern beliefs about chivalry. Period accounts tell of knights killing each other's horses, grappling foes and bearing them down to be stabbed to death, and dealing vicious shield bashes, chokes with sword blades, and "murder strokes" using the handle of a reversed sword. Knights *did* have a concept of honor . . . but in duels and warfare, victory mattered at least as much as how one fought.

Modern myth also tends to portray knights as brutal sluggers with little technique. A perusal of written manuals of period martial arts – collectively known as *fechtbücher* – puts the lie to this. The design of knightly weapons was rugged in order to overcome heavy armor, but the techniques for using them were quite refined. These martial arts weren't restricted by borders or culture. Germanic and French knights bowed to different kings but shared nearly identical weapons and fighting styles.

On the unarmed front, complex striking arts such as *pankration* and boxing fell out of use when the infrastructure for martial sports disintegrated with the Roman Empire. The prevalence of heavy armor made wrestling *much* more useful, though, and every warrior learned at least basic grappling. The heavier the armor, the more important this became – penetrating metal armor is difficult, but sliding a knife through your foe's visor is easy once you have him prone and pinned.

As the Middle Ages wore on, both armor and the weapons needed to defeat it became heavier. Early knights wore mail, relied on shields to block, and fought from horseback with spears. With the development of high-backed saddles, it became possible to charge with the lance "couched," or held under the arm. Armor improved, making it possible to discard the shield and fight with two-handed weapons better able to overcome the armor. The period saw a steady development of weapons, armor, and techniques for using them.

Warfare wasn't the only forum for the martial arts. Mock battles and tournaments – melees and jousts – kept knights' skills sharp. They also served as a way for a knight to spread his reputation and display his expertise. Trial by combat was another fixture of the era. An accused criminal could claim this right and battle his accuser (either could use a willing champion), with the "court" finding in favor of the victor.

Noblemen weren't the only warriors of the Dark Ages and Middle Ages. Commoners such as England's yeomen and Masters of Defence, Asiatic horsemen such as the Mongols, and the feared Vikings of Scandinavia all practiced martial arts. For much of the period, though, the premier armed martial-arts styles in Europe were those of the knights.

### Yeomen Archers

Across most of medieval Europe, farmers were serfs. In England, though, some farmers – called *yeomen* – actually owned small pieces of land. While still peasants, yeomen were free by the standards of their time. In return for their freedom, the law required them to train from youth with the longbow and other weapons. The government encouraged archery with contests, tournaments, and laws. It sometimes went so far as to ban cockfighting, dice, football, and other distractions in order to encourage archery practice!

The finest longbows were made of a single piece of yew, carved with both core and edge wood to give a natural composite effect. Yeomen armed with such weapons were credited with hitting massed troops at nearly 400 yards. The usual length of a shot against an *individual* target would have been markedly shorter.

The legend of Robin Hood owes much to the real accomplishments of English longbowmen. Robin Hood was reputed to be the greatest archer in a company of seasoned archers. His most famous feat of skill was splitting a rival's arrow in an archery tournament. (Even ***GURPS*** is colored by his exploits: its rules let archers make individual shots at distances that would have challenged massed bowmen shooting at an entire army!)

Robin Hood was also a master of another celebrated English weapon: the quarterstaff. He used his staff to spar with and defeat his eventual companion, Little John – a giant of a man. Like the longbow, the staff was inexpensive and available while swords were costly and spears were inconvenient for daily use. The iron-shod staff was as much a walking aid as a weapon, and the English masters praised its value in self-defense against all foes.

Robin Hood's legend curiously parallels that of Japanese hero Yoshitsune. Both were rebels against authority, skilled archers, and leaders of men, and both had a huge, polearm-using companion. In a mythical campaign, they could be rivals – or allies against an even greater foe.

# Masters of Defence

In England at the end of the Middle Ages and beginning of the Renaissance, certain influential masters of personal combat became famous as the "Masters of Defence." Of common birth, they apprenticed themselves to skilled martial artists and studied all of the period's military and civilian weapons, truly earning the title "master." At times they even had a royal charter for their activities. They acted as fight instructors for noble and commoner alike, and were occasionally stand-ins during legal duels – a practice sometimes legal, often not.

During the Elizabethan period, instructors from overseas began to challenge the Masters indirectly. In particular, Italian rapier masters taught their skills to the wealthy and noble. Masters of Defence such as George Silver issued challenges to these newcomers and wrote pamphlets and even books denigrating their teachings, but their rivals dismissed them as social inferiors – the Masters weren't nobility. The fencing masters likely saw no *reason* to accept: defeating a commoner in a no-holds-barred competition would do little to impress patrons and students, and failure (or less than total success) could mean ignominy or even death.

Regardless of the relative efficacy of the competing styles, it was fashion that undid the Masters' dominance over English martial arts. Broadswords, polearms, and staves were not stylish accessories, while rapiers became such. Much as in Japan during the Tokugawa era, the decline of real combat tests meant that instructors of questionable skill – making dubious claims – could flourish and surpass those with true ability.

For more on the Masters' skills, see *Masters of Defence Weapon Training* (p. 182).

# Fechtbücher and Traveling Masters

Two facets of Renaissance martial arts merit special discussion: *fechtbücher* and traveling masters.

## *Fechtbücher*

The *fechtbuch* (plural: *fechtbücher*), or "book of fighting," represents an important historical resource. Masters would pen fechtbücher to illustrate their techniques – mainly armed but also unarmed striking and grappling (often using holds that modern readers would consider "low" or "dirty"). These works varied greatly in quality. Some were poorly illustrated, badly written pamphlets full of common techniques. Others had excellent art – in one case, by Albrecht Dürer – and clear text. Many fechtbücher survive to this day, giving the modern student a glimpse of the incredible depth of the martial-arts training of an earlier time.

The purpose of fechtbücher *wasn't* self-instruction. Students were supposed to refer to them while training under the master. As a result, many fechtbücher and their instructions were intentionally unclear. A notable example was the 14th-century fechtbuch of Johannes Liechtenauer. It had excellent illustrations but deliberately cryptic instructions. Liechtenauer gave only his students the key to his mnemonic devices. Armed with this, they could profit from the book while others would be stymied. It wasn't until the 15th century that a student, Sigmund Ringeck, broke ranks and explained Liechtenauer's writings.

Books of this type weren't unique to Germany or even Europe. Virtually every culture had some form of written, inscribed, or painted combat manual. Some of these were straightforward texts on fencing, others were books of military strategy reputed to contain hidden lessons in swordplay (or vice versa), and yet others were scrolls that illustrated fighting techniques but gave only cryptic descriptions. Perhaps the earliest "fechtbuch" was Egyptian: a set of tomb paintings that depicted wrestling moves that are still in common use.

## *Traveling Masters*

Germany's martial-arts masters were similar to England's Masters of Defence: commoners who trained until they attained master status through grueling public duels. Like the Masters of Defence, they knew how to put on a show. Groups of masters – accompanied by their journeymen, apprentices, and inevitable camp-followers – would travel around Germany demonstrating their skills at festivals. They would conduct tests for mastery, stage mock combats to show off their proficiency, and collect money from spectators. In a historical campaign, such an eclectic group of combat-trained wanderers would be an ideal party of PCs!

# Renaissance Europe

By the time of the Renaissance, heavy armor, guns, and masses of disciplined infantry were the norm in warfare. On the battlefield, arms designed for use by ranked troops overshadowed those suited to individual combat. In the civilian world, though, there was a growing need for weapons and training useful in street skirmishes and duels.

The first important civilian weapon of the period was the rapier. Its long blade was designed to let the wielder hit with a thrust before an opponent with a shorter, broader sword of comparable weight – like a military sword – could attack. Early rapiers could cut *and* thrust, but as time went on, tactics favored the thrust so much that later blades were rarely edged. Rapiers became the center of an arms race, with longer and longer rapiers emerging to increase the wielder's chances of scoring the first strike. These were unwieldy against other weapons but their length gave them an edge in a rapier vs. rapier fight – very useful when dueling!

The rapier's length made parrying difficult. Most rapierists relied on the off hand to parry, using a cloak, main-gauche, or mail glove. Some preferred a second rapier – not for its parrying ability but for the increased odds of defeating the foe before *needing* to parry! Fencers in this period sought the *botte segrete* (p. 86), or the secret unstoppable attack. This might have been the lunge – an extended thrust that took advantage of the rapier's length and thrusting ability.

Long blades eventually went out of fashion as masters discovered that shorter ones had a defensive advantage. This led to a cycle of new tactics that inspired even shorter weapons and necessitated further refinements in technique. The smallsword was the end result: a short, light, stiff blade designed solely for thrusting and equally useful for offense and defense. The quest for the *parata universale* – the Universal Parry, which could stop even the *botte segrete* – replaced the search for the unstoppable attack. For more on such "ultimate" attacks and defenses, see *Secret Techniques* (p. 86).

# Modern Europe

Modern Europe owes much of its martial-arts heritage to an explosion of interest in combative sports – and later, Asian fighting styles – that began during Victorian times.

## *Victorian Europe*

The Victorian period saw a great resurgence in sportive martial arts across Europe. Polite society still regarded boxing and wrestling as brutal sports of the lower classes – and indeed these activities were *extremely* popular with those classes. This "lower-class" nature didn't stop the posh from sponsoring fighters, attending fights, and wagering recklessly large amounts of money, though; it simply kept them from participating.

As for armed martial arts, the period witnessed the development of sport quarterstaff forms (using a far shorter staff than the medieval version) and the widespread practice of singlestick (stickfighting based on broadsword combat). With dueling outlawed and combative fencing no longer acceptable to settle scores, sport fencing began to surge in popularity. New weapons and rules appeared to make fencing safer, shifting the emphasis to technique and sportsmanship.

This renaissance had some unfortunate consequences for martial-arts history, though. The writings of Victorian historians and fencing enthusiasts alike painted fencing as the pinnacle of swordfighting evolution. This myopic viewpoint helped generate the myth that knights were unskilled thugs when compared to skilled, elegant fencers – an error that would poison histories of the European martial arts until the present day.

## *20th-Century Europe*

Asian martial arts made their European debut near the close of the 19th century. In the 1890s, several Japanese teamed up with self-promoter and showman E.W. Barton-Wright to teach Jujutsu in England. For Barton-Wright, this was more an exercise in money-making than in teaching a martial art – but it wasn't long before Jujutsu and Judo came to stay for real. The first European Jujutsu instructor opened a school in Austria in 1904. By the 1930s, Judo had students across Europe. Even the Hitler Youth trained in Judo; the Nazis saw it as a masculine sport, worthy of future warriors.

Sport fencing, boxing, and wrestling remained popular, too. Most people saw these activities as excellent training in fitness, proper conduct, and gentlemanly behavior – and as suitable competition between nations. Boxing in particular surged in popularity as the Marquess of Queensbury rules removed some of its stigma without dulling its brutal edge.

During World War II, commandos trained in military martial arts. They needed skills to eliminate sentries and to fight using improvised weapons – or no weapons – when the ammunition ran out or circumstances made firearms undesirable. The knife, in particular, was popular.

After WWII, Asian martial arts continued to flourish. European judoka helped make Judo a competitive Olympic sport, and influenced its rules. Meanwhile, other Asian arts – such as Karate (pp. 169-172), and Pentjak Silat (pp. 189-191) brought back from Indonesia by the Dutch – became more popular. The French kickboxing style of Savate (pp. 193-194), its practitioners decimated by the World Wars, became more sportive in form.

In the late 20th century, two developments exerted a major influence on European martial arts. The first was an increase in academic interest in the martial arts of medieval and Renaissance Europe, accompanied by the appearance of hobbyists who wished to replicate those arts. The second was the rapid spread of mixed martial arts (p. 189). Today's Europe is a cultural swirl of martial arts, with traditional armed and unarmed European arts, Asian imports, and the increasingly popular mixed martial arts among its mosaic of styles.

# Beyond Western Europe

Many Eastern European and Middle Eastern nations had or have their own martial arts. These styles receive less detail here only because they are for the most part either defunct or extremely new.

## *Middle East*

Islamic warriors fighting against the Crusaders developed Furusiyya (pp. 159-161): a style of mounted combat that combined horse archery with close-in tactics. Its main practitioners were the Mamluks, who first served as soldiers in Egypt and then ruled there.

Wrestling has long been popular in Iranian and Turkish culture. Legendary heroes wrestled demons. Rulers kept famous wrestlers at their courts, and sometimes wrestled themselves. A Turkish wrestling tournament, Kirkpinar, is said to be the oldest continuously running sporting competition in the world, having been held since c. 1362. Both Turkey and Iran regularly send successful teams of wrestlers to international competitions.

Today, the Arab states sponsor many sporting events. One of the biggest grappling tournaments in the world is that of the Abu Dhabi Combat Club (ADCC), which attracts competitors from all over the globe. This is no longer held exclusively in the Middle East, but grappling championships remain popular there. In addition, most modern Arab states train their special-operations forces in the martial arts.

## *Israel*

Present-day Israel is an embattled state, surrounded by potential foes and in internal turmoil owing to deep ethnic and religious divides. This motivates many people to study a martial art for protection. A popular modern style native to Israel is Krav Maga (p. 183), developed by Imi Sde-Or (born Imi Lichtenfeld) on the basis of his experience fighting Nazi toughs on the streets of Prague in the 1930s. Krav Maga stresses pragmatic self-defense tactics – especially alertness, fight-avoidance, and improvised weapons – and learning simple techniques thoroughly.

## *Russia*

The Russian Empire covered a vast territory and engulfed many cultures. Wrestling was popular throughout the region. It came in several varieties, including belt wrestling (each contender wore a thick belt and tried to grab his opponent's belt and throw him), shirt wrestling, and free wrestling.

In the 1930s, when Soviet culture was on the rise, Anatolij A. Kharlampiev, Viktor A. Spiridonov, and Vasilij S. Oschepkov synthesized Sambo (p. 185) from many indigenous wrestling styles and Judo. Sambo went on to become the official martial art of the USSR. Aside from Sambo, only Judo – as an Olympic sport – enjoyed official sanction. Sambo practitioners have often done well in Judo and mixed martial arts competitions. Other martial arts have made inroads in the post-Soviet era, but Sambo's roots are firmly established and it remains Russia's signature fighting style.

# AFRICA

Few people regard Africa as a hotbed of martial arts, but in fact the earliest verifiable evidence of the martial arts comes from ancient Egypt. Other African fighting styles are poorly known outside their homelands. It's clear that fierce warriors wielded spears and sticks with great skill throughout African history, however.

## *Ancient Egypt*

Paintings on the walls of a tomb at Beni Hasan, dating to 1950 B.C. or even earlier, constitute the oldest known record of the martial arts. The frescoes depict wrestlers using holds that modern grapplers would recognize. These might have been for teaching – an early wrestling "manual" – or for artistic purposes.

Friezes on the walls of other Egyptian tombs show men and boys fighting with sticks before the pharaoh. It isn't clear whether this depicts a sport, training for war, or an exhibition for the pharaoh's entertainment. What *is* clear is that the Egyptians had their own martial arts, and that training and practice were a spectator sport for kings.

In a cinematic campaign, adventurers might plumb the depths of a musty Egyptian tomb searching not for funerary treasures but for the lost teachings of an ancient martial-arts master!

## *The Zulus*

In the 19th century, the Zulus were pastoral herders living in southern Africa. They built an empire after the rise of a new king, Shaka. Shaka organized his warriors into disciplined regiments. His army developed a new method of spear fighting that used not only the traditional javelin but also a short spear for stabbing. Decades later, the Zulus dealt Britain a catastrophic defeat at the battle of Isandlwana. Subsequent battles proved disastrous for the Zulus, but their victory at Isandlwana cemented their reputation as fierce opponents.

## *Stickfighting*

Many African tribes retain a tradition of stickfighting as both a sport and (until recently) a combative art. In some cases, fighters wear padding and wield whippy sticks; in others, they wear no protection and use heavy knobbed clubs. There are both one-stick and two-stick styles; two-stick styles use the off-hand stick for parrying. Some traditions eschew parrying and simply alternate strikes until one fighter gives in from the pain. Defending in such a contest is considered cowardly and weak! Whether African stickfighting traditions stretch back to those of ancient Egypt or are independent local developments isn't known.

# The New World

Asian and European martial arts made the long trek to the New World along with immigrants from their homelands – often acquiring a distinctive flavor along the way. You can find martial artists from Canada to Argentina, but Brazil and the U.S. are home to the most active communities.

## Brazil

Brazil, the largest nation in South America, is also the point of origin of two widely known martial arts: Capoeira (pp. 153-154) and Brazilian Jiu-jitsu (pp. 167-168). Both can trace their origins to Old World styles.

Capoeira developed from a fusion of styles, most from Africa but possibly including Savate (pp. 193-194). Largely practiced as a sport outside of Brazil, it originated as a combative form practiced by slaves. Even in modern times, streetfighters use it to settle differences.

Brazilian Jiu-jitsu originated with the Gracie family. They learned Jujutsu (pp. 166-168) and Judo (p. 166) from a Japanese immigrant and then applied their own experience to those teachings. The Gracies tested and refined their art in numerous no-holds-barred matches, called *vale tudo* ("anything goes") in Portuguese. Vale tudo makes an excellent venue for a campaign centered on competitive martial artists; see *The Contender* (p. 250).

## United States

The earliest martial arts in the U.S. were boxing and wrestling, which have origins that long predate the colonization of America. During the 19th century, these were popular pastimes among the poorer strata of society. Lawmakers often outlawed prizefights, but this simply drove them underground or led to bizarre legal dodges such as paying an "appearance fee" at a bar, charging customers a "membership fee" for a one-night-only private club, or staging bouts on barges or at unadvertised locations along a train route. Today, American boxing and wrestling have a dedicated following in the U.S. and worldwide.

Few martial arts claim the U.S. as their point of origin, and even those that do – for instance, Hawaii's Kajukenbo (p. 168) and California's Jeet Kune Do (pp. 164-165) – can trace their development from Asian arts. Contact with America has changed many martial arts, though. The present-day U.S. has an eclectic collection of martial arts; look hard enough and you can find almost *any* style within its borders. Asian styles and mixed martial arts are especially common. This makes the U.S. a hotbed of martial-arts development.

The wealth of the modern U.S. means that even the smallest town can support one (or more!) martial-arts schools. It's common for parents to send little Taylor and Ashley off to the local *dojo* to get fit, learn confidence and self-defense, and "get better grades." Today, training in the martial arts is no more unusual than playing baseball or football.

The typical American school emphasizes tournament fighting, forms, and kata. Some academies hold an unusually large number of promotional exams – almost *everyone* gets a black belt after a predictable time period. Derogatory terms for such a business include "belt mill" and "McDojo." Other schools work on a tiered system, training most students in the art form but teaching a select few the entire combat style, either to preserve the tradition or to produce competitors for no-holds-barred bouts.

### Women in the Martial Arts

Nature, nurture, or a combination of the two . . . whatever the reason, it's a historical fact that most of the combatants in humanity's wars have been male. Thus, it isn't especially surprising that men have dominated the martial arts since their inception. This certainly doesn't mean that women don't practice or teach martial arts!

Women have been martial artists for much of recorded history. Greek legends described the Amazons, reputed to be unrivalled as archers. Early tales of Celtic hero Cu Chulainn told of a female warrior. Both no doubt had some basis in fact. Muslim traveler Ibn Battuta wrote of women warriors in Southeast Asia. The naginata is famous as the weapon of Japanese noblewomen – both for fitness and defense in wartime – and in the 1930s was taught to schoolgirls.

Several martial arts – notably Wing Chun (pp. 203-204) and one form of Pentjak Silat (pp. 189-191) – claim a female founder in their legendary history. Tradition has it that Wing Chun is named after the woman who founded it, and that the Silat style was invented by a woman who observed two animals fighting. Neither origin is verifiable, but these styles certainly attract numerous female martial artists. Silat, especially, prides itself on female participation and has many women students and masters. Kalaripayit (pp. 168-169), too, has legends of female practitioners and instructors. Again, it's difficult to verify these but they clearly show that the art isn't solely for men.

Many modern schools are open only to women or hold women-only classes. This is somewhat controversial. For artistic styles, it's of little consequence. For combat or self-defense styles that might be used against men, however, it's a valid argument that practicing only against women leaves out an essential element of training: employing techniques against opponents of the type you're likely to face in an actual conflict. Suggesting that a women-only school produces poor or incomplete martial artists is a good way to start a fight, though!

In the sports world, competitive Judo has a women's division that features many competitors at the Olympic level. Mixed martial arts and professional boxing and wrestling have women's tournaments, too, and participation levels have grown steadily. In Japan, local Kyudo (p. 181) and Kendo (p. 175) schools and clubs are co-ed, and women and men sometimes compete head-to-head.

# Some Famous Martial Artists

Below are short biographies of some important figures from martial-arts history, arranged chronologically to give a sense of the evolution of the fighting arts.

## *Milo of Croton (6th Century B.C.)*

Milo was born in the 6th century B.C. in the Greek colony of Croton, in southern Italy. A prodigiously strong wrestler, he rose to prominence at the 60th Olympic Games (540 B.C.). He won at least *32* major wrestling contests – including six Olympic crowns – over a career spanning more than two decades. His attempt to win a seventh crown failed when his younger opponent (also from Croton) made it a contest of endurance and refused to close with the more powerful Milo. Despite his age, his rivals still feared his massive strength!

Milo was famously strong and large – it's said that he carried a bull calf around on his shoulders daily to strengthen his muscles, finally eating the bull when it reached adulthood four years later. Due to this feat, some credit him as the father of progressive resistance exercise. Milo also performed feats of strength and balance. He challenged people to move him from a precarious perch atop an oiled discus, or to bend his fingers or arm, and could burst a band stretched around his temples by inhaling. Legend has it that Milo himself carried and placed the great bronze statue dedicated to his Olympic victories.

Detractors made Milo out to be a buffoon, a glutton, and a man who thought with his muscles. He wasn't simply a wrestler, though – some sources claim that he was a disciple of Pythagoras (and once saved his life by holding up a falling roof), a man of political influence, and a brave warrior respected by his fellow soldiers. According to legend, he died of hubris: finding a partially split tree stump held open by wedges, he tried to tear it apart with sheer strength but the wedges fell out and his hands were trapped. Helpless, he was devoured by wild beasts. This legendary death features prominently in the many statues and paintings immortalizing Milo.

## *Theogenes of Thasos (5th Century B.C.)*

Born on the island of Thasos in the early 5th century B.C., Theogenes was a boxer and pankrationist of legendary skill. A full-time athlete, he traveled widely to compete. He purportedly won between 1,200 and 1,400 bouts. These included 23 major contests, among them two Olympic crowns – one in boxing, one in pankration – and a "double victory" at Isthmus (winning boxing *and* pankration in the same day). Some sources claim that he killed or disabled most of those he defeated. True or not, his rivals feared him: he won at least one boxing competition because his opponents chose to withdraw rather than face him!

Theogenes was famously arrogant, aggressive, and concerned with personal honor. He named his son "Diolympos" – "twice at Olympia" – to commemorate his Olympic victories. He also had a reputation for competitiveness, and once challenged his guests at a feast to fight him at pankration. Trying to win at both boxing and pankration at the 75th Olympiad, Theogenes lost to his best opponent only after exhausting him and forcing him to default in the final match. The judges felt that Theogenes had deliberately undercut his opponent's chances for victory, fined him one talent (enough to pay at least 6,000 soldiers for a day!), and sternly rebuked him. He apparently took this in stride, as he continued to compete for many years.

Upon his death, Theogenes was enshrined like a god, complete with a statue hollowed out to hold donations. This relic acquired a reputation for miraculous healing. Theogenes was one of the first professional martial artists – he built his career entirely around fighting in contests and lived off his prize money.

## *William Marshal (1146-1219)*

William Marshal was born c. 1146, the son of John Marshal – a middle-class knight and tender of the king's horses. Squired to another knight at age 12, he was himself knighted just before battle at age 20. William fought ably in his first battle. He went on to fight in dozens of tournaments and melees, and was more often than not victorious.

William served under four English kings, including Henry II and Richard I. He once put down a rebellion by Richard while in the service of Henry, but Richard so admired William's valor and loyalty that he granted him lands and a command upon becoming king. William also went on a crusade to the Holy Lands, where he fought for five years.

William was a paragon of knighthood: humble, well-spoken, honorable, and a noted leader of men. He was loyal to his king, brave, and dedicated. He was also a terrifically skilled fighter, a loyal companion in battle (and in the taverns afterward!), and fond of jousts. Like most Western martial artists, he claimed no particular school or master. He was skilled with knightly weapons (sword, lance, and mace), an expert horseman, and – based on what's known of his time period – almost certainly an adept wrestler, capable of handling himself unarmed as well as armed.

William's fearsome combat skills apparently waned little with age. He fought in battles and tournaments, and put down rebellions against his lord, right up until his death. At age 73, he led a charge against rebelling knights. He took three dents to his helm and personally fought the rebel commanders hand-to-hand. He died not in battle but of natural causes.

## *Musashi Miyamoto (1584-1645)*

Born in the village of Miyamoto, Mimasaka province, Japan in 1584, Shinmen Musashi no Kami Fujiwara no Genshin – better known as Musashi Miyamoto – was the son of a samurai with a long and honorable lineage. His father either left or was killed, and his mother died, leaving Musashi an orphan in the care of a local priest.

Musashi was a precocious martial artist. Large for his age and prone to violence, he slew his first man in single combat at age 13, throwing his sword-armed opponent to the ground and dashing in his head with a stick – foreshadowing a tactic for which he would later become famous. At age 16, he joined the Ashikaga army in their fight against Tokugawa Ieyasu at the battle of Sekigahara. Musashi chose the losing side but survived both the battle and the subsequent hunting down and massacre of the defeated army.

Musashi then began his "Warrior's Pilgrimage." He traveled around Japan, honing his sword skills and fighting anyone willing to meet him in mortal combat. He was utterly single-minded about the martial arts. He left his hair uncut and took neither a wife nor a job. His sole concern was perfecting his art, and he thought only of battle. It's said that he wouldn't bathe without his weapon close at hand, to prevent enemies from taking advantage. He was eccentric, and showed up to more than one duel so disheveled and behaving so oddly that it unnerved his foe.

Musashi fought in six wars and hundreds of single combats until about age 50. A legend in his own time, he features prominently in stories from all parts of Japan. For instance, practitioners of Jojutsu (p. 192) proudly tell the tale of how their founder *lost* to Musashi and went on to perfect a style so powerful that even Musashi couldn't defeat him!

After his pilgrimage, Musashi adopted a son and became a teacher, commander, and advisor at the court of a daimyo on Kyushu. He fought in even more battles, acted as a general and sword instructor, and took up painting and woodcarving. In his final years, he left the court and lived alone in the mountains, contemplating the ways of the sword and of strategy. Shortly before his death, he wrote *Go Rin No Sho,* or "A Book of Five Rings," in which he expounded that strategy and swordsmanship were identical.

Musashi is best known for the style of Kenjutsu (pp. 173-175) he created, *Hyoho Niten Ichi Ryu.* He felt that fighting exclusively with two hands on a single sword was limiting, and espoused fighting with long and short swords simultaneously. Musashi did not himself use actual swords often – his preferred weapon was the *bokken,* or wooden training sword. His record of success in duels leaves little room to debate its deadliness. Musashi even fought duels with improvised clubs made from tree branches or oars.

Musashi was a ferocious fighter in his youth, ruthlessly killing his foes regardless of age, skill, and social position. In his later years, though, he became less bloodthirsty and was widely regarded for his great skill in Kenjutsu, earning the name *Kensei,* or "sword saint."

## *George Silver (Late 16th/Early 17th Century)*

George Silver was a Master of Defence in late 16th- and early 17th-century England. He's best known for his written attacks on foreign martial-arts masters – notably those teaching the popular new dueling weapon, the rapier. He wrote two treatises on the subject. *Paradoxes of Defence* was published in 1599. The manuscript for *Brief Instructions on My Paradoxes of Defence* remained in a museum collection until finally published in 1898.

Silver epitomized the Master of Defence. Of humble origins and by most accounts literate and well-spoken, he was a master of all of the requisite weapons of personal combat and war. He honed his skills with constant training and tested them against other masters in open matches. Silver was confident of his ability to defeat any foe with any combination of weapons. The Italian rapier masters teaching in England rebuffed or ignored his many challenges, however.

Silver felt that the rapier masters' emphasis on the thrust was dangerous thinking. He acknowledged that a thrust through the body could kill, but pointed out that it wasn't so immediately disabling that the victim couldn't return the favor before falling! He favored a weapon that could deal cuts severe enough to cripple an opponent's limbs, effectively neutralizing him. His writings are often strident defenses of a combat form on its way to becoming outmoded and unfashionable, but they're also the work of a true martial-arts master who sought to prepare his readers for battle in all its forms.

## *Wong Fei-Hung (1847-1924)*

Wong Fei-Hung was a physician and martial artist in Canton province, China. He was born in 1847, the son of Wong Kei-Ying – one of the famous Ten Tigers of Canton, a group of top martial-arts masters. Wong Kei-Ying traced his own martial-arts lineage – from his sifu (master) to his sifu's sifu – back to the Shaolin Temple's scattered masters.

As a physician, Wong was known for his compassion and skill. He would treat any patient, rich or poor. As a martial artist, he was credited with developing the Tiger-Crane form of Hung Gar Kung Fu (p. 163). A political revolutionary as well, Wong participated in a mass protest against the governor of Fujian province, which was brutally crushed. He fled to Canton, where he married several times and lived a quiet life until his death in 1924.

After Wong's death, Woshi Shanren wrote a series of popular novels about his life. Wong was also the main character in many Peking Opera productions and over 100 movies. Many actors have portrayed him, including Kwan Tak-Hing (who played him in most of those movies), Jet Li, Sammo Hung, and Jackie Chan. Wong's abilities and deeds grew in the retelling. He became a full-fledged folk hero, credited with fighting off scheming Triads, defeating secret plots, and standing up for China against rampant European colonialism. His name is instantly recognizable in Chinese cinema – complete with a theme song, a statue in his honor, and still-growing legends of his exploits.

## *John L. Sullivan (1858-1918)*

John Lawrence Sullivan was born to Irish immigrant parents in Boston, Massachusetts on October 12, 1858. By 1880, he had started fighting, first in exhibitions (usually with gloves) and then in prize rings (with gloves, kid gloves, or bare knuckles). At the time, prizefighting was illegal and promoters nonexistent. The fighters' backers put up the prize money and side bets. Spectators paid admission and a hat was passed to gather money for the fighters. Police often interrupted the bouts, which were as a result frequently staged in undisclosed locations (once even on a barge!).

Sullivan stood 5'10" and weighed just under 200 lbs. in fighting trim. He sported the long handlebar mustache of his era and wore his dark hair short to prevent hair-pulling in the ring. He was the stereotypical celebrity athlete. He drank heavily, womanized, and partied, and saved little for the future. He took crazy dares, shot off guns, and once even ran into a burning building to help salvage furniture. He could also be generous, offering money or goods to those in need.

Sullivan fought under the loose London Prize Ring rules, which featured untimed rounds and allowed standing grapples, throws, and bare knuckles; in fact, he was the last of the bare-knuckle champs. Later, he became the first prizefighter to accept the Marquess of Queensbury rules – the forerunner of today's boxing regulations. Whatever the rules, he wasn't a finesse fighter. He ran down his opponents with his famous bull-like rushes and defeated them with ferocious strength. He participated in 47 prize bouts, with a record of 43-3-1. He fought in a match in France and one in Canada, and in hundreds of exhibitions.

In 1889, just outside New Orleans, Sullivan fought in the last great bare-knuckle boxing championship. He accepted the bout while he wasn't in top form, and hired a noted wrestling and boxing coach to whip him into shape for the reported sum of $10,000! It was money well-spent. Sullivan knocked out his opponent, Jake Kilrain, after 75 brutal rounds under the London Prize Ring rules. This was also Sullivan's greatest moment; he lost his next bout to James J. Corbett, a young fighter known for a bobbing, weaving, and ducking style that would soon characterize all prizefighting. Although Sullivan would win one more bout under the Marquess of Queensbury rules, his career as a boxer was over.

Sullivan died of a heart attack on February 2, 1918.

## *Funakoshi Gichin (1868-1957)*

Funakoshi Gichin was in many ways the father of the modern sport of Karate. Born in Okinawa in 1868, at the dawn of the Meiji Restoration, he was a small and weak child. One of his classmates was the son of a Te (pp. 169-170) instructor, and Funakoshi took lessons – at night and in secret, since instruction was still illegal. His health improved, and this turned out to be the first step in what would later become his way of life.

Funakoshi sat for and passed the entrance exams for medical school, but furor over his samurai-class topknot led him to withdraw his application. He later cut off his topknot and became a schoolteacher, drawing on his early education in Chinese classics. Funakoshi continued to study martial arts at night under Azato Yasutsune. Azato was strict, requiring his student to repeat the same kata or drill until it was mastered before moving on to the next. Funakoshi went on to learn from several of Okinawa's top Te instructors.

In 1922, Funakoshi came to Japan as an official ambassador for Karate. He founded a dojo and called it and the style he taught there Shotokan (p. 170), after a nom de plume he used for his poetry (Shoto, or "Pine Wave").

Funakoshi was a great believer in the power of Te and the benefits of Karate as healthy exercise, and attempted to spread the practice of the martial arts to all. He was peaceful, and taught that the martial arts should only be used for self-defense – and even then, only when one's life was in danger. He had little tolerance for exaggerated techniques or myths about "fatal blows," and regarded "iron hand" training as bunk.

Funakoshi constantly refined and improved his style. He believed that each instructor should teach his own way and encouraged a diversity of Karate styles. Indeed, Shotokan is the forerunner of many modern Karate styles – including Kyokushin (pp. 171-172), founded by Funakoshi's student Mas Oyama (p. 24). Funakoshi died in 1957.

## *Ghulam Muhammad ("Gama") (1878-1960)*

Ghulam Muhammad – better known as "The Lion of the Punjab" or simply "Gama" – was born in 1878 to Kashmiri parents in what was then India. Both he and his brother, Imam Bux, became wrestlers. Despite being a Muslim, Gama was accepted into Indian wrestling circles thanks to his enormous skill and power. By age 19, he stood 5'7" and weighed 200 lbs. He fought numerous matches against Indian opponents, defeating or drawing against them all and eventually defeating those capable of drawing against him.

In 1910 (some sources say 1908), Gama traveled to Europe to wrestle. He engaged in several catch-as-catch-can wrestling matches against the best grapplers he could find. These included the 234-lb. American B.F. "Doc" Roller and the 254-lb. Pole Stanislaus "Stanley" Zbyszko. Zbyszko was unable to take the offensive but his weight advantage allowed him to sustain a draw after a match that lasted over two and a half hours. He didn't show for the decision match, so Gama won the John Bull Belt by default.

Gama returned to India, where he had become a celebrity. He met all comers, reigning undefeated as world champion. Zbyszko fought Gama again in 1928 – this time in a traditional Indian dirt pit. Gama quickly disposed of him, throwing him in only six seconds and winning in 42 seconds.

Gama's strength and endurance were legendary. Every day, he would rise hours before dawn – common practice for Indian wrestlers – and begin his routine of 2,000 *dands* (a kind of pushup) and 4,000 *baithaks* (deep knee bends). His skill was equally fearsome: few could take the offensive in matches against him, and those who tried lost more quickly than those who chose to delay. His combination of power, stamina, and ability was unmatched.

Gama continued to wrestle until the India-Pakistan partition of 1947. He moved to Pakistan, losing his wealth, trophies, and state pension. He was unable to wrestle against champions because of the bitter political and religious divide the partition created. He died in 1960.

## *William E. Fairbairn (1885-1960)*

William Ewart Fairbairn was born in England in 1885. He served in the Royal Marine Light Infantry from 1901 to 1907. Upon leaving the military, he joined the Shanghai Municipal Police.

In China, Fairbairn came into contact with Chinese and Japanese martial arts. As part of a SWAT-style "flying squad" called in to deal with troublemakers on a routine basis, he was able to put his training to immediate, practical use. Police records document his personal involvement in over *600* altercations! Despite his famous toughness, Fairbairn didn't escape unscathed – in fact, he once survived a beating by Triad hatchet men who left him for dead. This merely encouraged him to further develop his unarmed-combat abilities. He trained his men in "Defendu" – his own style, stripped down for quick instruction and effectiveness. In 1940, he retired from his post.

During World War II, Fairbairn was recruited to teach hand-to-hand combat to U.S. and British commandos, and to members of the OSS. Fairbairn and Eric Anthony Sykes (another member of Fairbairn's Shanghai squad) developed a system of sentry removal and quick, ruthless tactics for dealing with German troops. They also developed a knife – the Sykes-Fairbairn commando knife – for use with their style. Colonel Rex Applegate of the OSS contributed to their style, too, as well as to the pistol, submachine gun, and rifle training used by these special-operations troops. Some of Fairbairn's teachings were published in the book *Get Tough*. Fairbairn died in 1960.

## *Oyama Masutatsu ("Mas Oyama") (1923-1994)*

Oyama Masutatsu was born Yong I-Choi in Korea in 1923. At age 15, he moved to Japan, hoping to become a military pilot. Life as a Korean in Japan was difficult, though, and his dreams of aviation fell away. He took the name Oyama after the family he lived with and began to train in Karate under Funakoshi Gichin (p. 23). He made rapid progress, having trained in Chinese martial arts while in Korea. He was a *nidan* (second-degree black belt) by age 18, when he joined the military.

After World War II, Oyama started to study Goju Ryu (pp. 170-171). He also took up Judo (p. 166), achieving *yondan* (fourth-degree black belt) after only four years. Oyama's life changed yet again after killing a knife-wielding attacker with a single strike to the head. Taking a life left him distraught. He supported the dead man's widow and children by working on their farm until they were able to take care of themselves. He then retreated into the mountains for a year and a half, meditating and developing his martial arts in constant training.

Oyama returned to civilization in time to win the first Japan-wide Karate tournament. In 1952, he toured the U.S. for a year, meeting all challengers, from all styles. He fought 270 matches, winning most with a single, well-placed blow. Oyama believed that fancy techniques and stances were secondary to power, and both his kicks and punches were strong. Word had it that if you failed to block him, you were defeated . . . but if you *did* block him, your arm was broken! For his incredible punching power, he became known as the "Godhand."

Oyama is also famous for bullfighting, although not in the traditional sense – he fought bulls barehanded, pitting his Karate against their brute strength. It's said that he fought 52 bulls in total, killing three and striking off the horns of most of the others using only his hands. In 1957, he fought a bull in a public match in Mexico. The bull gored Oyama but he got off its horns . . . and then removed one of them with a sword-hand strike. Oyama was bedridden for six months, but upon recovery returned to fighting bulls and practicing the martial arts.

Oyama founded Kyokushin (pp. 171-172) *karate-do* and established its first official dojo in 1956. Prior to this, he and fellow stylists gathered in a Tokyo field to practice with few holds barred, using open hands or towel-wrapped fists. Injuries were common and the dropout rate was prodigious. Over the years, Kyokushin has spread worldwide. Its training isn't nearly as brutal as Oyama's early classes, but it still has a well-deserved reputation for turning out tough martial artists.

Oyama died from lung cancer in 1994.

## *Bruce Lee (1940-1973)*

Bruce Lee was born in San Francisco, California in 1940. His father – a popular entertainer – was in the U.S. to appear in a play. Bruce grew up in Hong Kong, however. By most accounts he was a good kid, if rambunctious; playful, but also hot-tempered and competitive. In his teens, he demonstrated ability as a dancer, winning a Hong Kong-wide cha-cha competition.

Bruce's introduction to the martial arts came from his father, who practiced T'ai Chi Chuan (pp. 200-201). Bruce preferred the more direct art of Wing Chun (pp. 203-204), and started training with Yip Man – an instructor from a long line of instructors. A talented and enthusiastic martial-arts student, Bruce also boxed for his high school. His temper got him into a lot of less-decorous fights with other teens around town, however. He often fought in full-contact challenge matches held on rooftops or in alleyways, against both armed and unarmed foes. It was a run-in with the police for fighting that convinced his family to send him to the U.S. to finish school. He arrived in America in 1959. In 1964, while at college in Seattle, Washington, he married Linda Emery, one of his kung fu students.

Soon after, Bruce began to teach martial arts full-time, opening what would become a chain of three schools. He had to turn away would-be students despite his high rates! He trained those of either sex and of any racial background. This caused quite a stir in the local Chinese community. A group of instructors offered Lee a formal challenge: cease teaching non-Chinese or face a duel. Bruce chose the duel and won handily, chasing his opponent around the room until he could force him to submit. Lee's students eventually included Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (seen in *Game of Death*), Lee Marvin, James Coburn, and Dan Inosanto.

After his duel, Bruce was unhappy. He had won but felt that his style had been too inefficient to let him win as quickly as he should have. This led him to develop a more streamlined method of fighting, which became known as Jeet Kune Do (pp. 164-165): "the way of the intercepting fist." Bruce drew on all of his martial-arts knowledge – boxing, fencing, and especially Wing Chun – to develop his art. He eventually closed his schools because he felt that they were leading to a rigid style instead of the adaptive process he sought to create.

Lee was a fanatical martial artist and an enthusiastic weightlifter, and jogged or ran daily. He also read books on martial arts, weight training, running, and anatomy. Never satisfied with his progress, he pushed himself and constantly sought out ways to work more efficiently. He paid a price for this enthusiasm: while doing a set of heavy back exercises without a proper warm up, he injured his sacral nerve. This sent him to the hospital and threatened to end his training permanently. Undaunted, Bruce spent his time in the hospital filling notebook after notebook with thoughts on the martial arts. In 1975, these notes would see posthumous publication as *The Tao of Jeet Kune Do*.

Hollywood discovered Bruce Lee in 1966, while he was demonstrating his art at a Karate tournament. He was cast as "Kato" on the television show *The Green Hornet*. This wasn't Lee's first acting experience. From age six until his late teens, Bruce had acted in Hong Kong films. Lee found it hard to make an impact in Hollywood, though – the film business there was resistant to the idea of a Chinese star. He eventually moved to Hong Kong to make movies with Golden Harvest Productions.

In Hong Kong, Lee was a tremendous success. His first movie, *The Big Boss* (called *Fists of Fury* in the U.S.), smashed all Hong Kong box-office records. Each of his two subsequent films, *Fists of Fury* (known as *The Chinese Connection* in America) and *Way of the Dragon* (titled *Return of the Dragon* in the U.S.), outdid the previous one. He did the fight scenes for a film to be called *The Game of Death* before a bigger project came along – *Enter the Dragon*.

Near the peak of his fame, just after *Enter the Dragon* was filmed, Bruce Lee died suddenly. Suffering from a severe headache while visiting a friend, he took medication, laid down for a nap, and died in his sleep. Rumors were rife that his death was caused by poison, a drug overdose, or rival martial artists using secret "hand of death" techniques. The truth is more prosaic: the headache remedy he took triggered a cerebral edema, killing him. He had previously had a scare and a hospital visit for a similar drug reaction, but neither Bruce nor the friend who gave him the medication realized that it contained ingredients to which Lee was allergic.

After Lee's death, his popularity hit an all-time high. *Enter the Dragon* launched the action-movie genre, and interest exploded in Chinese martial arts and Asian martial arts in general. Hong Kong and Hollywood alike sought "the next Bruce Lee" but found no one who could match his on-screen charisma, fantastic fitness, and sheer skill. To this day, Lee memorabilia, books, and movies continue to sell. His legacy of influence over the martial arts in America is immeasurable.

Bruce's son, Brandon, was on his way to modest movie stardom of his own when he suffered an untimely death on the set of *The Crow*. Brandon was shot dead by a gun that was supposed to be firing blanks. While indisputably an accident, his death rekindled conspiracy theories about Secret Masters or angry Chinese martial artists out to destroy Bruce Lee and his legacy.

Bruce is survived by his wife, Linda, and their daughter, Shannon.

# Myths and Misconceptions

Myths and misconceptions heavily influence "common wisdom" about the martial arts. This comes as no surprise – the martial-arts world itself is full of unverifiable legends, misinformed students, wild claims, and bad data!

## Boards Don't Hit Back

*Tameshiwari* is the art of using unarmed strikes to break things: boards, roofing tiles, blocks of ice, and even stones. It sometimes includes breaking *flaming* boards, shearing off the tops of beer bottles, and snuffing candles with the force of a blow. Tameshiwari is inextricably linked with Karate in the public mind – especially since many schools use it in flashy demonstrations and promotions. In reality, it's a minor, fairly impractical aspect of the martial arts.

Tameshiwari normally takes place under highly controlled conditions. Practitioners carefully select wood – most often pine – that is free of knots and has a clear grain. They choose tiles made of pottery known for its breakability and the fact that it doesn't shatter into sharp, hand-shredding shards. There are many tricks involved, too – some of them legitimate "training wheels" for beginners, others the tools of unscrupulous showoffs. These include drying or baking boards to remove springiness; separating multiple boards with spacers to make them easier to break; and shaving ice blocks in half and re-freezing them with rock salt between the halves to conceal the flaw.

Tameshiwari isn't purely for show, though. Karate masters often teach their students to pull their punches and kicks in practice, to prevent injury. Tameshiwari represents an opportunity to strike at full-force and prepare for actual contact.

> *NEVER FIGHT UNARMED BY CHOICE*
> *– Ned Beaumont,* ***Kill-As-Catch-Can***

Asian styles aren't the only ones to emphasize showy techniques. Greek wrestlers were fond of demonstrating their strength, balance, and dexterity. To show off their ability without fighting, they would break rocks, stand on a greased shield while people tried to dislodge them, and so on. More recently, Western circus wrestlers and boxers took on all comers and paid out prizes to those who could stand against them.

## Don't Bring a Fist to a Knife Fight

In the real world, fists are no match for weapons. If an unarmed martial artist faces sticks, knives, swords, etc., he'll probably lose. Even if he's victorious, he's liable to be wounded.

## Bad Reenactments

A problem hardly unique to the martial arts is that of bad reenactments. Simply put, these are demonstrations of martial skills that don't actually prove what they set out to establish. Most take one of two forms: the deliberately staged event or bad science.

Deliberately staged events are pure showmanship – whether to entertain or to deceive – by masters who claim chi powers, incredible speed or skill, or other special abilities. Such demonstrations *seem* to occur under "real-life" conditions but actually involve prepared props and/or subjects trained or coached by the master, typically in carefully engineered situations. Swords thrust into an iron throat might be flimsy "thunder blades" designed for showy looks and safety. Boards struck by a "power blow" might be baked to remove moisture, meaning they'll snap under minimal pressure. The master might "knock out" cooperative students using pressure-point strikes or "push" them across the room using his chi powers. And so on.

Bad science involves a methodical effort to prove or disprove a claim without genuine scientific rigor. If the objective is to demonstrate the impracticality of a technique, the weapons used might be inappropriate (e.g., a cheap replica) or wielded incorrectly (e.g., using a broadsword with katana techniques). A test of chi powers might lack any kind of control group. A computer model that "proves" that certain martial-arts techniques can snap ribs or break necks with ease might assume impossibly ideal conditions. Such exercises often lack proper attention to the sources, making it easier to pass off flimsy claims and inaccurate numbers as true.

Both types of bad reenactment help perpetuate false claims about the martial arts. Even successfully debunked myths can enjoy incredible vitality. Martial arts mythology is *resilient* . . . mostly because people *want* to believe in it!

***GURPS*** reflects this reality. An armed fighter who parries a barehanded attack can injure his attacker (p. B376). An unarmed warrior who slugs a shield due to a successful block, or who strikes armor thanks to a *failed* defense, can hurt himself (p. B379). If these outcomes don't seem severe enough, the GM can use *Harsh Realism for Unarmed Fighters* (p. 124) to raise the stakes. Because weapons don't suffer these drawbacks – and enjoy superior reach, swing damage, and/or wounding modifiers – a weaponless fighter needs to be far more skilled (and *lucky*) than an armed opponent to win unscathed.

Martial-arts *fiction* doesn't always work this way. It often seems as if the bad guy who brings weapons to a fight ends up *more* vulnerable to the heroes' punches and kicks! Armed flunkies serve only to give the heroes a chance to show off by deflecting arrows, snapping swords, and dodging ill-timed spear thrusts. Archvillains and important henchmen who wield weapons against unarmed heroes fare better – but the finale inevitably comes down to fists and feet. Those who enjoy this genre convention should consider using *Unarmed Etiquette* (p. 132).

Movies where the heroes themselves are armed are an exception. *Chambara* movies delight in showing swordsmen gruesomely carving up unarmed foes, and *wuxia* movies often center on swordfighting. What matters is a fair contest – both sides armed or unarmed. And if an armed hero is disarmed and must fight barehanded, he'll certainly be victorious.

## When Do I Learn Weapons?

Traditional martial arts either focused entirely on armed combat, emphasized barehanded techniques but included some weapons training, or balanced the two. European masters included wrestling in their armed styles. Filipino masters regarded sticks and knives as training tools, and taught advanced students the same techniques with bare hands. Only ancient sports styles minimized weapons training – and even then, the participants, being able-bodied men, were expected to be adept at another, weapon-dominated style for war. In short, it's historically inaccurate to segregate weapons from unarmed combat. Even today, there are parts of the world where it's best to assume that martial artists are armed!

This doesn't prevent modern schools – especially those that teach art or sport forms – from reserving weapons training for top students, or restricting it to tournaments and demonstrations. Reasons for this include philosophy ("master your body first"), cost (weapons are *expensive*), and safety (even the "safest" training weapons are more dangerous than bare hands). If a style is entirely weapon-based, it's likely to be purely an art or sport form; e.g., Épée (p. 160) or Kyudo (p. 181).

Even so, most modern military and police styles – and some weapon-based styles – *do* train in realistic conditions. Practitioners accept injuries as the cost of realism!

And "martial-arts weapons" capture the popular imagination from time to time even among those with *no* training. Witness the nunchaku fad of the '70s or the obsession with "ninja weapons" in the '80s. This fascination sometimes leads to weapons training in styles that weren't meant to use weapons.

## Martial Arts and the Law

The martial arts – armed and unarmed – have had an interesting relationship with the law since the earliest days of both. At various points in history, certain regions have enforced laws restricting martial-arts training by class or by sex; banning weapons partly or completely; and even forbidding *unarmed* training.

In the modern world, unarmed fighting skills are rarely regulated. The *use* of fighting skills can sometimes result in difficulties with the law, though. As well, a jurisdiction that puts severe limits on the possession and use of firearms or knives is likely to extend those restrictions to "martial-arts weapons" – although one can usually carry them to and from martial-arts class unchallenged.

## Martial Arts in Court

Contrary to longstanding urban legend, black belts *don't* have to register their hands as deadly weapons. This myth is traceable to publicity stunts before professional boxing matches and to outlandish claims made in the movies. Nowhere in the modern world is there a legal requirement for trained martial artists to register with the authorities.

Martial-arts experience *can* influence the case against a defendant on trial for a violent crime, though. If he's a martial artist, he can expect investigators to bring up his background in an attempt to show that he had the training to cause harm – or the knowledge and experience to show restraint. Major considerations include whether the initial attack was provoked, whether either party acted in self-defense, and whether the martial artist used "reasonable force." Most jurisdictions allow lethal force only if a life is at stake. In the U.S., there's precedent for considering an attacker's martial-arts training in a self-defense claim; a court could even find that someone who shot an unarmed assailant he knew to be martial-arts master was acting in "self-defense." On the other side of the coin, muggers have brought assault charges against victims who've fought them off – and the more injured they look in the witness box, the better the chance of convincing a jury.

In the eyes of the law, the best policy is to avoid a fight. If you can't, then "reasonable force" – such as restraining your attacker without harming him – is second-best. In such a situation, the police might opt not to intervene or simply to send everybody home: no harm, no foul. Unnecessary force – for instance, striking a drunk and stomping him after he hits the ground, or using any weapon against an unarmed man – is an excellent way to attract *serious* police attention in even relatively lawless parts. Macho posturing isn't a great way to avoid legal trouble, either. Remarks such as "Even with that knife, he didn't have a chance against me!" and "I could kill a guy in three seconds flat!" aren't conducive to a successful defense.

Ultimately, the police, magistrates, judges, jury, etc., who examine the events leading up to a fight or an assault may or may not see things from the martial artist's perspective . . . and it's *their* judgment that counts. Lethal force or even unnecessary nonlethal force can mean prison time. The GM should keep all this in mind if the PCs in a modern-day campaign get too "karate happy."

These considerations might not apply in historical or fictional settings. In some game worlds, the nobility might possess absolute, life-and-death power over commoners. A commoner striking a noble, however lightly, might receive a death sentence. A noble killing a commoner to test his new sword technique might be guilty only of showing off – or at most of damaging another noble's property by slaying a valuable peasant.

## Teaching

Through most of history, all that a would-be teacher *needed* was the will to hang out a shingle. Instructors thus varied greatly in terms of skill, teaching ability, enthusiasm, and fees. Of course, if dueling was legal, the unskilled were unlikely to risk claiming mastery unless the money was excellent. But where dueling was illegal or looked down upon, and the martial arts rarely saw use in anger, false masters flourished alongside true ones.

In some times and places, though, martial artists *did* require a license to teach. For instance, in medieval and Renaissance Europe, those who wished to sell instruction sometimes needed a royal charter – which in turn required them to produce certification of their mastery. No such legal requirements exist today, but modern fighters must often join a federation or an organizing body in order to compete.

Separate from the issue of "who's a master" is the matter of injury – physical, psychological, or social. Historically, if a student suffered injury or was shown to be less skillful than his reputation demanded, the master could lose noble patronage or social approval. The teacher might face the law if he *struck* a social superior – even in training. Worries of modern teachers include insurance, lawsuits (for injury or harassment), half-hearted students, and concerned parents. Any of these things could lead to watered-down techniques, emphasis on Combat Art skills, and non-contact training.

Lastly, an instructor might not wish to teach just anyone lethal techniques for fear that an irresponsible student might use them unnecessarily, resulting in legal consequences! This was a serious concern for historical masters, and a realistic (and relatively benign) reason to apply the "Trained by a Fraud" lens (p. 145) to a style.

### Style™

The names of many martial-arts styles – e.g., Hwa Rang Do (pp. 163-164) and Shorinjikempo (see *Kempo,* pp. 172-173) – and schools (such as Dog Brothers Martial Arts, mentioned under *Escrima,* pp. 155-156) are *trademarked.* ***Martial Arts*** doesn't append the trademark sign (™) because this isn't a legal requirement for a game. What the law *does* require is that those who sell martial-arts instruction under these names have the trademark-holder's permission.

There's a good reason for this. Historically, the first fake teacher probably set up shop 15 minutes after the first real one. Today's laws protect business from this kind of theft. Of course, a trademark sign says nothing about the quality of the *martial art.* Trademark law protects the fraud who wants to keep competing scam artists off his turf as well (or as poorly) as it protects the true master.

Historical style founders would have adopted trademarks if they could have – especially the frauds! Such self-promoters as E.W. Barton-Wright (see *Bartitsu,* p. 167) would have appreciated the veneer of legitimacy that a legal trademark provided back when such things still impressed the masses. In the absence of such protection, warrior and swindler alike had to resort to more direct action if they wished to defend against misuse of their good (or at least *popular*) name . . .

# Chapter Two
# Characters

*Jon Gilbey shouted, "No, Adrian. The **high** guard!" Less loudly, "Whatever possessed me to teach a girl?"*

*Adrian smiled sweetly and repositioned her splintery waster. "The fact that Tom would teach me if you would not?"*

*Jon blushed and then focused on the business at hand. "Here we go," he said, swinging his wooden blade. "One, two, three!"*

*Adrian parried expertly.*

*Jon nodded approvingly. "Again! One, two – **ow!**"*

*Adrian's weapon snaked past Jon's and knocked him on the head. Adrian smiled again. "You said not to be predictable."*

*Jon rubbed his head. "Oh, you aren't. I wonder often which of us is the teacher here."*

Any adventurer might know a few combat skills and be a capable fighter, but these things alone don't make him a martial artist. A true martial artist strives to master a *system* of fighting arts. He's dedicated to physical, mental, and possibly spiritual self-improvement in pursuit of that goal. He probably started training as a youth and has devoted far more than just his free time to learning and practicing his craft since then.

Such a lifestyle is usually only practical for those who are cloistered . . . or skilled enough to work as professional fighters, coaches, or instructors . . . or fortunate enough to be independently wealthy or have a generous patron. To hold a normal job and still be an accomplished and recognized martial artist requires almost fanatical determination! In game terms, the GM would be within his rights to forbid Laziness to such characters, require high Will, and perhaps even make one or more of Fanaticism, Obsession, and Workaholic *mandatory*.

On the other hand, law enforcers, soldiers, and others in occupations that bring them into contact with physically hostile individuals commonly learn to fight as part of their job. And *anyone* might take self-defense lessons or practice a sportive martial art to stay in shape. Such people aren't full-time martial artists like those discussed above, but they can justify being familiar with a fighting style and knowing its core skills and techniques – especially since their teachers often *are* career martial artists, supporting themselves by tutoring.

***Martial Arts*** supports both kinds of characters. The difference has to do with focus, not with who would win in a fight. A career martial artist should put most of his points into ST, DX, HT, physical advantages, and his style's skills and techniques. A part-time student can certainly be in similar physical shape. He might be a good fighter, too – maybe *better* than a dedicated athlete, when it comes to playing for keeps. He'll have fewer points in martial-arts abilities, though, and probably *no* points in his style's cinematic or optional traits (see Chapter 5).

# Power Level

The power levels discussed on p. B487 remain valid for both part-time and full-time martial artists. Some guidelines:

*Feeble (under 25 points):* No successful career martial artist will have so few points! Those in other professions will need their points for job skills – they won't have enough left over for martial-arts abilities. This level best suits the legions of hopeless goons that action heroes wade through in martial-arts movies.

*Average (25-50 points):* Too low for a dedicated martial artist other than a youth who's just starting out. "Ordinary folks" at this level can spare a point or two for martial-arts lessons, but dangerous occupations that include martial arts as on-the-job training remain out of reach.

*Competent (50-75 points):* This is probably the lowest level where a dedicated martial artist can work as an adventurer – and only if he takes a few disadvantages and focuses exclusively on the martial arts. Green military or police recruits will have enough points to cover their basic job skills and still learn the rudiments of a martial art.

*Exceptional (75-100 points):* At this level, it's possible to create a respectable career martial artist, although being a "star" requires extra points from disadvantages and leaves little room for other skills. A cop, soldier, etc., could be good at his job and have enough points left over to be competent at the martial arts, too.

*Heroic (100-200 points):* Most famous real-world martial artists are at this level. If they focus on the martial arts, they'll be *very* good – but many spread their points across abilities useful for acting, teaching, or writing. Individuals in other professions will have enough points to perform solidly at a job *and* a martial art. This level is ideal for realistic ***Martial Arts*** games. It lets the PCs be capable without being godlike or one-dimensional.

*Larger-than-Life (200-300 points):* As the ***Basic Set*** says, this level suits the leading roles in kung fu movies! Those with ordinary jobs can afford to be world-class in their field *and* heroic martial artists. Both character types are only borderline-realistic, but this is a good starting level for cinematic ***Martial Arts*** games and action-movie campaigns.

*Legendary (300-500 points):* Any character who starts out this powerful and has more than a few points in martial-arts skills will be an adept martial artist – even if ostensibly something else – unless intentionally designed to be physically incompetent. This level is suitable for style founders and the heroes of *wuxia* and *chambara* movies.

*Superhuman/Godlike (500+ points):* This is the realm of comics and video games, where "martial arts" is often code for "super-powers." Superhuman attributes and exotic advantages don't *have* to overshadow skills, though. By requiring the PCs to spend their many points on believable attribute levels and mundane traits, with the only exceptions being cinematic martial-arts skills and the special advantages in this chapter, the GM can run a campaign that's truly superheroic but nothing like "mutants in tights."

# Realism Level

Few fields are as fertile ground for extravagant claims as the martial arts. Such claims, in turn, drive skeptics to doubt even believable, well-documented feats, further obscuring matters. Fortunately, the GM has the final say about what's "real" in *his* campaign – which is as important as the power level.

## *Realistic Martial Artists*

Realistic martial artists are limited to normal human abilities. Attribute scores above 15 should be rare – and DX, IQ, and HT can't exceed 20 in any event. ST *might* go past 20, but the GM may restrict such scores to practitioners of styles that emphasize bulk (e.g., *Sumo,* pp. 198-199). The GM should strictly enforce secondary characteristic limits, too:

- HP and FP can't vary by more than 30% of ST and HT, respectively.
- Will and Per can't exceed 20 or be lowered by more than four levels.
- Basic Speed must stay within ±2.00 of its calculated value.
- Basic Move must remain within ±3 yards/second of *its* base value.

Only *mundane* advantages and disadvantages are allowed; those labeled exotic or supernatural are off-limits. Mundane traits described as "cinematic" – Enhanced Defenses, Gadgeteer, Gizmos, Gunslinger, Rapier Wit, Trained by a Master, Weapon Master, etc. – are also forbidden. The GM might even wish to rule out such borderline-supernatural advantages as Danger Sense, Daredevil, Empathy, Luck, and Serendipity.

The above restrictions weaken somewhat in TL8+ campaigns. Steroids, surgery, and so on can grant "superhuman" physical abilities even in realistic settings. ***GURPS Bio-Tech*** is indispensable for such games.

Realistic PCs can't learn skills that have prohibited advantages as prerequisites. This eliminates all cinematic martial-arts skills (for a list, see *Trained by a Master,* p. 48) and magic spells. It would be reasonable to forbid skills that produce supernatural effects, too, such as Alchemy, Enthrallment, Exorcism, Herb Lore, Musical Influence, and Ritual Magic.

Realistic martial artists can have any point total the GM likes . . . but as suggested under *Power Level* (above), anything over 200 points verges on unrealistic. A fighter with 250 or more points in purely realistic abilities *won't* seem realistic in play! He'll be a "combat monster" whose extreme attribute and skill levels let him duplicate the effects of cinematic abilities through brute force.

Even at low power levels, *believable* martial artists should spend their points evenly on all of their style's skills, not just on those useful in a fight. Unless they're cops, street fighters, or soldiers, they're liable to have Combat Art or Sport skills rather than combat skills, and are highly unlikely to have Combat Reflexes. There's no special reason to let high-tech martial artists capitalize on their typically high DX to have awesome Guns skills, either – not unless they're police or military sharpshooters. If the players want to play lethal fighters above all, consider running a cinematic campaign!

## Beginning Students as PCs

The guidelines in this chapter assume that the PCs are experienced fighters, but it can be fun to play martial artists who are just starting out. If *all* the PCs are students, the GM may require everyone to start with the *Student* template (pp. 38-40) – or his own variation on it – and study the same style under a common master. Whatever ground rules the GM sets, the heroes should be low-powered. As the template suggests, 75 points is typical. Anything over 100 points is cinematic . . . for a student.

The fun of student PCs is that the players get to see them grow during play, painstakingly advancing in ability as they adventure. From a game-mechanical standpoint, the gradual introduction of new abilities and the associated optional combat rules enables players who are unfamiliar with ***Martial Arts*** to learn the rules in play. How *quickly* the students develop their skills is up to the GM.

If the GM religiously enforces *Improvement Through Study* (p. B292) and requires that even earned points be spent at the rates given there, it will take the students *many* game sessions to master their style. Since campaigns often don't last that long and because many players only enjoy the "absolute beginners" theme in small doses, the GM should consider using *Intensive Training* (p. B293) to keep things interesting. This isn't the only option, though – even if it's the most realistic one. The GM may let the heroes learn as described in *The Training Sequence* (p. 147), which abstracts long, possibly realistic training times as a die roll and a few minutes of play. In a cinematic game, the GM might even let the players spend earned points to increase their skills without pausing to train at all!

Alternatively, the students might be otherwise competent at their careers but beginners at the martial arts. The only limit on such PCs is that they can't have more points in their martial-arts abilities than indicated on the *Student* template. The heroes might even know *nothing* about the martial arts, in which case they must learn them in play – see *Learning New Styles During Play* (pp. 146-147). This is another good place for a training sequence; e.g., for spies learning to be ninja in a week . . .

### *Cinematic Martial Artists*

Cinematic martial artists are free of some, most, or all of the limitations just described for realistic martial artists. The GM decides how far to go.

The simplest option is to permit no superhuman abilities other than Heroic Archer, Trained by a Master, Weapon Master, and cinematic skills. At low power levels, this can feel more authentic than a high-powered "realistic" campaign. For instance, many people find it easier to accept that an aged (and presumably skilled) martial-arts master with ST 10 can break boards using Breaking Blow than that a youthful warrior can have ST 20 – even if the latter is realistic by the letter of the rules. This treatment suits settings where the world looks like ours and anything unusual is hidden away in monasteries, rarely seen outside secret battles between masters.

To get a feel closer to a swashbuckling or sword-and-sorcery tale, allow superhuman attribute, secondary characteristic, and skill levels – and perhaps one or two levels of an exotic advantage like Damage Resistance or Striking Strength – but *not* cinematic skills. The heroes' feats are larger-than-life because the PCs are extraordinary raw material. There's nothing mystical afoot. The strong man has ST 25, not Power Blow. The rapier fighter can strike twice per second because his skill is high enough to absorb the -6 for Rapid Strike, not because Trained by a Master lets him halve the penalty. And so on.

Allowing all of the above – and most of the cinematic advantages under *Advantages* (pp. 42-53) besides – brings the campaign closer to a *wuxia* or *chambara* movie. Still, the heroes are limited to abilities from traditional martial-arts myth. They fly by projecting chi using Flying Leap. Their fists have DR because they punched iron for 10 years. They don't possess super-powers. They're *legendary* martial artists . . . but they're still *martial artists.*

Throwing in exotic and supernatural advantages in general turns the campaign into a video game or superhero comic book that's only loosely martial arts-based. The heroes *do* possess super-powers – they fly, shoot fire from their fists, and have skin that turns bullets. The players in such a "four-color" or "over-the-top" campaign will probably want access to ***GURPS Powers*** as well as ***Martial Arts*** when creating their PCs!

Like their realistic brethren, cinematic martial artists can have any point total the GM likes. The availability of flashy, *expensive* abilities means that the cinematic style of play works best at generous power levels – probably over 200 points, perhaps higher – but a cinematic campaign doesn't have to be high-powered. "Cinematic" has more to do with attitude than with cool powers. The GM should read *The Cinematic Campaign* (p. B488) and require the players to do the same. There's no denying the link between "high-powered" and "cinematic" in martial-arts games, though. At a sufficiently high power level, even a campaign that permits *no* special abilities will seem cinematic!

# Character Templates

Below are templates for character types especially suitable as PCs in ***Martial Arts*** games. To use a template, simply pay its point cost, choose any options left open on the template, and note what abilities this gives you. To customize your PC, spend your remaining points – and any additional points from quirks or personal disadvantages – on whatever you like (subject to GM approval). See *How to Use Character Templates* (p. B258) for details.

Each template sets aside points for a martial-arts style but *doesn't* list the individual abilities to spend them on. To customize the character, choose a style from Chapter 5 and spend these reserved points on its components, as explained under *Components of a Style* (pp. 141-143). The template's "Customization Notes" section suggests especially suitable styles, along with appropriate "style lenses" from *Choosing a Style* (pp. 144-146).

Only *Contender* (p. 32), *Instructor* (pp. 34-35), *Monk* (p. 36), and *Student* (pp. 38-39) portray "career" martial artists. All of the remaining templates give traits for heroes who work at occupations where martial-art experience could be useful. These don't depict *typical* members of those professions, but unusual people who've chosen to invest a lot of time in martial-arts training, either for reasons of personal philosophy or to impress potential employers.

*Stiletto*

The base templates assume a 100- to 150-point realistic game. However, each has one or two "lenses" that convert it into a template suitable for a 200- to 250-point cinematic campaign. The GM should use the higher end of these point ranges if he wants the PCs to be naturally gifted *and* well-trained, as the templates keep attributes modest (between 10 and 13) and focus on skills. As well, the *Instructor* template is intended for a master – someone who is by definition better than most martial artists – and calls for closer to 200 points in a realistic game or 300 points in a cinematic one.

Remember that templates are neither required nor prescriptive. You can use them "as is," alter them, or ignore them and create a PC from whole cloth. But even if you choose to ignore them, they're worth skimming for *ideas* that could help you with your character concept.

## *Assassin*

**100 points**

You're a silent killer. You might be a ninja, a government agent, a hired hit man, or a dangerous nutcase with an agenda. Whatever your motivations, you've chosen the martial arts as your tool. Unarmed combat is valuable for taking out targets that would never let a weapon get near, while "traditional" weapons – bows, knives, etc. – are quieter and less random than firearms or explosives. The trick is to get close enough . . . and you're an expert at that.

***Attributes:*** ST 10 [0]; DX 12 [40]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 10 [0].

***Secondary Characteristics:*** Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 12 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.50 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

***Advantages:*** 20 points chosen from among DX +1 [20], IQ +1 [20], Per +1 to +4 [5/level], Acute Senses (any) 1-5 [2/level], Alternate Identity (Illegal) [15] *or* Zeroed [10], Cultural Familiarity [1/culture], Danger Sense [15], Honest Face [1], Night Vision 1-9 [1/level], Perfect Balance [15], Peripheral Vision [15], Style Familiarity (any) [1/style], or Style Perks [1/perk].

***Perks:*** Style Familiarity (own style) [1].

***Disadvantages:*** -20 points chosen from among Duty (Agency, clan, or guild; Extremely Hazardous; 12 or less) [-15] *or* (15 or less) [-20], Greed [-15*], Intolerance (Nation or other large group) [-5], Obsession (Assassinate a particular target) [-5*], Secret (Professional assassin) [-20], Sense of Duty (Clan or guild) [-5], or Social Stigma (Criminal Record) [-5]. ● Another -20 points chosen from among Bloodlust [-10*], Callous [-5] *or* Low Empathy [-20], Code of Honor ("Stay bought") [-5], Light Sleeper [-5], Loner [-5*], Nightmares [-5*], No Sense of Humor [-10], Paranoia [-10], or Trademark [-5, -10, or -15].

***Primary Skills:*** *Either* Disguise (A) IQ+2 [8]-14 *or* Stealth (A) DX+2 [8]-14. ● Also spend 20 points in the skills and techniques of a combat style (see Chapter 5).

***Secondary Skills:*** Pick *four* of Forced Entry (E) DX+1 [2]-13; Climbing (A) DX [2]-12; Camouflage or Savoir-Faire (Servant), both (E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Acting, Electronics Operation (Security), Fast-Talk, Holdout, Lockpicking, Shadowing, or Traps, all (A) IQ [2]-12; or Poisons (H) IQ-1 [2]-11.

***Background Skills:*** Choose *three* of Area Knowledge (any) or Savoir-Faire (Mafia), both (E) IQ [1]-12; or Armoury (Melee Weapons or Missile Weapons), Explosives (Demolition or Fireworks), or Streetwise, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-11.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

### Lens

*Cinematic* (+100 points): Add 80 points chosen from among Blunt Claws [3], Combat Reflexes [15], Cultural Adaptability [10], Damage Resistance 1-2 (Partial, Hands, -40%; Tough Skin, -40%) [1-2], Enhanced Time Sense [45], Extra Attack 1 or 2 (Multi-Strike, +20%) [30 or 60], Forceful Chi 1-4 [15/level], Gizmos (Only for style, -20%) [4/level], Heroic Archer [20], Innate Attack [Varies], Social Chameleon [5], Striker (Crushing) [5], Trained by a Master [30], or Weapon Master [20-45]. You *must* take either Trained by a Master or Weapon Master! ● Add 20 points in your style's cinematic skills (and prerequisites); Invisibility Art, Light Walk, and Lizard Climb are useful for stalking victims.

### Customization Notes

*Styles:* Ninja should know Taijutsu (pp. 202-203) and at least one of Kenjutsu (pp. 173-175), Kusarijutsu (p. 179), Kyujutsu (pp. 179-180), or Shurikenjutsu (pp. 195-197); those in B-movies often practice Kobujutsu (p. 178). Dagger Fighting (p. 155) or Shortsword Fighting (p. 195) would serve realistic assassins well in *any* pre-modern setting. Modern government agents are typically taught a form of Military Hand-to-Hand (pp. 182-185). Cinematic killers occasionally eschew weapons for aggressive styles, such as Bando (pp. 151-152) and Muay Thai (pp. 185-186), or those with lethal pressure-point attacks, like Chin Na (p. 154), Hwa Rang Do (pp. 163-164), and Kalaripayit (pp. 168-169).

*Style Lenses:* Traditional ninja need no lens. "Military" makes sense for a modern government agent, while "Street" suits a mob hit man or suspense-movie nutcase.

## *Contender*

**100 points**

You're a full-time competitor at a combat sport such as boxing, fencing, or sumo. You might be a medal-seeking Olympian, a professional jock, or a tough guy on the no-holds-barred circuit. Stereotypes needn't apply to you: not every Olympian is "clean," jocks aren't universally stupid and greedy, and tough guys don't have to be bloodthirsty. One thing almost certainly *is* true, though – you're either fighting or training most of the time.

***Attributes:*** ST 12 [20]; DX 12 [40]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 12 [20].

***Secondary Characteristics:*** Damage 1d-1/1d+2; BL 29 lbs.; HP 12 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 10 [0]; FP 12 [0]; Basic Speed 6.00 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0].

***Advantages:*** 20 points chosen from among ST +1 or +2 [10 or 20], DX +1 [20], HT +1 or +2 [10 or 20], HP +1 to +3 [2/HP], Will +1 to +4 [5/level], FP +1 to +3 [3/FP], Ambidexterity [5], Enhanced Dodge 1 [15], Enhanced Parry 1 [5 or 10], Fearlessness 1-5 [2/level] *or* Unfazeable [15], Fit [5] *or* Very Fit [15], Hard to Subdue 1-5 [2/level], High Pain Threshold [10], Reputation (Titlist) [Varies], Striker (Crushing; Limb, Shin, -20%) [4], Style Familiarity (any) [1/style], Style Perks [1/perk], or Wealth (Comfortable) [10] *or* (Wealthy) [20].

***Perks:*** Style Familiarity (own style) [1].

***Disadvantages:*** -20 points chosen from among Code of Honor ("Fight fair") [-5] *or* Secret (Cheater, fall-taker, steroid-user, etc.) [-5], Greed [-15*], Obsession (Win a title) [-5*] *or* (Become the best in the world) [-10*], Overconfidence [-5*], or Workaholic [-5]. ● An additional -20 points chosen from among any of the above or Appearance (Unattractive) [-4] *or* (Ugly) [-8], Bad Temper [-10*], Enemy (Contender of equal skill; Rival; 6 or less) [-2] *or* (9 or less) [-5], Jealousy [-10], Pacifism (Reluctant Killer) [-5] *or* (Cannot Kill) [-15], Reputation (see p. 54) [Varies], or Stubbornness [-5].

***Primary Skills:*** 30 points in the skills and techniques of a sport or combat style (see Chapter 5).

***Secondary Skills:*** Pick *two* of Bicycling (E) DX+1 [2]-13, Breath Control (H) HT-1 [2]-11, Lifting (A) HT [2]-12, Running (A) HT [2]-12, Sports (any) (A) DX [2]-12, or Swimming (E) HT+1 [2]-13.

***Background Skills:*** Savoir-Faire (Dojo) (E) IQ [1]-10. ● Also spend 4 points on Current Affairs (Sports), First Aid, or Games (any), all IQ/E; Acting, Gambling, or Streetwise, all IQ/A; Intimidation, Will/A; or Autohypnosis, Will/H.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

### Lenses

*Cinematic* (+100 points): Add 80 points chosen from among Arm ST +1 or +2 [5 or 10], Damage Resistance 1-2 (Partial, Hands, -40%; Tough Skin, -40%) [1-2], Enhanced Dodge 1-3 [15/level], Enhanced Parry 1-3 [5 or 10/level], Enhanced Time Sense [45], Extra Attack 1 or 2 (Multi-Strike, +20%) [30 or 60], Forceful Chi 1-4 [15/level], Innate Attack [Varies], Resistant to Chi Abilities (+3) [10], Recovery [10], Striking ST +1 or +2 [5 or 10], Trained by a Master [30], or Weapon Master [20-45]. You *must* take either Trained by a Master or Weapon Master! ● Add 20 points in your style's cinematic skills (and prerequisites); Power Blow is excellent for "finishing moves."

*Tough Guy* (+100 points): You're a hulking brute! You have no "mystical" abilities, but your gifts are just as cinematic. Add +1 to ST [10] and 90 points chosen from among ST +1 to +9 [10/level], HT +1 to +9 [10/level], HP +1 to +10 [2/HP], Will +1 to +10 [5/level], FP +1 to +10 [3/FP], Arm ST +1 or +2 [5 or 10], Damage Resistance 1 or 2 (Tough Skin, -40%) [3 or 6], Extra Attack (Multi-Strike, +20%) 1-3 [30/level], Lifting ST +1 or +2 [3 or 6], Recovery [10], Resistant to Arm Injury (+3) [1], Resistant to Neck Injury (+3) [1], or Striking ST +1 or +2 [5 or 10].

### Customization Notes

*Styles:* Styles for historical contenders include Boxing (pp. 152-153), Greco-Roman Wrestling (p. 205), Pankration (pp. 188-189), and Sumo (pp. 198-199). The most common sportive styles today are Judo (p. 166), Karate (pp. 169-172), Kendo (p. 172), Professional Wrestling (p. 206), Sport Fencing (p. 160), and Tae Kwon Do (p. 200). Among those who compete in mixed martial arts and no-holds-barred events, Bando (pp. 151-152), Brazilian Jiu-jitsu (pp. 167-168), Muay Thai (pp. 185-186), Sambo (p. 185), and Submission Wrestling (p. 205) are popular.

*Style Lenses:* This template *is* a style lens – albeit a complex one – but a contender who competes in tournaments hosted by the armed services might have "Military," while one who fights in illegal events could justify "Street."

## *Crimefighter*

**100 points**

You use martial-arts skills to uphold justice or keep the peace. You might be a watchman in a time or place where skilled fighters are common (e.g., feudal Japan), a modern cop who prefers to subdue crooks without the lethal finality of a bullet, or a vigilante who goes unarmed because weapons aren't available or would attract unwelcome attention. An interesting – if unlikely – alternative is the detective charged with solving martial arts-related crimes.

***Attributes:*** ST 10 [0]; DX 12 [40]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 10 [0].

# Del Duque (350 points)

Del Duque is a masked Mexican wrestler and freelance detective. Every Del Duque adventure starts with our hero enjoying a meal in some exotic locale while reading the newspaper. There's *always* an unsolved crime in the news, and the headline *always* hints at the action to come ("Thieves dressed as ninja steal art treasures!").

After a short investigation during which Del Duque inevitably stumbles onto clues that the police missed, he impresses the cops by identifying the culprits as evil masters of an obscure fighting style. He follows the trail to the criminals' lair, sneaks in, and uses a drop kick to jump the sentry. Within seconds, the rest of the gangsters come charging in and also suffer defeat. Then the boss appears and hits Del Duque a few times – but Del Duque soon catches his fist, twists his arm, and uses his trademark "pain grip" to force surrender. By the time the police arrive, Del Duque is tying up the bad guys.

Del Duque lives in a B-movie world where everybody speaks Spanish, nobody thinks it's odd that he's constantly masked (or asks how he eats with a mask on), and a lone wrestler is more capable than an entire police force. He doesn't seem all that fast or skilled, yet he always wins. He's definitely a cinematic hero!

Del Duque stands only 5'11" but must weigh at least 300 lbs. He was inspired by the *Crimefighter* template (pp. 32-34), and mixes Combat Wrestling (pp. 204-205) with Professional Wrestling (p. 206).

**ST** 16 [60]; **DX** 14 [80]; **IQ** 14 [80]; **HT** 14 [40].
Damage 1d+1/2d+2; BL 51 lbs.; HP 16 [0]; Will 14 [0]; Per 14 [0]; FP 14 [0].
Basic Speed 6.00 [-20]; Basic Move 6 [0]; Dodge 10*; Parry 12*.

## Social Background

*TL:* 8 [0].
*CF:* Western [0].
*Languages:* Spanish (Native) [0].

## Advantages

Combat Reflexes [15]; Damage Resistance 1 (Tough Skin, -40%) [3]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Higher Purpose (Bring criminals to justice) [5]; Intuition [15]; Serendipity 1 [15]; Trained by a Master [30].

*Perks:* Honest Face (Only when masked!); Special Exercises (DR 1, Tough Skin); Style Familiarities (Combat Wrestling; Professional Wrestling). [4]

## Disadvantages

Fat [-3]; Honesty (12) [-10]; Pacifism (Cannot Harm Innocents) [-10]; Secret Identity [-10]; Sense of Duty (Law-abiding citizens) [-10].

*Quirks:* Always uses Drop Kick when making a surprise attack; Considers masks perfectly normal; Rarely speaks; Spends hours reading the newspapers, looking for high-profile crimes; Wears a cape, even though opponents could grab it. [-5]

## Skills

Acrobatics (H) DX-1 [2]-13; Area Knowledge (World) (E) IQ [1]-14; Brawling (E) DX+2 [4]-16; Brawling Art (E) DX [1]-14; Criminology (A) IQ-1 [1]-13; Current Affairs (Headline News) (E) IQ [1]-14; Driving (Automobile) (A) DX-1 [1]-13; Forensics (H) IQ-2 [1]-12; Hidden Lore (Secret Styles) (H) IQ [2]-14; Immovable Stance (H) DX [4]-14; Intimidation (A) Will [2]-14; Judo (H) DX [4]-14; Knot-Tying (E) DX [1]-14; Law (Criminal) (H) IQ-2 [1]-12; Observation (A) Per [2]-14; Power Blow (H) Will [4]-14; Pressure Points (H) IQ [4]-14; Stealth (A) DX [2]-14; Streetwise (A) IQ [2]-14; Wrestling (A) DX+2 [8]-16; Wrestling Art (A) DX [1]-14†; Wrestling Sport (A) DX [1]-14†.

*Techniques:* Drop Kick (Brawling) (H) [2]-16; Hand Catch (Wrestling) (H) [4]-12*; Wrench Arm (H) [5]-16.

* Includes +1 for Combat Reflexes.
† Based on Wrestling default.

***Secondary Characteristics:*** Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 12 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.50 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

***Advantages:*** 15 points chosen from among Per +1 to +3 [5/level], Acute Senses (any) 1-5 [2/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Danger Sense [15], Hard to Kill 1-5 [2/level], Intuition [15], Legal Enforcement Powers [5, 10, or 15] *and* Police Rank 0-4 [5/level]†, or Style Perks [1/perk].

***Perks:*** Style Familiarity (own style) [1].

***Disadvantages:*** *One* of Duty (Law-enforcement agency; 12 or less) [-10]†, Secret (Vigilante) [-10], or Secret Identity (Caped crusader, masked avenger, etc.) [-10]. • A further -30 points chosen from among Charitable [-15*], Curious [-5*], Honesty [-10*], Intolerance (Criminals) [-5], Obsession (Bring down a particular crook) [-5*], Overconfidence [-5*], Pacifism (Cannot Harm Innocents) [-10] *or* (Cannot Kill) [-15], Sense of Duty (Law-abiding citizens) [-10], or Stubbornness [-5].

***Primary Skills:*** Area Knowledge (any) (E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Criminology (A) IQ+1 [4]-13; and 20 points in the skills and techniques of a combat style (see Chapter 5).

***Secondary Skills:*** Observation (A) Per [2]-12 and Streetwise (A) IQ [2]-12. • Also pick *five* of Forced Entry or Knot-Tying, both (E) DX+1 [2]-13; Driving (Automobile) or Stealth, both (A) DX [2]-12; Current Affairs (Regional) or Savoir-Faire (Police), both (E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Interrogation or Shadowing, both (A) IQ [2]-12; Intimidation (A) Will [2]-12; or Search or Tracking, both (A) Per [2]-12.

***Background Skills:*** *Two* of Expert Skill (Hoplology), Forensics, Intelligence Analysis, Law (Criminal or Police), or Tactics, all (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; or Detect Lies (H) Per-1 [2]-11.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.
† Duty must accompany Legal Enforcement Powers.

### Lens

*Cinematic* (+100 points): Add 80 points chosen from among Enhanced Dodge 1-3 [15/level], Enhanced Parry 1-3 [5 or 10/level], Enhanced Time Sense [45], Extra Attack 1 or 2 (Multi-Strike, +20%) [30 or 60], Forceful Chi 1-4 [15/level], Gadgeteer [25], Gizmos [5/level], Heroic Archer [20], Higher Purpose [5], Innate Attack [Varies], Resistant to Chi Abilities (+3) [10], Trained by a Master [30], Weapon Master [20-45], or Wild Talent 1-3 [20/level]. You *must* take either Trained by a Master or Weapon Master! ● Add 20 points in your style's cinematic skills (and prerequisites); Hypnotic Hands, Kiai, and Pressure Points are handy for taking prisoners.

### Customization Notes

*Styles:* Taihojutsu (p. 201) merits special mention because it was *invented* for law enforcers. Most grappling styles – including Aikijutsu (p. 149), Judo (p. 166), Jujutsu (pp. 166-168), and Wrestling (pp. 204-206) – are well-suited to subduing crooks. Being able to hit hard is also useful. Fictional 19th-century detectives might use Bartitsu (p. 167) or Savate (pp. 193-194); pulp heroes and practical cops prefer Boxing (pp. 152-153); modern vigilantes go for styles with "street cred," such as Capoeira (pp. 153-154), Jeet Kune Do (p. 164-165), and Kajukenbo (p. 168); and everyone is familiar with the Shurikenjutsu (pp. 195-197) skills of a famous crime-fighting "dark knight."

*Style Lenses:* "Police" is probable for an actual law officer. A vigilante might have "Self-Defense" or "Street," depending on how aggressive his methods are.

## *Duelist*

**100 points**

You've studied the fighting arts, typically a knightly or sword style, in order to win duels for profit. You champion moneyed folk who wish to settle affairs of honor with blood – just not *theirs*. You're adept at remaining cool enough to strike not necessarily first but *best*. Dueling attracts hotheads, may be illegal, and often leaves corpses behind, so you must stay on the road to avoid those who would seek glory, vengeance, or justice at your expense.

***Attributes:*** ST 11 [10]; DX 13 [60]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 11 [10].

***Secondary Characteristics:*** Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 10 [0]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 6.00 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0].

***Advantages:*** 20 points chosen from among DX +1 [20], Basic Speed +1 [20], Ambidexterity [5], Enhanced Block 1 [5], Enhanced Dodge 1 [15], Enhanced Parry 1 [5 or 10], Fearlessness 1-5 [2/level] *or* Unfazeable [15], Hard to Kill 1-5 [2/level], Luck [15], Rapid Healing [5], Style Familiarity (any) [1/style], Style Perks [1/perk], Wealth (Comfortable) [10] *or* (Wealthy) [20], or Weapon Bond [1].

***Perks:*** Style Familiarity (own style) [1].

***Disadvantages:*** -20 points chosen from among Enemy (Glory-seeker or rival duelist; Hunter; 6 or less) [-5] *or* (9 or less) [-10], Enemy (Past victim's vengeful relatives; Hunter; 6 or less) [-5] *or* (9 or less) [-10], Reputation -1 or -2 (Ruthless killer) [-5 or -10], Secret (Illegal dueling deaths) [-20], or Social Stigma (Criminal Record) [-5]. ● An additional -20 points chosen from among Bloodlust [-10*], Callous [-5] *or* Low Empathy [-20], Code of Honor (Professional) [-5] *or* (Gentleman's) [-10], Distinctive Features (Dueling scars) [-1], Greed [-15*], Loner [-5*], or Overconfidence [-5*].

***Primary Skills:*** 30 points in the skills and techniques of a combat style (see Chapter 5). Unlike most martial artists, a duelist can justify putting most of these points into just one skill!

***Secondary Skills:*** Armoury (Melee Weapons) (A) IQ [2]-10; Current Affairs (People) (E) IQ [1]-10; First Aid (E) IQ [1]-10; and Savoir-Faire (High Society) (E) IQ [1]-10.

***Background Skills:*** 4 points chosen from among Area Knowledge (any) or Savoir-Faire (Dojo), both IQ/E; Connoisseur (Weapons) or Merchant, both IQ/A; Diplomacy, Expert Skill (Hoplology), or Law (Criminal), all IQ/H; or Intimidation, Will/A.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

### Lens

*Cinematic* (+100 points): Add 80 points chosen from among Enhanced Block 1-3 [5/level], Enhanced Dodge 1-3 [15/level], Enhanced Parry 1-3 [5 or 10/level], Enhanced Time Sense [45], Extra Attack 1 or 2 (Multi-Strike, +20%) [30 or 60], Forceful Chi 1-4 [15/level], Innate Attack [Varies], Resistant to Chi Abilities (+3) [10], Trained by a Master [30], or Weapon Master [20-45]. You *must* take either Trained by a Master or Weapon Master! ● Add 20 points in your style's cinematic skills (and prerequisites); Flying Leap is *extremely* useful for surprising adversaries and getting the first strike.

### Customization Notes

*Styles:* Sword styles dominate the profession. These include Fencing (pp. 156-159), Kenjutsu (pp. 173-175), Longsword Fighting (pp. 180-182), Shortsword Fighting (p. 195), Sword-and-Buckler Play (p. 199), and Sword-and-Shield Fighting (pp. 199-200). Historical duelists might instead know Glaive Fighting (p. 187), Pollaxe Fighting (p. 191), or Quarterstaff (pp. 192-193). A duelist might supplement any of these styles with Combat Wrestling (pp. 204-205) and/or Dagger Fighting (p. 155). An alternative for the well-rounded 15th- through 17th-century European duelist is the very complete Masters of Defence Weapon Training (p. 182).

*Style Lenses:* Usually none, because the unmodified forms of most styles suitable for duelists are *meant* for dueling. "Trained by a Fraud" is conceivable for a wannabe duelist taught by an unscrupulous master, though.

## *Instructor*

**175 points**

You're a martial-arts master with your own *dojo, salle,* gym, etc. While you're an accomplished fighter, your real expertise lies in inspiring students to train and in figuring out where they most need to improve. How you do this is up to you. You might favor newfangled "scientific" methods (e.g., geometric patterns on the floor or gleaming machines) or old-fashioned ones. You might patiently tutor your charges or beat them until they get it right . . .

***Attributes:*** ST 12 [20]; DX 12 [40]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 12 [20].

***Secondary Characteristics:*** Damage 1d-1/1d+2; BL 29 lbs.; HP 12 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 12 [0]; FP 12 [0]; Basic Speed 6.00 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0].

***Advantages:*** 25 points chosen from among DX *or* IQ +1 [20], Will +1 to +5 [5/level], Basic Speed +1 [20], Charisma 1 or 2 [5 or 10], Combat Reflexes [15], Enhanced Block 1 [5], Enhanced Dodge 1 [15], Enhanced Parry 1 [5 or 10], Extra Attack [25], Fearlessness 1-5 [2/level] *or* Unfazeable [15], Fit [5] *or* Very Fit [15], High Pain Threshold [10], Indomitable [15], Language (Broken) [2], Longevity [2], Reputation [Varies], Status 1 or 2 [5 or 10], Style Familiarity (any) [1/style], Style Perks [1/perk], Wealth (Comfortable) [10] *or* (Wealthy) [20], or Weapon Bond [1].

***Perks:*** Style Familiarity (own style) [1] *and* Style Familiarity (one other style) [1].

***Disadvantages:*** Duty (School; 12 or less) [-10]. ● Either Bully (12) [-10], for a not-so-nice master, or any *two* of Code of Honor ("Fight fair") [-5], Pacifism (Reluctant Killer) [-5], Sense of Duty (Students) [-5], or Vow (Never refuse a request for training) [-5], for a pleasant one. ● A further -20 points chosen from among Bad Temper [-10*], Disciplines of Faith (Ritualism) [-5], Enemy (Members of rival school; Rival; 9 or less) [-5], Obsession (Perfect the ultimate style) [-10*], Odious Personal Habit (Inscrutable, or speaks in riddles) [-5], Overconfidence [-5*], Stubbornness [-5], or Workaholic [-5].

***Primary Skills:*** Savoir-Faire (Dojo) (E) IQ+2 [4]-14; Teaching (A) IQ+2 [8]-14; and 40 points in the skills and techniques of *any* style (see Chapter 5).

***Secondary Skills:*** Pick *one* of Diplomacy (H) IQ [4]-12, Intimidation (A) Will+1 [4]-13, or Leadership (A) IQ+1 [4]-13. ● Also select *one* of Body Language (A) Per+1 [4]-13 or Psychology (H) IQ [4]-12.

***Background Skills:*** Any *three* of First Aid (E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Administration, Hidden Lore (Secret Styles), Public Speaking, or Writing, all (A) IQ [2]-12; Expert Skill (Hoplology), Philosophy (any), or Physiology, all (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Meditation (H) Will-1 [2]-11; or Esoteric Medicine (H) Per-1 [2]-11. ● Also choose *one* of Breath Control (H) HT-1 [2]-11, Lifting (A) HT [2]-12, or Running (A) HT [2]-12.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

### Lens

*Cinematic* (+125 points): Add 85 points chosen from among Blunt Claws [3], Damage Resistance 1-2 (Partial, Hands, -40%; Tough Skin, -40%) [1-2], Enhanced Block 1-3 [5/level], Enhanced Dodge 1-3 [15/level], Enhanced Parry 1-3 [5 or 10/level], Enhanced Time Sense [45], Extra Attack 1 or 2 (Multi-Strike, +20%) [30 or 60], Forceful Chi 1-4 [15/level], Heroic Archer [20], Innate Attack [Varies], Inner Balance 1-4 [15/level], Resistant to Chi Abilities (+3) [10] *or* (+8) [15], Striker (Crushing) [5], Trained by a Master [30], Weapon Master [20-45], or Wild Talent (Focused, Martial Arts, -20%) 1-4 [16/level]. You *must* take either Trained by a Master or Weapon Master! ● Add 40 points in your style's cinematic skills (and prerequisites) – preferably all of them.

### Customization Notes

*Styles: Every* style has masters, but teachers of certain styles are more likely to elicit strong reactions – usually respect, fear, or disapproval – from their community. Hoplomachia (pp. 161-162), Kalaripayit (pp. 168-169), and Pentjak Silat (pp. 189-191) all have this reputation. Historically, Masters of Defence (p. 17) were outspoken and influential, and often enjoyed noble patronage . . . or censure. In modern times, the menacing drill sergeant who teaches Military Hand-to-Hand (pp. 182-185) is among the strongest of instructor archetypes.

*Style Lenses:* An instructor normally practices an unmodified style – even if what he teaches has the "Military," "Police," or "Self-Defense" lens – but he could have one of these lenses himself. "Trained by a Fraud" is unlikely, but some masters *are* frauds; see *Frauds*.

## Frauds

*Instructor* (p. 34-35) depicts a talented martial artist who genuinely teaches a fighting style – whatever his personal flaws. The world is full of frauds, though. Some have little skill but pretend otherwise because they're dishonest or crazy. Others are skilled masters who don't teach anything useful out of laziness, concern that student injuries might ruin their reputation, fear that their teachings might be turned to evil or against them, and so on.

In a lighthearted game with little mortal combat, it can be fun to play a phony. In *any* ***Martial Arts*** campaign, the GM might wish to keep players on their toes by making some instructors charlatans. To create a convincing fraud, consider the traits listed below. The *students* of such a pretender must buy their style with the "Trained by a Fraud" lens (p. 145). For rules on bogus martial arts in action, see *Faking It* (p. 130).

*Advantages:* Charisma, Reputation, Smooth Operator, and Voice can all help lure students. Alternate Identity is an excellent way to avoid getting caught! Don't overlook the Honest Face perk.

*Disadvantages:* Greed is the motivation of most frauds. Laziness often accompanies it in the case of those with real skill. Compulsive Lying, Delusions, and Overconfidence are all common. Even true masters might harbor Delusions about their skills – or simple Paranoia. Being a fake can be a risky Secret.

*Skills:* Acting, Fast-Talk, and Performance are crucial. Complete shams might add Stage Combat. Those trying to pass off watered-down styles as valuable in combat have Combat Art/Sport skills. Dishonest masters may truly possess the skills they purport to teach, even if they don't share these with their students. In all cases, Intimidation is a great way to discourage prying questions.

*Techniques:* Total cons don't know any techniques! Those with combat skills, or at least Art/Sport versions, know their style's usual techniques. Dishonest masters may know useless techniques (p. 95). Deluded ones likely have secret techniques (p. 86) . . . which might still be useless.

## *Monk*

**100 points**

You've isolated yourself from society in order to contemplate existence and purify your soul. You practice martial arts not to defeat foes (although you *can* fight if you must) but to focus your mind. You might practice your art in a monastery or alone, as a hermit. You don't actively seek adventure – but it might find you during a pilgrimage or a quest, or when disrespectful outsiders challenge the peace of your monastery or hermitage.

***Attributes:*** ST 11 [10]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 11 [10].

***Secondary Characteristics:*** Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 12 [0]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5.50 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

***Advantages:*** 15 points chosen from among ST *or* HT +1 [10], Will +1 to +3 [5/level], Autotrance [1], Claim to Hospitality (Monasteries of the same order) [1], Clerical Investment [5], Enhanced Dodge 1 [15], Enhanced Parry 1 [5 or 10], Fearlessness 1-5 [2/level] *or* Unfazeable [15], Fit [5], High Pain Threshold [10], Less Sleep 1-4 [2/level], Longevity [2], Perfect Balance [15], Resistant to Disease (+3) [3], Resistant to Poison (+3) [5], Single-Minded [5], or Style Perks [1/perk].

***Perks:*** Style Familiarity (own style) [1].

***Disadvantages:*** -25 points chosen from among Disciplines of Faith (Monasticism or Mysticism) [-10] *or* (Asceticism) [-15], Fanaticism (Philosophical or religious) [-15], Low TL 1 or 2 [-5 or -10], Pacifism (Cannot Kill or Self-Defense Only) [-15], Vow (Chastity, Vegetarianism, etc.) [-5], Vow (Silence) [-10], Vow (Always fight unarmed) [-15], or Wealth (Struggling) [-10], (Poor) [-15], *or* (Dead Broke) [-25]. ● A further -15 points chosen from among the above traits or Charitable [-15*], Loner [-5*], Oblivious [-5], Sense of Duty (Fellow monks) [-5], Shyness [-5 or -10], or Workaholic [-5].

***Primary Skills:*** Meditation (H) Will [4]-12 *or* Religious Ritual (H) IQ [4]-12; Philosophy *or* Theology, both (H) IQ [4]-12; and 30 points in the skills and techniques of an art or combat style (see Chapter 5).

***Secondary Skills:*** Pick *two* of Autohypnosis (H) Will-1 [2]-11, Breath Control (H) HT-1 [2]-10, Esoteric Medicine (H) Per-1 [2]-11, Hypnotism (H) IQ-1 [2]-11, Mind Block (A) Will [2]-12, Occultism (A) IQ [2]-12, Pharmacy (Herbal) (H) IQ-1 [2]-11, or Savoir-Faire (Dojo) (E) IQ+1 [2]-13.

***Background Skills:*** First Aid (E) IQ [1]-12, and *either* Cooking (A) IQ-1 [1]-11 *or* Housekeeping (E) IQ [1]-12.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

### Lens

*Cinematic* (+100 points): Add 80 points chosen from among Enhanced Dodge 1-3 [15/level], Enhanced Parry 1-3 [5 or 10/level], Enhanced Time Sense [45], Extra Attack 1 or 2 (Multi-Strike, +20%) [30 or 60], Heroic Archer [20], Higher Purpose [5], Innate Attack [Varies], Inner Balance 1-4 [15/level], Reduced Consumption 1 or 2 [2 or 4], Resistant to Chi Abilities (+3) [10] *or* (+8) [15], Social Chameleon [5], Trained by a Master [30], True Faith [15], Weapon Master [20-45], or Wild Talent 1-3 [20/level]. You *must* take either Trained by a Master or Weapon Master! ● Add 20 points in your style's cinematic skills (and prerequisites); Body Control, Mental Strength, and Zen Archery all suit a meditative monk.

### Customization Notes

*Styles:* The most famous monastic style by far is Shaolin Kung Fu (p. 194). Other traditional kung fu styles for Chinese monks include Chin Na (p. 154), Hung Gar (p. 163), Pak Hok (p. 188), and Praying Mantis (pp. 191-192). A Japanese monk might know Bojutsu (p. 192) or Naginatajutsu (p. 186). A European monk could know Quarterstaff (pp. 192-193) – and a former Crusader might be adept at Knightly Mounted Combat (pp. 175-177) or Sword-and-Shield Fighting (pp. 199-200). The best surviving manual on Sword-and-Buckler Play (p. 199) was written by and *for* Christian monks.

*Style Lenses:* A monk normally trains in an unmodified style.

## *Movie Star*

**100 points**

You're an actor, often a contender gone soft, who specializes in martial-arts roles. You might work on swashbuckling films featuring musketeers and pirates, or *chambara* and *wuxia* flicks about samurai and kung fu masters – or just bad action movies. Most of your moves are faked and choreographed, but you train at the martial arts to improve your odds of getting a plum role. A lot of your fans think you're the real deal. On a good day, so do you!

***Attributes:*** ST 10 [0]; DX 12 [40]; IQ 11 [20]; HT 12 [20].

***Secondary Characteristics:*** Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 11 [0]; Per 11 [0]; FP 12 [0]; Basic Speed 5.00 [-20]; Basic Move 5 [0].

***Advantages:*** 15 points chosen from among ST +1 [10], Appearance (Attractive) [4] *or* (Handsome) [12], Charisma 1-3 [5/level], Fashion Sense [5], Fit [5], Languages (any) [2-6/language], Reputation [Varies], Shtick [1], Smooth Operator 1 [15], or Voice [10]. ● An additional 20 points chosen from among the above traits or Contacts (any) [Varies], Daredevil [15], Luck [15], Signature Gear [Varies], Status 1 or 2 [5 or 10], or Wealth (Comfortable) [10] *or* (Wealthy) [20].

***Perks:*** Style Familiarity (own style) [1].

***Disadvantages:*** -15 points chosen from among Code of Honor ("The show *must* go on!") [-5], Debt 1-20 [-1/level], Duty (Contract; Nonhazardous; 12 or less) [-5], Greed [-15*], Impulsiveness [-10*], or Obsession (Become #1 at the box office) [-10*]. ● A further -25 points chosen from among Addiction [Varies], Alcoholism [-15], Bad Temper [-10*], Compulsive Carousing [-5*], Delusions (see pp. 53-54) [-5 to -15], Jealousy [-10], Lecherousness [-15*], Overconfidence [-5*], Pacifism (Reluctant Killer) [-5] *or* (Cannot Kill) [-15], Reputation (see p. 54) [Varies], Selfish [-5*], Slow Riser [-5], or Stubbornness [-5].

***Primary Skills:*** Performance (A) IQ+2 [8]-13; Stage Combat (A) DX+1 [4]-13; and 20 points in the skills and techniques of an art or sport style (see Chapter 5).

***Secondary Skills:*** Pick *four* of Acrobatics (H) DX-1 [2]-11, Acting (A) IQ [2]-11, Dancing (A) DX [2]-12, Makeup (E) IQ+1 [2]-12, Professional Skill (Modeling) (A) IQ [2]-11, Public Speaking (A) IQ [2]-11, Singing (E) HT+1 [2]-13, or Skiing (H) HT-1 [2]-11.

***Background Skills:*** 4 points chosen from among Sports (Golf, Tennis, etc.), DX/A; Current Affairs (Popular Culture) or Savoir-Faire (High Society), both IQ/E; Connoisseur (any) or Fast-Talk, both IQ/A; Carousing, HT/E; or Sex Appeal, HT/A.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

### Lenses

*Cinematic* (+100 points): Add 80 points chosen from among Enhanced Dodge 1-3 [15/level], Enhanced Parry 1-3 [5 or 10/level], Enhanced Time Sense [45], Extra Attack 1 or 2 (Multi-Strike, +20%) [30 or 60], Gizmos (Only for style, -20%) [4/level], Heroic Archer [20], Innate Attack [Varies], Rapier Wit [5], Serendipity 1-4 [15/level], Trained by a Master [30], Weapon Master [20-45], or extreme levels of traits on the realistic template: Appearance (Very Handsome) [16] *or* (Transcendent) [20], Charisma 4-12 [5/level], Luck (Extraordinary) [30] *or* (Ridiculous) [60], Smooth Operator 2-4 [15/level], and Wealth (Very Wealthy) [30] *or* (Filthy Rich) [50]. You *must* take either Trained by a Master or Weapon Master!

- Add 20 points in your style's cinematic skills (and prerequisites); Flying Leap, Light Walk, and Lizard Climb suit *wuxia* stars who do their stunts for real.

*Tough Guy* (+100 points): You're a beast of a man, typecast as the guy who shrugs off baseball bats and fires machine guns one-handed. You're as unbelievable as any flashy *wuxia* star – but it's all grit, not mystical mumbo-jumbo. See *Contender* (p. 32) for statistics.

## Adrian Froste (200 points)

Adrian was born in 1537 to a Warwickshire man-at-arms and his wife. Despite being raised like any English girl, she was more fascinated with her father's skills than her mother's domestic duties. She eventually convinced several of her father's younger comrades to train her. Most regarded this as a fair trade for the opportunity to spend time with a pretty (if eccentric) girl.

When Adrian was 17, her father marched off to some nastiness in which the Duke of Suffolk was embroiled. It proved to be a rebellion, and her father was slain when forces loyal to Queen Mary defeated Suffolk. Shortly thereafter, her mother was killed in random reprisals against Protestants. Adrian escaped the same fate only by taking up a rusty longsword – a souvenir of her father's – and fighting her way free.

Once safe, Adrian cut her hair, dressed in men's clothing, and posed as one of England's many traveling "masters," showing off for food and drink. She swore a vow to avenge her parents' deaths by seeking news of unpopular deeds by the Queen's agents in the countryside, finding those responsible, and killing them. She soon found *herself* sought by bounty hunters coming to collect the price on her head. Several Englishmen, two Welshmen, and one Italian later, she still walks free.

Adrian is a larger-than-life prodigy at 19 years of age, and stronger than some men – which lets her move her 5'8", 125-lb. frame with blinding speed. She was built with the *Duelist* template (p. 34) and has Masters of Defence Weapon Training (p. 182).

**ST** 12 [20]; **DX** 14 [80]; **IQ** 11 [20]; **HT** 11 [10].
Damage 1d-1/1d+2; BL 29 lbs.; HP 10 [-4]; Will 11 [0]; Per 11 [0]; FP 11 [0].
Basic Speed 7.00 [15]; Basic Move 8 [5]; Dodge 10; Parry 13; Block 10.

### *Social Background*

*TL:* 4 [0].
*CF:* Christian European [0].
*Languages:* English (Native) [0].

### *Advantages*

Attractive [4]; Enhanced Parry 1 (All) [10]; Luck [15].

*Perks:* Grip Mastery (Longsword); Style Familiarity (Glaive Fighting; Italian School; Longsword Fighting; Masters of Defence Weapon Training; Pollaxe Fighting; Quarterstaff; Sword-and-Buckler Play; Sword-and-Shield Fighting); Weapon Bond (Her father's longsword). [10]

### *Disadvantages*

Enemy (Many bounty hunters; Hunter; 6 or less) [-10]; Loner (12) [-5]; Secret (Woman) [-5]; Social Stigma (Criminal) [-5]; Trademark (Simple; Always takes the time to strip the bodies of those she slays – looking for items of value to the needy – even when that's unsafe) [-5]; Vow (Never refuse any request for aid) [-15].

*Quirks:* Abstains from intimate relations; Accepts only things she needs, never money, from those she aids; Claims to be the bastard son of a local official when asked for identification; Fights *dirty;* Maneuvers to keep opponents at maximum reach in duels. [-5]

### *Skills*

Acting (Cross-Dressing) (E) IQ+1 [2]-12†; Area Knowledge (England) (E) IQ+1 [2]-12; Armoury (Melee Weapons) (A) IQ-1 [1]-10; Brawling (E) DX [1]-14; Broadsword (A) DX+4 [16]-18; Current Affairs (England) (E) IQ+1 [2]-12; Disguise (Cross-Dressing) (E) IQ+1 [2]-12†; Fast-Talk (A) IQ [2]-11; First Aid (E) IQ [1]-11; Hiking (A) HT [2]-11; Knife (E) DX [1]-14; Polearm (A) DX [2]-14; Shield (E) DX [1]-14; Shield (Buckler) (E) DX [1]-14; Shortsword (A) DX [0]-16*; Spear (A) DX [2]-14; Staff (A) DX [2]-14; Stealth (A) DX [2]-14; Two-Handed Sword (A) DX+4 [14]-18*; Wrestling (A) DX [2]-14.

*Techniques:* Feint (Two-Handed Sword) (H) [3]-20; Sweep (Two-Handed Sword) (H) [4]-18.

* Based on Broadsword default.
† *Optional* specialties; see p. B169.

### Customization Notes

*Styles:* Unarmed styles with a strong body of kicks are popular on the big screen. These include Hapkido (p. 161), Kyokushin (pp. 171-172), Muay Thai (pp. 185-186), Tae Kwon Do (p. 200), and Wushu (pp. 206-207). Other styles made famous by movie stars are Aikido (p. 149), Jeet Kune Do (pp. 164-165), Professional Wrestling (p. 206), and Wing Chun (pp. 203-204). Actors often use training in modern art and sport forms to *simulate* Shaolin Kung Fu (p. 194) and Taijutsu (pp. 202-203) – but in a cinematic game, their skills might be real. Weapons show up in film, too, led by the whippy swords of Sport Fencing (p. 160), the trademark nunchaku and sais of Kobujutsu (p. 178), and the "ninja stars" of Shurikenjutsu (pp. 195-197).

*Style Lenses:* The watered-down styles that result from "Self-Defense" and "Trained by a Fraud" are suitable for a phony. An ex-contender would know the unmodified style.

## *Spy*

**100 points**

You spy for an intelligence, military, or security service. You aren't an analyst or a diplomat, though – you're a more "hands-on" kind of spy. Your specialties are physical infiltration, gathering information, and getting out in one piece. You employ martial arts because they're hard to trace, silent, and the ultimate concealed weapon. These features make them handy for taking out inconvenient sentries and making informants talk.

***Attributes:*** ST 10 [0]; DX 12 [40]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 10 [0].

***Secondary Characteristics:*** Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 12 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.50 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

***Advantages:*** 15 points chosen from among Alternate Identity (Legal) [5] *or* (Illegal) [15], Claim to Hospitality (Safe-houses of allied nations) [10], Contact Group (Spy network; Skill-15; 9 or less; Somewhat Reliable) [10] *or* (Skill-18) [15], Rank 1-3 (Administrative or Military) [5/level], or Security Clearance [5, 10, or 15]. ● Another 15 points chosen from among Will +1 to +3 [5/level], Per +1 to +3 [5/level], Acute Senses (any) 1-5 [2/level], Cultural Familiarity [1/culture], Danger Sense [15], Eidetic Memory [5] *or* Photographic Memory [10], Flexibility [5], High Pain Threshold [10], Languages (any) [2-6/language], Peripheral Vision [15], Style Familiarity (any) [1/style], or Style Perks [1/perk].

***Perks:*** Style Familiarity (own style) [1].

***Disadvantages:*** Duty (Intelligence service; Extremely Hazardous; 15 or less) [-20]. ● *One* of Enemy (Counterintelligence cell; Hunter; 9 or less) [-20], Enemy (Enemy nation; Watcher; 12 or less) [-20], or Secret (Spy) [-20]. ● Another -10 points chosen from among Callous [-5], Curious [-5*], Intolerance (Enemy nation) [-5] *or* (All nations but own) [-10], Paranoia [-10], or Sense of Duty (Own nation) [-10].

***Primary Skills:*** Area Knowledge (any) (E) IQ [1]-12; Observation (A) Per [2]-12; Stealth (A) DX [2]-12; and 20 points in the skills and techniques of a combat style (see Chapter 5).

***Secondary Skills:*** Pick *one* of these three options: Acting (A) IQ [2]-12 *and* Disguise (A) IQ [2]-12; Parachuting (E) DX+2 [4]-14; or Scuba (A) IQ [2]-12 *and* Swimming (E) HT+1 [2]-11. ● Choose *two* of Forced Entry (E) DX+1 [2]-13; Climbing (A) DX [2]-12; or Electronics Operation (Security), Lockpicking, or Traps, all (A) IQ [2]-12. ● Select *one* of Filch (A) DX [2]-12; Electronics Operation (Surveillance), Interrogation, or Photography, all (A) IQ [2]-12; or Lip Reading or Search, both (A) Per [2]-12. ● Take *one* of Escape (H) DX-1 [2]-11, Holdout (A) IQ [2]-12, or Smuggling (A) IQ [2]-12.

***Background Skills:*** Pick *two* of Cartography or Propaganda, both (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; or Cryptography, Diplomacy, Economics, Expert Skill (Computer Security, Military Science, or Political Science), Forensics, Geography (Political), or Intelligence Analysis, all (H) IQ-2 [1]-10.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

### Lens

*Cinematic* (+100 points): Add 80 points chosen from among Enhanced Dodge 1-3 [15/level], Enhanced Parry 1-3 [5 or 10/level], Enhanced Time Sense [45], Extra Attack 1 or 2 (Multi-Strike, +20%) [30 or 60], Forceful Chi 1-4 [15/level], Gizmos [5/level], Innate Attack [Varies], Inner Balance 1-4 [15/level], Resistant to Chi Abilities (+3) [10], Trained by a Master [30], Weapon Master [20-45], or Wild Talent 1-3 [20/level]. You *must* take either Trained by a Master or Weapon Master! ● Add 20 points in your style's cinematic skills (and prerequisites); Invisibility Art and Light Walk work wonders.

### Customization Notes

*Styles:* Historical ninja were spies, and used Taijutsu (pp. 202-203) when undercover and unarmed. Today, guns relegate martial arts to the court of last resort, for use when the spy is disarmed and has nothing to lose. Various forms of Military Hand-to-Hand (pp. 182-185) are most common, but such training is easily traced. To avoid this, some officers learn popular "civilian" styles: Boxing (pp. 152-153), Jujutsu (pp. 166-168), Karate (pp. 169-172), Wrestling (pp. 204-205), etc. Any style works in a cinematic game, but Western super-spies from the 1960s generally know Judo (p. 166) *and* Karate, while Russian and Chinese secret agents seem to prefer Sambo (p. 185) and Wushu (pp. 206-207), respectively.

*Style Lenses:* For a ninja, none. For a modern spy, the "Military" or "Police" lens, depending on the agency. A *good* spy avoids fights and could get by with "Self-Defense." A wartime spy can't always circumvent violence and might end up with a skill set that looks a lot like the "Street" lens.

## *Student*

**75 points**

You're a martial-arts neophyte – but a talented, driven one. You make up in youthful energy what you lack in experience. In time, you could become a model example of *any* of the archetypes portrayed by the other templates. For now, you train, making whatever sacrifices this requires of you. You might spend all of your spare time at the gym – or, if you're a traditional student, live with your master and work as his servant.

***Attributes:*** ST 10 [0]; DX 12 [40]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 12 [20].

# Kai Lian (250 points)

Kai Lian is a secret agent of the Shining Temple of the Autumn Wind, the location of which is known to no one – travelers to and from the monastery must go blindfolded, in the company of a blind master. She is trained in the way of Shaolin, as well as in two of the Temple's secret styles. Her trademark attacks are a lethal strike with her long fingernails (Delicate Hand Dragon Claw), a leaping kick (Graceful Floating Axe), and a chi-blast that can hammer foes at 30 feet (Autumn Wind Sky Fist).

Kai Lian's present assignment is in frontier America, land of the six-shooter, telegraph, and locomotive. Her job is a tough one: retrieve the Five Tigers Jade Buddha statue, which was stolen from its guardian monks by American crooks. To them, it was merely a valuable antique. To those who know better, it's a powerful relic, capable of binding evil spirits.

The Temple chose Kai Lian for her stealth and fighting abilities, and the fact that she learned broken English from her master. None of this has helped her much when it comes to dealing with American culture and technology. "Frisco" was nothing like China, and it took all of her acrobatic skills to dodge the bullets of those thugs at the docks. They fought like men possessed, and Kai Lian is beginning to suspect that there's more to this mystery than meets the eye.

Kai Lian is a petite woman (4'10" and 90 lbs) in her mid-30s, with unusually long fingernails, clad in simple but immaculate clothing. She was inspired by the cinematic *Monk* template (p. 36). Her style is Shaolin Kung Fu (p. 194).

**ST** 9 [-10]; **DX** 14 [80]; **IQ** 13 [60]; **HT** 11 [10].
Damage 1d-2/1d-1; BL 16 lbs.; HP 9 [0]; Will 14 [5]; Per 13 [0]; FP 14 [9].
Basic Speed 6.00 [-5]; Basic Move 6 [0]; Dodge 12; Parry 12.

## Social Background

*TL:* 3 [-10].
*CF:* Chinese [0].
*Languages:* English (Broken) [2]; Mandarin (Native) [0].

## Advantages

Blunt Claws [3]; DR 1 (Partial, Hands, -40%; Tough Skin, -40%) [1]; Enhanced Dodge 3 [45]; Flying Fists (p. 45) [5]; Perfect Balance [15]; Trained by a Master [30].

*Perks:* Shtick (Clothes never get torn or dirty); Style Familiarity (Shaolin Kung Fu; two secret styles for use with *Shout It Out!*, p. 132). [4]

## Disadvantages

Duty (Shining Temple of the Autumn Wind; 15 or less; Extremely Hazardous) [-20]; Shyness (Mild) [-5]; Social Stigma (Second-Class Citizen) [-5]; Vow (Fight without weapons) [-15]; Wealth (Poor) [-15].

*Quirks:* Believes that users of TL4+ gadgetry are weak; Finds big moustaches exceptionally silly; Humble; Incompetence (Riding); Shouts out the name of each technique before attacking (much to the puzzlement of American foes). [-5]

## Skills

Acrobatics (H) DX+1 [4]-15*; Climbing (A) DX [1]-14*; Esoteric Medicine (H) Per-1 [2]-12; Flying Leap (H) IQ+1 [8]-14; Judo (H) DX-2 [1]-12; Jumping (E) DX [1]-14; Karate (H) DX+4 [20]-18; Light Walk (H) DX [4]-14; Lizard Climb (H) DX [4]-14; Meditation (H) Will-2 [1]-12; Observation (A) Per-1 [1]-12; Pharmacy (Herbal) (H) IQ-1 [2]-12; Philosophy (Buddhism) (H) IQ-1 [2]-12; Power Blow (H) Will [4]-14; Shadowing (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Staff (A) DX-1 [1]-13; Stealth (A) DX [2]-14; Tracking (A) Per-1 [1]-12.

*Techniques:* Lethal Strike (Karate) (H) [3]-18; Flying Jump Kick (Karate) (H) [8]-18.

* Includes +1 for Perfect Balance.

***Secondary Characteristics:*** Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 10 [0]; FP 12 [0]; Basic Speed 6.00 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0].

***Advantages:*** 15 points chosen from among ST +1 [10], HT +1 [10], HP +1 to +3 [2/HP], Will +1 to +3 [5/level], FP +1 to +3 [3/FP], Ambidexterity [5], Fit [5] *or* Very Fit [15], High Pain Threshold [10], Language (Broken) [2], Patron (Martial-arts master; 6 or less) [8] *or* (9 or less) [15], Pitiable [5], Single-Minded [5], or Style Perks [1/perk].

***Perks:*** Style Familiarity (own style) [1].

***Disadvantages:*** -15 points chosen from among Duty (Master; Nonhazardous; 12 or less) [-5] *or* (15 or less) [-10], Fanaticism (Master, school, or style) [-15], Obsession (Reach a specific grade) [-5*], Overconfidence [-5*]†, or Workaholic [-5]. ● Another -15 points chosen from among Chummy [-5] *or* Gregarious [-10], Delusions (see pp. 53-54) [-5 to -15], Easy to Read [-10], Gullibility [-10*], Impulsiveness [-10*], Low Self-Image [-10]†, Pacifism (Reluctant Killer) [-5], Post-Combat Shakes [-5*], Sense of Duty (Master) [-2] *or* (Fellow students) [-5], Social Stigma (Minor) [-5], or Wealth (Struggling) [-10] *or* (Poor) [-15].

***Primary Skills:*** Savoir-Faire (Dojo) (E) IQ+2 [4]-12 and 15 points in the skills and techniques of a martial-arts style (see Chapter 5).

***Secondary Skills:*** Lifting (A) HT [2]-12 and Running (A) HT [2]-12.

***Background Skills:*** 6 points chosen from among Hobby (any), DX/E or IQ/E; Sports (any), DX/A; First Aid, Games (any), Housekeeping, or Savoir-Faire (Servant), all IQ/E; Cooking, IQ/A; or Carousing, HT/E.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.
† Low Self-Image and Overconfidence are incompatible.

### Lens

*Cinematic* (+75 points): Add 60 points chosen from among Destiny [5, 10, or 15], Enhanced Block 1-3 [5/level], Enhanced Dodge 1-2 [15/level], Enhanced Parry 1-3 [5 or 10/level], Extra Attack 1 (Multi-Strike, +20%) [30], Forceful Chi 1-2 [15/level], Heroic Archer [20], Innate Attack [Varies], Inner Balance 1-2 [15/level], Resistant to Chi Abilities (+3) [10], Trained by a Master [30], Weapon Master [20-45], or Wild Talent 1-2 [20/level]. You *must* take either Trained by a Master or Weapon Master! ● Add 15 points in your style's cinematic skills (and prerequisites); students often drill at Breaking Blow and Sensitivity.

### Customization Notes

*Styles:* It's possible to be a student of *any* style. If an ordinary man on the street has martial-arts training in a modern-day game, he'll most likely know Greco-Roman Wrestling (p. 205), Judo (p. 166), Karate (pp. 169-172), Kendo (p. 175), Tae Kwon Do (p. 200), T'ai Chi (the meditative version on p. 201, *not* T'ai Chi Chuan), Wing Chun (pp. 203-204), or Wushu (pp. 206-207), depending on his culture. Aikido (p. 149) and Hapkido (p. 161) are growing in popularity in the West, as are such actively promoted arts as Hwa Rang Do (pp. 163-164) and Kempo (pp. 172-173).

*Style Lenses:* See the lenses suggested for the kind of martial artist that the student aspires to become. Lessons at the typical modern-day gym lead to "Self-Defense." "Trained by a Fraud" is unfortunately common.

## *Stuntman*

**100 points**

You stand in for movie stars (although probably not the skilled ones described under *Movie Star,* pp. 36-38) and play nameless bad guys in martial-arts movies. A stuntman might work as an aerialist, cowboy, driver, marksman, and many other things, all in the same feature. You're good at some of these things, but you're great at *fighting.* Most of your martial-arts skills are slanted toward what looks good, but the real thing looks best, and you know enough about it to be convincing.

***Attributes:*** ST 11 [10]; DX 12 [40]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 12 [20].

***Secondary Characteristics:*** Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 10 [0]; FP 10 [-6]; Basic Speed 6.00 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0].

***Advantages:*** 20 points chosen from among ST +1 or +2 [10 or 20], DX +1 [20], HT +1 or +2 [10 or 20], HP +1 to +3 [2/HP], Basic Speed +1 [20], Basic Move +1 to +3 [5/level], Daredevil [15], Enhanced Dodge 1 [15], Fearlessness 1-5 [2/level] *or* Unfazeable [15], Flexibility [5], Hard to Kill 1-5 [2/level], High Pain Threshold [10], Perfect Balance [15], Rapid Healing [5] *or* Very Rapid Healing [15], Style Familiarity (any) [1/style], or Style Perks [1/perk].

***Perks:*** Style Familiarity (own style) [1].

***Disadvantages:*** -20 points chosen from among Compulsive Behavior (Thrill-Seeking) [-5*], Duty (Agent, producer, or studio; 9 or less) [-5] *or* (12 or less) [-10], Greed [-15*], Impulsiveness [-10*], On the Edge [-15*], or Overconfidence [-5*]. ● Another -20 points chosen from among the above traits or Compulsive Carousing [-5*], Delusions (see pp. 53-54) [-5 to -15], Gigantism [0], Minor Addiction (Ordinary painkillers) [-1], Minor Handicap (Old injury) [-1], Overweight [-1] *or* Fat [-3], Pacifism (Reluctant Killer) [-5] *or* (Cannot Kill) [-15], Reputation (see p. 54) [Varies], Stubbornness [-5], or Trickster [-15*].

***Primary Skills:*** Acrobatics (H) DX+2 [12]-14; Jumping (E) DX+1 [2]-13; Stage Combat (A) DX+1 [4]-13; and 20 points in the skills and techniques of almost any style (see Chapter 5).

***Secondary Skills:*** Performance (A) IQ+1 [4]-11. ● Also select *two* of Parachuting (E) DX+2 [4]-14; Climbing, Driving (any), Fire Eating, Riding (any), or Sports (any), all (A) DX+1 [4]-13; Escape (H) DX [4]-12; Acting or Scuba, both (A) IQ+1 [4]-11; Swimming (E) HT+2 [4]-14; or Skating or Skiing, both (H) HT [4]-12.

***Background Skills:*** 5 points chosen from among Guns (any), DX/E; First Aid or Makeup, both IQ/E; Armoury (Melee Weapons) or Explosives (Fireworks), both IQ/A; or Artist (Scene Design), IQ/H.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

### Lenses

*Cinematic* (+100 points): Add 80 points chosen from among Damage Resistance (Tough Skin, -40%) 1 or 2 [3 or 6], Enhanced Dodge 1-3 [15/level], Enhanced Parry 1-3 [5 or 10/level], Enhanced Time Sense [45], Extra Attack 1 or 2 (Multi-Strike, +20%) [30 or 60], Forceful Chi 1-4 [15/level], Gizmos (Only for style, -20%) [4/level], Heroic Archer [20], Innate Attack [Varies], Resistant to Chi Abilities (+3) [10], Recovery [10], Trained by a Master [30], or Weapon Master [20-45]. You *must* take either Trained by a Master or Weapon Master! ● Add 20 points in your style's cinematic skills (and prerequisites); the GM may let you use Breaking Blow when slamming bodily into doors and windows.

*Tough Guy* (+100 points): Like the cinematic stuntman above, you perform "impossible" stunts. The difference is that instead of being impossibly agile, you're tough enough to take those falls for real! See *Contender* (p. 32) for statistics.

### Customization Notes

*Styles:* Stuntmen are often former athletes who competed at Boxing (pp. 152-153), Judo (p. 166), Karate (pp. 169-172), or Tae Kwon Do (p. 200). Many tough guys come from the world of Greco-Roman Wrestling (p. 205), Professional Wrestling (p. 206), or Sumo (pp. 198-199), or are ex-soldiers with a Military Hand-to-Hand (pp. 182-185) background. Most of the notes under *Movie Star* (pp. 36-38) are also applicable.

*Style Lenses:* Cops or soldiers who've moved into showbiz should have "Military" or "Police," as appropriate. "Street" suits many tough guys; quite a few real-life stuntmen are the genuine article.

## *Warrior*

**100 points**

You're a full-time man-at-arms. You might be a knight, mercenary, or volunteer – or perhaps you're a conscript, draftee, or levy who never got sent home. Whatever your situation, you're in it for the long haul and you've gravitated to the martial arts as a set of tools that can help you survive on (and off) the battlefield. Unlike most martial artists, you have a good excuse to be skilled with heavy, *military* weapons.

***Attributes:*** ST 11 [10]; DX 12 [40]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 11 [10].

***Secondary Characteristics:*** Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 10 [0]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 6.00 [5]; Basic Move 6 [0].

***Advantages:*** 20 points chosen from among ST +1 or +2 [10 or 20], DX *or* IQ +1 [20], HT +1 or +2 [10 or 20], HP +1 to +3 [2/HP], Per +1 to +4 [5/level], FP +1 to +3 [3/FP], Combat Reflexes [15], Danger Sense [15], Enhanced Block 1 [5], Enhanced Dodge 1 [15], Enhanced Parry 1 [5 or 10], Fearlessness 1-5 [2/level] *or* Unfazeable [15], Fit [5] *or* Very Fit [15], Hard to Kill 1-5 [2/level], High Pain Threshold [10], Military Rank 1-4 [5/level]†, Penetrating Voice [1], Rapid Healing [5] *or* Very Rapid Healing [15], Style Familiarity (any) [1/style], Style Perks [1/perk], or Weapon Bond [1].

***Perks:*** Style Familiarity (own style) [1].

***Disadvantages:*** -25 points chosen from among Code of Honor ("Stay bought") [-5], (Soldier's) [-10], *or* (Bushido or Chivalry) [-15], Duty (Unit or force; 12 or less) [-10] *or* (15 or less) [-15]†, Fanaticism (Unit, force, nation, etc.) [-15], Greed [-15*], Intolerance (Enemy nation) [-5] *or* (All nations but own) [-10], or Sense of Duty (Unit) [-5] *or* (Own nation) [-10]. ● A further -15 points chosen from among the above traits or Berserk [-10*], Bloodlust [-10*], Callous [-5], Chummy [-5] *or* Gregarious [-10], Overconfidence [-5*], Stubbornness [-5], or Workaholic [-5].

***Primary Skills:*** Soldier (A) IQ+2 [8]-12, plus 20 points in the skills and techniques of a combat style (see Chapter 5). ● Spend a *further* 10 points on your style or on military weapon skills typical for your TL:

*TL0-3:* Crossbow, Shield, or Thrown Weapon (Spear), all DX/E; Axe/Mace, Bow, Broadsword, Polearm, Shortsword, or Spear, all DX/A; or Sling, DX/H.

*TL4-5:* Gunner (Cannon) or Guns (Musket, Pistol, or Rifle), both DX/E; or Broadsword, Polearm, Rapier, Shortsword, Spear, or Throwing, all DX/A.

*TL6-8:* Gunner (MG), Guns (GL, LAW, LMG, Rifle, or SMG), or Liquid Projector (Flamethrower), all DX/E; or Spear or Throwing, both DX/A.

*TL9+:* Beam Weapons (Projector or Rifle), Gunner (Cannon or Beams), or Guns (GL, Gyroc, LAW, or Rifle), all DX/E; or Force Sword or Throwing, both DX/A.

***Secondary Skills:*** Hiking (A) HT+1 [4]-12 *or* Riding (any) (A) DX+1 [4]-13. ● Also choose *two* of Stealth (A) DX+1 [4]-13; Camouflage or First Aid, both (E) IQ+2 [4]-12; Armoury (any), Forward Observer, Leadership, or Navigation (Land), all (A) IQ+1 [4]-11; or Observation or Survival (any), both (A) Per+1 [4]-11.

***Background Skills:*** 4 points chosen from among Gesture or Savoir-Faire (Military), both IQ/E; Connoisseur (Weapons), Gambling, or Heraldry, all IQ/A; Expert Skill (Hoplology or Military Science), Strategy, or Tactics, all IQ/H; Carousing, HT/E; or Intimidation, Will/A.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† Duty must accompany Military Rank.

### Lenses (Realistic)

*Hand-to-Hand Combat Instructor* (+25 points): Add Fit [5]; Teaching (A) IQ+2 [8]-12; and an extra 12 points of style skills and techniques. Add the NCO template to get a drill sergeant.

*Knight or Samurai* (+25 points): Add Status 2 [5] and Wealth (Wealthy) [20]; Status includes +1 from Wealth. ● *Replace* Soldier with Leadership (A) IQ+2 [8]-12. ● Add Lance and Two-Handed Sword, both DX/A, to primary weapon skill lists. ● Riding is *mandatory*. ● Add Savoir-Faire (High Society), IQ/E, to background options.

*NCO* (+35 points): Add IQ +1 [20]; Military Rank 1 [5]; Leadership (A) IQ+1 [4]-12; Tactics (H) IQ-1 [2]-10; and an extra 4 points in primary, secondary, or background skills. Maximum Military Rank is 4.

*Officer* (+50 points): Add IQ +1 [20]; Military Rank 3 [15]; Leadership (A) IQ+1 [4]-12; Savoir-Faire (Military) (E) IQ+1 [2]-12; Tactics (H) IQ [4]-11; and 5 more points in primary, secondary, or background skills. This is a *veteran*, not a green lieutenant!

### Lenses (Cinematic)

*Cinematic* (+100 points): Add 80 points chosen from among Blunt Claws [3], Damage Resistance 1-2 (Partial, Hands, -40%; Tough Skin, -40%) [1-2], Enhanced Block 1-3 [5/level], Enhanced Dodge 1-3 [15/level], Enhanced Parry 1-3 [5 or 10/level], Enhanced Time Sense [45], Extra Attack 1 or 2 (Multi-Strike, +20%) [30 or 60], Forceful Chi 1-4 [15/level], Heroic Archer [20], Innate Attack [Varies], Resistant to Chi Abilities (+3) [10], Striker (Crushing) [5], Trained by a Master [30], or Weapon Master [20-45]. You *must* take either Trained by a Master or Weapon Master! ● Add 20 points in your style's cinematic skills (and prerequisites).

*Tough Guy* (+100 points): You're the soldier from the movies, shrugging off arrows or bullets as you wade into the enemy with a massive two-handed weapon . . . or a hefty machine gun. See *Contender* (p. 32) for statistics.

### Customization Notes

*Styles:* An historical warrior *could* have any style known in his time and place. Armed styles meant for battlefield use – Armatura (p. 150), Hoplomachia (pp. 161-162), Kenjutsu (pp. 173-175), Kyujutsu (p. 179-180), Naginatajutsu (p. 186), Sojutsu (pp. 197-198), Spear Fighting (pp. 196-197), Sword-and-Shield Fighting (pp. 199-200), etc. – make the most sense. For a mounted warrior, add Bajutsu (p. 151), Furusiyya (pp. 159-161), and Knightly Mounted Combat (p. 175-177) to this list. A smart soldier will supplement his training with an unarmed style – perhaps Aikijutsu (p. 149) or Combat Wrestling (pp. 204-205). Modern troops learn Military Hand-to-Hand (pp. 182-185).

*Style Lenses:* A genuine battlefield style requires no lens. Other styles should have "Military" if taught formally, "Street" if picked up in pubs and ports.

# Advantages, Disadvantages, and Skills

The martial arts are ultimately about personal capability. Dedicated fighters train hard, and the most successful tend to be fit, talented people to begin with. These realities make the PCs' advantages, disadvantages, and skills remarkably important in a ***Martial Arts*** campaign – worthy of the same attention as exotic powers in a superhero game or magic in a fantasy setting.

Even if the martial arts are "background color" in another type of campaign – fantasy, historical, military, etc. – the GM should realize that martial artists are popular as PCs. To those who like to play them, their aptitudes and training are as vital as their weapons and background. If the GM wants such heroes to be viable and *fun,* he should lend some thought to how he plans to handle their capabilities. It's crucial to let the players know in advance which traits are allowed, which are off limits, and which work differently.

## Advantages

The advantages discussed below either work differently in a ***Martial Arts*** game or require additional interpretation for martial artists. Consult with the GM before taking any trait described as "cinematic." Such abilities may have additional prerequisites (typically Trained by a Master or Weapon Master) and are likely off-limits in a realistic campaign.

### *Altered Time Rate*

**see p. B38**

This advantage has no place in a *realistic* game. Real-world martial artists who can land multiple techniques in the space of a second are using All-Out Attack (Double) (p. B365), Rapid Strike (p. B370), Combinations (p. 80), and so forth. They aren't warping time!

Altered Time Rate is also unsuitable for "traditional" cinematic settings. To stay true to martial-arts myth, those whose blinding speed results from schooling in secret fighting arts should use Trained by a Master or Weapon Master to halve the Rapid Strike penalty, while those with exceptional coordination should look at Extra Attack (p. B53). Fighters with both can make many *attacks* but are still limited to one *maneuver* per turn.

However, some comic books and movies depict impossibly fast martial artists who can engage several widely spaced opponents before any of them can retaliate. This requires multiple maneuvers per turn, implying Altered Time Rate. In campaigns inspired by such fiction, the GM may allow one or more levels of this advantage to those with Gunslinger, Heroic Archer, Trained by a Master, or Weapon Master.

For more on speedy heroes, see *Multiple Attacks* (pp. 126-128).

### *Claws*

**see p. B42**

Many martial artists toughen their hands by punching a heavy bag, wooden post, etc. The usual goal is to condition the hands so that hitting hard surfaces is less risky (treat this as DR; see *Damage Resistance,* p. 43), but some unorthodox exercises are intended to *harden* the hands into deadly weapons. These include striking iron or steel, driving extended fingers into hot sand, and applying rank-smelling unguents. The results often have a colorful name, such as "iron hand" or "eagle claw." Represent this using Blunt Claws [3] – and perhaps other traits.

*Chakram*

Realistically, any toughening extensive enough to improve punching damage would irreversibly damage the hand. The GM should only let realistic fighters buy Blunt Claws if they also take Bad Grip 1 [-5]. The package is a net disadvantage (-2 points). Since Bad Grip 1 gives -2 to grapple or use melee weapons, this severely curtails the martial artist's *other* combat options.

In a cinematic campaign, the GM may relax this restriction and allow esoteric, non-destructive exercises or amazing ointments. If so, individuals with Trained by a Master should have access to such methods and be able to buy Blunt Claws *without* Bad Grip. If those without Trained by a Master want this advantage, they can either get it the hard way (with Bad Grip) or pay 10 points for Unusual Background (Access to secret hand-toughening exercises).

It's possible to modify just *one* hand. This doesn't reduce the point cost of Claws or Unusual Background, but Bad Grip must have the -80% limitation "One hand only." This reduces its value to -1 point and means that its -2 penalty applies to one-handed tasks with the modified hand. For two-handed tasks, the penalty is only -1.

Those who wish to do this in play should see *Learnable Advantages* (p. B294). Base the time required on the cost of Blunt Claws (3 points). Where applicable, any Unusual Background must be bought *before* training begins, while Bad Grip appears at the end of this time.

For another option, see the Limb limitation under *Striker* (p. 47).

## *Damage Resistance*

**see p. B46**

Suitably limited Damage Resistance fits many kinds of cinematic campaigns. A few ideas:

*Ablative:* Some action heroes can absorb a lot of damage before their luck runs out. They suffer kicks, punches, falls, etc., throughout the story, but only get *hurt* in the finale. To simulate this, the GM may allow DR (Ablative, -80%) [1/level]. Each point of damage rolled blows away a point of DR. This DR doesn't protect against poison – but while it lasts, it *does* keep poisoned weapons from delivering their deadly dose! Such DR works much like HP, but the two aren't the same. Compare lost HP to the victim's basic HP score to determine crippling, major wounds, and death.

*Limited:* Other fictional heroes are resistant to bludgeoning but affected normally by blades, bullets, and beams. To represent this, the GM may permit DR (Limited, Crushing, -40%) [3/level]. Limited, Unarmed is also -40%, and affects cutting and impaling Claws, Strikers, and Teeth.

*Partial:* Martial artists often toughen extremities or limbs into "iron body parts." Those with Trained by a Master may buy DR with Partial (-80% for one hand or one foot; -40% for two hands, two feet, one leg, or one arm; or -20% for two legs or two arms) *and* Tough Skin (-40%). This traditionally accompanies Claws (p. 42), or requires or *is* an Iron Body Parts perk (p. 50).

*Tough Skin:* The GM may let *really* tough guys buy DR (Limited, Crushing, -40%; Tough Skin, -40%) [1/level] for their whole body. Attacks that don't break the skin or carry a contact poison or chi-based touch attack simply hurt less. Some warriors have DR (Tough Skin, -40%) [3/level] and are harder to hurt with all attacks! Martial artists who simulate tough body parts using Partial *must* also take Tough Skin.

The GM decides how much DR to allow and of what type, and should base the time needed to acquire it through training on its final point cost (see *Learnable Advantages,* p. B294). Outside of superhero games, DR 1-2 is probably enough unless it's Ablative. Ablative DR could go up to HP in any cinematic game, and up to 5×HP for heroes who survive 10-story falls and 60-mph car wrecks. Anything is possible, though. Damage Resistance might have nearly *any* modifier when part of a chi power (see *Chi Powers for Martial Artists,* p. 46). The GM should design powerful defensive abilities himself and present them in a manner similar to the offensive ones under *Innate Attack* (pp. 45-47). For instance:

*Ghost Shirt* (-70%): DR 20 (Limited, Bullets, -60%; Pact, -10%) [30]. *Notes:* Your chi lets you resist bullets – *if* you don't use modern weapons yourself! The special Pact limitation means you must take and observe Vow (Use only muscle-powered attacks) [-10]. If you use guns, explosives, etc., for any reason, you immediately lose the DR until 1d days have passed (the GM rolls in secret). Treat the combination of DR and Vow as a meta-trait: Ghost Shirt [20]. *20 points.*

## *Enhanced Defenses*

**see p. B51**

The GM decides how many levels of these traits are available. Enhanced Defenses are cinematic and not especially suitable for a purely realistic game . . . but in a campaign that adds subtle cinematic elements to a largely realistic setting (see *Hybrid Campaigns,* pp. 239-241), a single level won't upset things. The typical "action movie" game can take two levels in stride. Campaigns that feature extreme comic-book and *wuxia* action might go up to three levels, but probably not beyond that – not unless the GM likes untouchable fighters!

## Desirable Advantages

Below are lists of advantages particularly valuable to martial artists, split into categories that reflect common fictional archetypes. Anybody can have the *mundane* traits, but only cinematic or super-powered characters are likely to have the *exotic* or *supernatural* ones.

- *Agility and coordination.* Fighters who put precision before power and feel that evading blows is more useful than being able to take lumps often have some of these traits, plus good DX, Basic Speed, and/or Basic Move. *Mundane:* Ambidexterity (p. B39); Combat Reflexes (p. B43); Enhanced Defenses (p. B51); Extra Attack (p. B53); Flexibility (p. B56); and Perfect Balance (p. B74). *Exotic & Supernatural:* Altered Time Rate (p. B38); Arm DX (p. B40); Enhanced Move (p. B52); Enhanced Time Sense (p. B52); Slippery (p. B85); and Super Jump (p. B89).
- *Endurance and toughness.* Some martial artists pride themselves on being able to take a few hits. This calls for high HT, FP, Will, and/or HP, along with an advantage or two from this list. *Mundane:* Fit (p. B55); Hard to Kill (p. B58); Hard to Subdue (p. B59); High Pain Threshold (p. B59); Rapid Healing (p. B79); and Resistant (p. B81). *Exotic & Supernatural:* Damage Resistance (p. B46); Injury Tolerance (p. B60); Recovery (p. B80); Regeneration (p. B80); Regrowth (p. B80); Supernatural Durability (p. B89); and Unkillable (p. B95).
- *Power and strength.* Heavy hitters require ST – as much as they can afford. In some campaigns, advantages that improve damage are available. *Exotic & Supernatural:* Arm ST (p. B40); Claws (p. B42); Striker (p. B88); Striking ST (p. B88); and Teeth (p. B91).
- *Situational awareness.* Tactical and streetwise warriors try to pick their fights carefully and avoid danger. These traits help, and work best with decent IQ and Per. *Mundane:* Acute Senses (p. B35); Danger Sense (p. B47); Fearlessness (p. B55); Peripheral Vision (p. B74); and Unfazeable (p. B95). *Exotic & Supernatural:* 360° Vision (p. B34) and Vibration Sense (p. B96) – although *any* superhuman sense could come in handy.

Finally, anyone who *routinely* goes on dangerous adventures would benefit from Daredevil (p. B47) and Luck (p. B66)!

Most martial artists can only take Enhanced Defenses listed under "Optional Traits" for their styles; see Chapter 5. Those with Trained by a Master or Weapon Master have access to *all* Enhanced Defenses. Weapon Masters who have Enhanced Parry may add their bonus to parries made using the Parry Missile Weapons skill (p. B212) as well as with regular Melee Weapon skills, when armed with suitable weapons.

To mute the deadliness of ranged weapons so that most fights end up at melee range, the GM may let heroes buy Enhanced Parry (All parries against ranged weapons) for 5 points/level – possibly at higher levels than other types of Enhanced Parry. This gives a bonus to regular parries against thrown weapons (see *Parrying,* p. B376) and to parries with the Parry Missile Weapons skill. Its bonus "stacks" with those for weapon-specific Enhanced Parry advantages.

## *Enhanced Time Sense*

**see p. B52**

A fighter with Enhanced Time Sense (ETS) always acts before one who lacks it – both in the "turn sequence" (p. B363) and in a Wait situation (see *Cascading Waits,* p. 108). This is especially useful to a martial artist who must face firearms. It lets him spring across a room and take out a gunman who has him dead to rights! It also lets him parry bullets, if he knows the Parry Missile Weapons skill (see p. 58). He can even try to dodge a sniper's bullet (normally, no active defense is possible). The GM may extend these benefits to encompass blaster bolts and other slower-than-light ranged attacks.

> *I kick arse for the Lord!*
>
> *– Father McGruder,*
> ***Braindead***

All of this makes ETS perfect for campaigns based on action movies. In the movies, Stars always get the drop on Extras, even alerted Extras with machine guns, and snipers shooting at Stars always miss with their first shot. Naturally, PCs are Stars, as are bosses, top henchmen, and other important NPCs. Stars are likely to have ETS; the GM can even make it a "campaign advantage" that all PCs must have. Everyone else is an Extra, and Extras never have ETS. This approach converts ETS from an exotic advantage to an Unusual Background that extends "plot immunity" to Stars – an *extremely* common feature of martial-arts cinema. In some films, ETS only applies during action sequences; see the special limitation below.

Finally, in campaigns that use *Bullet Time* (p. 133), the GM might wish to reserve that rule for heroes who have ETS.

### New Special Limitation

*Combat Sense:* Your ability only works when you're *fighting.* While the game is in "slow" time for combat (see *Time During Adventures,* p. B497), you enjoy all the usual benefits of ETS. The rest of the time, your advantage does nothing! It won't help you avoid penalties for being rushed on non-combat tasks and it's worthless against traps, snipers, and environmental hazards encountered out of combat. -20%.

## *Extra Attack*

**see p. B53**

A realistic martial artist may take *one* level of Extra Attack to represent excellent coordination. This lets him attack with any combination of two *different* weapons, hands, or feet, with no restrictions on the skills involved. To attack multiple times with the same weapon or body part requires the Multi-Strike enhancement. If both attacks must use the same combat skill, take the Single Skill limitation. Both modifiers appear below.

The GM decides how many levels of Extra Attack are possible in a cinematic game. Multi-Strike should be *mandatory* for humans with more than one level, as with three or more attacks and only two hands, one hand will be striking twice. The GM may relax this requirement if the martial artist takes Single Skill for skill that covers kicking. A warrior with Extra Attack 3 (Single Skill, Karate) could make two punches and two kicks at once – at least in a *chambara* or *wuxia* game where fighters rarely seem to touch the ground!

The GM decides whether Extra Attack is learnable. If so, consider using Single Skill to represent practice with a particular combat skill. Fighters who use paired weapons are more likely to buy Off-Hand Weapon Training (p. 50) and Dual-Weapon Attack (p. 83), however.

See *Multiple Attacks* (pp. 126-128) for other important details.

### New Special Enhancement

*Multi-Strike:* You can strike more than once with the *same* weapon or body part. This lets you launch more attacks than you have limbs, natural weapons, and attack abilities. You *can* use your best attack multiple times. +20%.

### New Special Limitation

*Single Skill:* Your Extra Attacks apply only to a particular combat skill. For instance, Extra Attack 2 (Single Skill, Karate) lets you attack three times – but at least two of the attacks must be with the Karate skill. To attack more than once using a *weapon* skill, you need either one weapon per attack or the Multi-Strike enhancement. -20%.

## *Fearlessness*

**see p. B55**

Mastering a fighting style is a great way to build confidence. The GM may wish to allow martial artists to buy a level of Fearlessness in play for every *two* levels by which their best combat skill exceeds DX. For instance, a fighter with Karate at DX+6 could "learn" Fearlessness 3. This option particularly suits military martial arts.

## *Flexibility*

**see p. B56**

The +3 for Flexibility and +5 for Double-Jointed apply to *all* rolls to break free (p. B371) – including attempts to escape the locks and holds in Chapter 3.

## *Gizmos*

**see p. B57**

Stealthy assassins and warriors in martial-arts fiction, especially ninja, always seem to have *exactly* the hardware they need – blowpipes, flash grenades, garrotes, knives, smoke bombs, throwing stars, vials of poison, etc. – without carrying a concealed armory that slows them with its weight or draws suspicion with its bulk. To simulate this, the GM may permit those with Weapon Master to buy Gizmos with an Accessibility limitation: Only for style, -20%. This limits the Gizmos to things typically used by the martial artist's style (GM's opinion) *and* that weigh no more than 1 lb. apiece . . . but they're undetectable and don't count as encumbrance until revealed.

## *Gunslinger*

**see p. B58**

As the ***Basic Set*** suggests, the GM may allow low-tech versions of this advantage that cover muscle-powered weapons. Here's an example suitable for mythic samurai, fantasy Elves, and green-clad English bandits.

### Heroic Archer

**20 points**

You can perform amazing feats with any weapon that uses the Bow skill. When you Attack or All-Out Attack with a bow, you may add its Accuracy bonus to skill *without* taking an Aim maneuver. If you do Aim, you get +1 after one second or +2 after two or more seconds, in addition to Acc.

When you Move and Attack, you don't get your bow's Acc bonus but may *ignore* its Bulk penalty. Ignore the extra -1 or -2 to skill for a Flying Attack (p. 107) or an Acrobatic Attack (p. 107), too. This lets you shoot at full skill even while running, jumping, sliding down banisters, etc.

You can also disregard Bulk in close combat (see *Weapons for Close Combat,* p. B391). You never get an Acc bonus there but you do shoot at full skill. This makes the Close Combat technique (p. 69) redundant for you.

You can use *Quick-Shooting Bows* (pp. 119-120) to improve your rate of fire when you Move and Attack as well as when you Attack or All-Out Attack. Regardless of your maneuver, *halve* the -6 to skill for this stunt. On an Attack or All-Out Attack, add Acc to your attack roll but not to the skill roll to ready your bow hastily. Similarly, halve the penalty to shoot two arrows at once using Dual-Weapon Attack (p. 83); DWA (Bow) defaults to Bow-2 for you, not Bow-4.

Finally, when you use Fast-Draw (Arrow), total all applicable penalties from *Multiple Fast-Draw* (p. 103), *Fast-Draw from Odd Positions* (pp. 103-104), and *Move and Attack* (p. 107), halve the sum, and round in your favor.

You can combine Heroic Archer with any Weapon Master specialty that covers bows. This gives you the damage bonus for Weapon Master *and* all of the above benefits – and makes the quick-shooting penalty a mere -1!

## *Injury Tolerance*

**see p. B60**

A new form of Injury Tolerance suits some cinematic action heroes:

*Damage Reduction:* You divide the injury you suffer by 2, 3, or 4 *after* subtracting DR from damage and applying wounding modifiers. This normally reduces all injury, but the GM should require the Limited modifier (see *Limited Defenses,* p. B46) in a ***Martial Arts*** game. "Physical Attacks" gives -20%, while "Crushing" or "Unarmed" gives -40%. *50 points for a divisor of 2, 75 points for 3, 100 points for 4.*

## *Innate Attack*

**see p. B61**

Use Innate Attack to create the "chi blasts" wielded by martial artists in video games and comic books. These take *many* forms: flaming breath, devastating kiais, "weapons" of pure chi, and so on. Some of the more improbable claims made for legendary masters in the real world would also be Innate Attacks, such as blows delivered from a distance, direct psychic attacks, and the sinister "hand of death."

If the GM allows such abilities, he should limit damage to keep Innate Attack from eclipsing the fists, swords, bows, and so forth that martial artists *usually* use, even in video games. Martial-arts tradition provides convenient guidelines: these abilities draw their strength from the same well as the martial artist's unarmed attacks – his chi – and should inflict comparable damage. Since most of these exotic attacks violently expend the user's chi, they should cost FP. This provides a convenient hedge against overuse.

Such an attack should still be a useful alternative to an ordinary punch, though. Otherwise, who'd waste time developing it? Fitting capabilities include non-crushing damage, ongoing injury (like poison), the capacity to partially or wholly bypass DR, and *range.*

Below are worked examples of suitable abilities. Damage is 1d, equivalent to a strong man's punch. In each case, the sum of the modifiers used appears in parentheses after the attack's name. To alter damage, apply this total modifier to the cost of an Innate Attack of the desired size.

*Breath of Dragon* (-25%): Burning Attack 1d (Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Melee Attack, Reach 1-4, Cannot Parry, -20%) [4]. *Notes:* A narrow flame jet – spewed from the mouth – that can scorch a target up to four yards away. This counts as a melee attack. Take an Attack maneuver and roll against Innate Attack (Breath) to hit. *4 points.*

*Flying Fists* (+0%): Crushing Attack 1d (Blockable, -10%; Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Low Signature, +10%; Variable, +5%) [5]. *Notes:* By punching or kicking at air, you can smite a distant target. If the victim has never witnessed this ability, he must make a Sense roll at -4 to know he's being attacked! (He may defend normally against later uses.) It's otherwise a standard ranged attack with Acc 3, 1/2D 10, Max 100, and RoF 1. To use it, take an Attack maneuver. Roll against Karate to hit. *5 points.*

*Ghost Knife* (-40%): Impaling Attack 1d (Blockable, -10%; Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Inaccurate 3, -15%; Increased 1/2D, ×5, +10%; Reduced Range, ×1/5, -20%) [5]. *Notes:* A hurled blade of pure chi, this is a standard ranged attack with Acc 0, 1/2D 10, Max 20, and RoF 1. To use it, take an Attack maneuver and roll against Thrown Weapon (Knife) to hit. *5 points.*

# Chi Powers for Martial Artists

***Martial Arts*** mostly treats passive chi abilities as advantages (e.g., Resistant to Chi Abilities) while modeling active ones as cinematic skills – Lizard Climb, Power Blow, etc. – in order to make them easier to tie into the styles in Chapter 5. Comic books and video games, however, often depict all such capabilities as something akin to psi powers or super-powers. They might be evident at birth, awakened by initiation or ordeal, or even learned (see *Learnable Advantages*, p. B294).

Like a psi power, a chi power consists of a set of advantages that must be bought with a power modifier (see *Power Modifier,* p. B254). Adept users may purchase levels of a Talent that aids die rolls to use those abilities, comparable to a psionic Talent (see *Psionic Talents,* p. B255). Below are two examples.

## *Body Control*

The Body Control power lets you channel your chi *internally* in order to heal injury, perform amazing athletic feats, purge your body of poison, and so on.

*Body Control Talent:* You get +1 per level to use any Body Control ability, and can use earned points to acquire new abilities. In some worlds, Inner Balance (p. 47) *replaces* Body Control Talent and benefits both Body Control abilities and the skills listed for Inner Balance. *5 points/level (15 points/level for Inner Balance).*

*Body Control Abilities:* Breath Holding; Catfall; Damage Resistance, with Tough Skin; Enhanced Defenses (any); Enhanced Move (Ground); Extra Attack, with Multi-Strike; Lifting ST; Metabolism Control; Perfect Balance; Protected Sense (any); Radiation Tolerance; Reduced Consumption; Regeneration; Resistant, to any *physical* threat; Sensitive Touch; Silence; Striking ST; Super Climbing; Super Jump; Temperature Tolerance; and Universal Digestion.

*Power Modifier:* Body Control. The advantage is a chi ability within the Body Control power. To maintain it, you must spend a few hours a day exercising and meditating. Take a -10-point Disciplines of Faith or Vow disadvantage to cover this. If you fail to roleplay your disadvantage, your *entire power* fails the first time you call upon any of its abilities. Once it does, none of your abilities will work and you'll feel ill, suffering an affliction chosen by the GM from those under *Irritating Conditions* (p. B428); e.g., coughing/sneezing, drowsy, nauseated, or pain. The only cure is to take 1d days out from other activities to rebalance your chi. -10%.

## *Chi Projection*

The Chi Projection power lets you direct your chi *externally* in order to blast enemies, project force fields, fly, and so forth.

*Chi Projection Talent:* You get +1 per level to use any Chi Projection ability, and can use earned points to acquire new abilities. In some worlds, Forceful Chi (p. 47) *replaces* Chi Projection Talent and benefits both Chi Projection abilities and the skills listed for Forceful Chi. *5 points/level (15 points/level for Forceful Chi).*

*Chi Projection Abilities:* Damage Resistance, with Force Field; Flight; Healing; Obscure (any); Rapier Wit, with Based on HT; Scanning Sense (Para-Radar); Terror, with Based on HT; and Vibration Sense. Chi Projection can justify nearly any Affliction or Innate Attack – and sometimes Telekinesis. The GM will usually restrict you to one or two "signature" attacks and set an upper limit on damage. Be sure to come up with elaborate names and special effects for your attacks! See *Innate Attack* (pp. 45-47) for examples.

*Power Modifier:* Chi Projection. The advantage is a chi ability within the Chi Projection power. Otherwise, this is identical to the Body Control limitation. -10%.

## *Other Powers*

The GM who wants to create additional chi powers will get a lot of use out of ***GURPS Powers.*** Body Control and Chi Projection (as "Bioenergy") are both there, and the Body Control power modifier appears as a generic -10% modifier – "Chi" – for use with many powers. For instance, Chi can replace the modifiers given for the Antipsi, ESP, Psychic Healing, and Psychokinesis powers on pp. B255-257, converting them from psi powers to chi powers.

*Hand of Death* (+205%): Toxic Attack 1d (Contact Agent, -30%; Cosmic, Lingering special effect, +100%; Costs Fatigue, 2 FP, -10%; Cyclic, 10 sec., 6 cycles, Resistible, +125%; Delay, Triggered, +50%; Low Signature, +10%; Melee Attack, Reach C, -30%; Resistible, HT-4, -10%) [13]. *Notes:* To deliver the Hand of Death, you *must* touch bare skin. This requires a Karate roll in combat, an ordinary touch otherwise. Only witnesses with the Esoteric Medicine skill will recognize the Hand. Success means you can – at an unspecified future date, from any distance – trigger the Hand. The victim must then roll HT-4 every 10 seconds for a minute. Each failure means 1d injury, as if from poison. There's no way to remove an untriggered Hand or interrupt its toxic effects. Survivors heal normally. *13 points.*

*Mega-Kiai* (+75%): Crushing Attack 1d (Accessibility, Not in vacuum, -10%; Based on HT, +20%; Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Malediction 1, +100%; No Blunt Trauma, -20%; No Knockback, -10%) [9]. *Notes:* Similar to the Kiai skill (p. B203), this mighty shout *injures* the target! To affect the victim, take a Concentrate maneuver and *win* a Quick Contest of Will vs. his HT. Your roll is at -1 per yard of distance between you. *9 points.*

*Soul Blast* (+170%): Fatigue Attack 1d (Malediction 2, +150%; No Signature, +20%) [27]. *Notes:* This invisible psychic attack disrupts the victim's chi. To affect him, take a Concentrate maneuver and *win* a Quick Contest of Will. Range penalties from the *Size and Speed/Range Table* (p. B550) apply to your roll. This chi attack *doesn't* cost FP like the others . . . it's slow and subtle, not violent. *27 points.*

Some of these abilities resemble weapons or unarmed attacks, and allow attack rolls against normal combat skills instead of the Innate Attack skill. This is a "special effect" aimed at preserving the martial-arts flavor. It doesn't affect point cost.

Normally, the only legal defense against a ranged Innate Attack is a dodge. However, a few of these attacks have the Blockable limitation or Melee Attack limitation, which lets the target attempt a block or parry. Others are Maledictions, which can be resisted but *not* avoided.

Innate Attacks are *unrealistic* and strictly for over-the-top cinematic games – and even then, they have Trained by a Master or Weapon Master as a prerequisite.

## *Regeneration*

**see p. B80**

Regeneration offers an alternative to *Flesh Wounds* (p. B417) for the GM who wants cinematic PCs back in the game soon after being knocked out or left for dead, but who prefers up-front point costs. The GM chooses the permitted levels. Accessibility limitations are prudent on speedier versions. "Not in combat" (-20%) limits healing to between fights. "Only when unconscious" (-30%) means the hero heals after he passes out, until he awakens at 1 HP. Limited, Crushing (-40%) or Unarmed (-40%) allow quick comebacks from beatings – but be aware that they *also* create the need to record what caused each wound.

## *Resistant*

**see p. B80**

Martial artists in cinematic games can be Resistant to Hypnotic Hands (p. 61), Invisibility Art (p. B202), Kiai (p. B203), Pressure Points (p. B215), or "Hand of Death" attacks (see *Innate Attack,* pp. 45-47). Neck-toughening exercises (an "iron neck") allow Resistant to Neck Injury, which gives a bonus in Quick Contests to avoid injury from chokes (p. B370) and Neck Snap (p. B404). Arm exercises might give a similar bonus to resist injury from Arm Lock (p. B403) and Wrench Limb (p. B404). Individually, the above items are "Rare." Resistant (+3) to any one of them costs 1 point and makes an excellent Style Perk.

The blanket category "Chi Abilities" is comparable in importance to "Psionics" and therefore "Very Common." Anyone might enjoy Resistant to Chi Abilities (+3) [10]; this represents unusually strong chi. Individuals with Trained by a Master can go as high as Resistant to Chi Abilities (+8) [15]. Immunity to Chi Abilities [30] only suits unnatural beings. These traits protect against *all* noxious effects caused by cinematic skills or chi powers (see *Chi Powers for Martial Artists,* p. 46).

## *Striker*

**see p. B88**

In a cinematic game, the GM may permit fighters to buy any body part that isn't a limb or an extremity as a Striker. Real-world martial artists have claimed to have "iron" foreheads and buttocks, among other things. Such Strikers must be crushing, can't have the Long enhancement, and frequently suffer from Cannot Parry, Clumsy, and/or Limited Arc.

Video game-inspired Strikers – such as a heavy spiked ball at the end of a long braid – have no such restrictions. They can have almost any reach and damage type. It's up to the GM whether things like that spiked ball are Strikers or just equipment. As a rule, if it gets damage bonuses from unarmed combat skills *and* you're gaming in an unrealistic genre where searches for weapons always conveniently overlook it, it's a Striker.

All Strikers inflict thrust damage at +1 per die – more than most punches and kicks.

### New Special Limitation

*Limb:* Your crushing Striker *isn't* a new body part but a limb. The limb has its normal reach and can strike with Brawling or Karate. Find punching or kicking damage as usual, including skill bonuses, and add +1 per die for the Striker. This *isn't* cumulative with the effects of Claws. *Limb, Arm* is cinematic, and also lets you parry with the arm as if it were a weapon; Unusual Background and training time are as per *Claws* (p. 42). *Limb, Shin* is a realistic part of some styles' training, and enhances shin kicks (p. 112). -20%.

## *Talent*

**see p. B89**

For general rules governing Talents, see the ***Basic Set.*** Two new Talents are germane to ***Martial Arts:***

*Forceful Chi:* Breaking Blow, Erotic Art, Flying Leap, Hypnotic Hands, Hypnotism, Invisibility Art, Kiai, Power Blow, Precognitive Parry, Pressure Points, Pressure Secrets, Push, Throwing Art, and Zen Archery. *Reaction bonus:* honorable opponents, those who practice "hard" or "external" styles (including potential students and masters), and lovers (past or present). *15 points/level.*

*Inner Balance:* Autohypnosis, Blind Fighting, Body Control, Body Language, Body Sense, Breath Control, Dreaming, Immovable Stance, Light Walk, Lizard Climb, Meditation, Mental Strength, Mind Block, and Sensitivity. *Reaction bonus:* pacifists, ascetics, and those who practice "soft" or "internal" martial-arts styles. *15 points/level.*

Someone with Forceful Chi is gifted at projecting his chi – both subtly and violently – to affect objects and people. He can even influence missiles in flight, helping him aim his own ranged weapons and evade his enemies'. His tangible aura of fitness impresses those who face him on the battlefield, at the dojo, or in the bedroom.

A hero with Inner Balance has superior control over his body and mind. This inner peace strengthens his will, sharpens his senses, and enables him to perform impossible feats of endurance and balance. He's visibly at peace, and those who appreciate order and focus find him pleasant to be around.

Forceful Chi and Inner Balance are in many ways opposites. The GM could even make them mutually exclusive. However, the greatest masters of the Chinese martial arts – whose *yang* and *yin* are in perfect balance – might have high levels of *both* talents.

*Inigo: You're using Bonetti's defense against me, ah?*
*Man in Black: I thought it fitting, considering the rocky terrain.*
*Inigo: Naturally, you must expect me to attack with Capo Ferro . . .*
*Man in Black: . . . naturally – but I find Thibault cancels out Capo Ferro, don't you?*
*Inigo: Unless the enemy has studied his Agrippa – which I have.*

***– The Princess Bride***

These Talents don't guarantee *access* to cinematic skills. If a skill lists Trained by a Master or Weapon Master as a prerequisite, you must possess the relevant advantage to learn it.

## *Trained by a Master*

**see p. B93**

This advantage represents schooling in the esoteric secrets of one or more fighting styles. These martial arts might be armed or unarmed, and of any provenance. One of the primary purposes of Trained by a Master is to give access to cinematic abilities, which might include:

- The cinematic skills Blind Fighting, Body Control, Breaking Blow, Flying Leap, Hypnotic Hands, Immovable Stance, Invisibility Art, Kiai, Light Walk, Lizard Climb, Mental Strength, Power Blow, Precognitive Parry, Pressure Points, Pressure Secrets, Push, Sensitivity, Throwing Art, and Zen Archery – but only if they're part of one of the martial artist's styles!
- Any technique or perk marked with an asterisk (*) to indicate that it's cinematic, provided it belongs to one of the martial artist's styles.
- Exotic and supernatural advantages that are normally off-limits to ordinary humans, such as Altered Time Rate (p. 42), suitably modified Damage Resistance (p. 43), certain Innate Attacks (p. 45-47), and chi powers (see *Chi Powers for Martial Artists,* p. 46).
- Fewer restrictions on advantages that are available to everyone, such as being able to take Claws (p. 42) without Bad Grip, buy all Enhanced Defenses (pp. 43-44), possess more than one level of Extra Attack (p. 44), have Resistant (p. 47) at up to +8 vs. chi abilities, and wield Strikers (p. 47) with Karate.

Another significant benefit of this advantage is to expand the martial artist's combat options. In campaigns that use the optional rules in Chapter 4, Trained by a Master (or Weapon Master) is required for *Chambara Fighting* (pp. 128-130) and *Bullet Time* (p. 133). The GM may also make it a prerequisite for attacking more than twice with Rapid Strike (see *Rapid Strike,* p. 127) or employing extra effort in a fight (see *Extra Effort in Combat,* p. 131). Those with Trained by a Master are never subject to *Harsh Realism for Unarmed Fighters* (p. 124). Finally, Trained by a Master halves the penalties for Rapid Strike (p. B370) and multiple parries (p. B376) – although this *isn't* cumulative with the similar halving for Weapon Master.

## *Weapon Master*

**see p. B99**

In a ***Martial Arts*** campaign, this advantage represents natural talent with low-tech weapons, or training in the esoteric secrets of an *armed* fighting style. Its main benefit is the damage bonus noted in the ***Basic Set,*** but it also grants access to cinematic abilities, which might include:

- The cinematic skills Blind Fighting, Flying Leap, Kiai, Mental Strength, Power Blow, Precognitive Parry, Pressure Points, Sensitivity, Throwing Art, and Zen Archery, as long as they belong to one of the martial artist's *armed* combat styles.
- *Weapon* techniques and perks marked as cinematic (*), provided they're found among the martial artist's armed styles.
- Several advantages that are usually forbidden to normal characters, such as Altered Time Rate (p. 42), Gizmos (p. 45), certain Innate Attacks (pp. 45-47), and chi powers (see *Chi Powers for Martial Artists,* p. 46).
- Exemption from the usual restrictions on Enhanced Defenses (pp. 43-44) and Extra Attack (p. 44).

Those with Weapon Master also have wider options in combat. When using weapons covered by their advantage, they receive half the usual penalties for *Multiple Fast-Draw* (p. 103), *Quick-Shooting Bows* (pp. 119-120), *Rapid Strike with Thrown Weapons* (pp. 120-121), and *Multiple Blocks* (p. 123). At the GM's option, they can use *Chambara Fighting* (pp. 128-130) and *Bullet Time* (p. 133), too. They can generally attack more than twice using a Rapid Strike (see *Rapid Strike,* p. 127) and employ extra effort in battle (see *Extra Effort in Combat,* p. 131) – even if ordinary fighters cannot.

As the ***Basic Set*** indicates, if you have Weapon Master, you may halve the penalties for Rapid Strike (p. B370) and multiple parries (p. B376). Those who also have Trained by a Master do this *once* – they don't divide by 4. However, the halving of penalties for quick-shooting bows *does* "stack" with the effects of Heroic Archer (p. 45), for Weapon Master specialties covering bows.

These benefits apply when using any weapon covered by your advantage – whether in melee or ranged combat, and whether defending against melee attacks or using the Parry Missile Weapons skill (p. B212) against missiles – as long it's capable of what you wish to attempt.

## *Wild Talent*

**see p. B99**

This ability is especially suitable for individuals who've achieved "harmony with the Tao" – the putative goal of many Chinese martial arts. A warrior can use this advantage to attempt unmastered techniques at *full* skill instead of at a default penalty, if he knows the underlying skill. A martial artist who also has Trained by a Master or Weapon Master can even attempt unknown cinematic skills. If your Wild Talent *only* works for these two purposes, add the -20% limitation "Focused, Martial Arts."

### *Extra Hit Points*

The GM may let martial artists with appropriate Style Perks increase Hit Points by up to 100% instead of the usual 30%. Hulking TV wrestlers, heavyweight boxers, and massive *sumotori* traditionally enjoy this benefit. Such giants should use the *Build Table* (p. B18) to find weight from *HP* instead of ST. Use the "Overweight" column for HP up to 130% of ST, the "Fat" column for HP up to 150% of ST, and the "Very Fat" column for HP up to 200% of ST.

Extra HP can also represent an unrealistic damage-taking capacity for ordinary-sized people; see *Cinematic Injury* (p. 139). In that case, *anyone* might be able to buy lots of HP. Hit points in excess of ST don't affect the weight of such characters, or increase the damage they take or inflict in falls and slams.

Remember that major wounds, crippling, and death all depend on thresholds calculated from HP. Those with 20+ HP also benefit from *High HP and Shock* (p. B419) and *High HP and Healing* (p. B424).

# PERKS

Three new types of perks are important in ***Martial Arts*** games. All can be gained in play. Each perk costs a point. For more on perks, see pp. B100-101.

## *Style Familiarity*

Style Familiarity means you've studied and/or practiced a martial-arts style. You *must* pay a point for familiarity with any style you know. (*Exception:* The "Self-Defense" lens, p. 145, lets you ignore this requirement . . . but you won't enjoy the allowances below.) Its effects are as follows:

- You can acquire the style's Style Perks, learn its cinematic skills (provided you have Trained by a Master or Weapon Master), improve its techniques whenever you have the points, and buy abilities listed among its "Optional Traits" – even ones that are generally off-limits to PCs, if the GM agrees. Style Familiarity acts as an Unusual Background that gives you access to these things. See *Components of a Style* (pp. 141-143).
- You're familiar with the style's *culture* and don't suffer the -3 for lack of Cultural Familiarity when using such skills as Connoisseur (Weapons), Games, Savoir-Faire (Dojo), or Teaching to interact with co-stylists.
- In most settings, you have the equivalent of a 1-point Claim to Hospitality (p. B41) with a school or instructor.
- If your opponent has studied one or more styles and you have Style Familiarity with them *all,* you may reduce the defense penalty from his feints and Deceptive Attacks by -1. You're aware of his styles' tricks and tactics! If the technique he uses with Deceptive Attack or to follow a feint isn't an orthodox part of any of his styles, ignore this effect.

In some campaigns, the GM may let you learn Style Familiarity for styles so secret that they lack style descriptions. For these, ignore the rules above and use *Shout It Out!* (p. 132).

## *Style Perks*

Style Perks are minor advantages or rules exemptions for veteran warriors. The best way to learn them is to study a martial art, as most styles offer them as advanced training. Anyone may buy one Style Perk per 20 points in combat skills. A martial artist who has Style Familiarity may further buy one of *that style's* perks per 10 points he has in its techniques and required skills; see *Components of a Style* (pp. 141-143). For example, 40 points in style abilities would allow two general perks *plus* four style-specific ones. Those with Style Familiarity for multiple styles and the minimum investment in each style (see *Combining Styles,* pp. 147-148) may count points in skills and techniques as part of each style that shares them.

Below, an asterisk (*) indicates a *cinematic* perk that requires Trained by a Master or Weapon Master. Perks with a † require specialization by skill, technique, weapon, etc., as noted. A style may offer a more restricted perk, but it still costs a point. The Style Perks for specific styles appear in Chapter 5 – and if they aren't listed here, they aren't available to non-stylists.

### Armor Familiarity†

You're accustomed to fighting in armor. You may ignore -1 in encumbrance penalties to attack or parry with Judo, Karate, or a fencing skill. You have no penalty at Light encumbrance, -1 at Medium, and so on. You must specialize by skill: Armor Familiarity (Judo), Armor Familiarity (Rapier), etc. The GM may permit multiple levels to negate greater encumbrance. Each level is an additional Style Perk.

### Biting Mastery

You've learned a highly developed body of effective bites for use in close quarters. You may use Karate skill to attack with a bite and add the Karate damage bonus to biting damage. Styles for fanged nonhumans often have this perk!

### Chi Resistance*†

You can rally your chi against a particular chi-based attack form, giving you +3 to resist. Examples include Chi Resistance (Hypnotic Hands) and Chi Resistance (Pressure Points). For details and more examples, see *Resistant* (p. 47).

### Cotton Stomach*

You've learned to catch attackers' hands and feet using your abdominal muscles (or rolls of fat!). Once per turn, you can attempt a standard unarmed parry against a punch or kick to your torso, but using your *body* instead of a limb. Success lets you use any follow-up technique capable of trapping an attacker – e.g., Arm Lock or Leg Grapple – "hands free."

### Drunken Fighting*

You've mastered the mythical art of fighting while intoxicated (see pp. B439-440). When you're tipsy or drunk (p. B428), treat the -1 or -2 to DX as a +1 or +2 *bonus* in a fight. Penalties to IQ and self-control rolls apply normally!

### Exotic Weapon Training†

Certain weapons have a built-in skill penalty due to their unusual balance relative to other weapons used with the same weapon skill. These include the *chigoridani,* three-part staff, and trident (see Chapter 6). You've trained enough with such a weapon that you no longer suffer this penalty. You must specialize by weapon.

### Form Mastery†

When using a weapon that works with multiple skills, you must normally specify the skill you're using at the *start* of your turn (see *Switching Weapon Skills,* p. 104). You've practiced fluid shifts between forms and can change skills freely during your turn. For instance, you could start your turn using a spear with the Staff skill, switch to the Spear skill to attack, and then return to Staff for parrying. You must specialize in a weapon: Form Mastery (Naginata), Form Mastery (Spear), etc.

### Grip Mastery†

Switching between one- and two-handed grips, or a regular grip and a Defensive Grip (p. 109-111), usually takes a Ready maneuver – but you've practiced until this has become second nature. You can do either grip change (or *both*) as a free action *once* on your turn, before or after your maneuver. For instance, you could make a one-handed katana cut and end your turn in a two-handed Defensive Grip. Next turn, you could shift to a regular two-handed grip and attack. You must specialize by weapon; Grip Mastery (Katana) is the most common version.

### Ground Guard

You know a body of tactics for use when you and your opponent are both on the ground. In that situation only, you get +1 in all Regular or Quick Contests to do with grappling – pins, chokes, attempts to break free, etc. If your foe knows Ground Guard, too, your bonuses cancel out. This perk is named for a fighting position used when lying face-up, commonly called the "guard," but encompasses many related positions and also works when crawling or lying face-down.

### Improvised Weapons†

You've practiced fighting with everyday items. These weapons might be improvised for others but they're familiar to you. Ignore skill penalties (only) when wielding them; see *Improvised Weapons* (p. 224). You must specialize by combat skill. You *can* learn Improvised Weapons (Brawling) or Improvised Weapons (Karate) to use improvised fist loads effectively.

### Iron Body Parts *†

You've toughened a body part through exotic exercises. This provides resistance to injury – either a bonus to resist harm from breaks and locks (see *Resistant,* p. 47) or DR against strikes (see *Damage Resistance,* p. 43) – and the right to buy optional abilities. Details depend on the body part, each of which is its own specialty:

*Iron Arms:* You have +3 to ST and HT rolls to resist injury from Arm Lock, Wrench Arm, and the like. You may opt to purchase DR 1 or 2 (Partial, Arms, -20%; Tough Skin, -40%) [2 or 4] or Striker (Crushing; Limb, Arm, -20%) [4].

*Iron Hands:* This is simply DR 1 (Partial, Hands, -40%; Tough Skin, -40%) [1]. Once you've acquired this perk, you may elect to buy a second level of DR [1] and/or Blunt Claws [3]. See *Claws* (p. 42) for possible drawbacks to the latter option.

*Iron Legs:* You have +3 to ST and HT rolls to resist injury from Leg Lock, Wrench Leg, and similar techniques, and may optionally acquire DR 1 or 2 (Partial, Legs, -20%; Tough Skin, -40%) [2 or 4].

*Iron Neck:* You have +3 to ST and HT rolls to resist injury from chokes, strangles, and Neck Snaps, and may buy DR 1 or 2 (Partial, Neck, -50%; Tough Skin, -40%) [1 or 2], if you wish.

### Naval Training

You've trained at fighting on a rocking ship or boat. You may ignore the -2 to attack and -1 to defend for bad footing under those circumstances.

### Neck Control†

You're adept at striking from the clinch. You must specialize in one unarmed striking skill. Whenever you've grappled a *standing* opponent's head, neck, or torso (only), you get +1 to hit when you strike that foe with your skill.

### Off-Hand Weapon Training†

You've practiced a particular skill enough with your "off" hand that you can ignore the -4 for using that hand (see *Handedness,* p. B14). This extends to all active defenses and techniques based on that skill. You must specialize by skill; any one-handed Melee Weapon, ranged weapon, or Fast-Draw skill qualifies.

This perk completely replaces the Off-Hand Weapon Training (OHWT) *technique* on p. B232. This is because the cost to buy off -4 as a Hard technique for even one skill is 5 points – the same as Ambidexterity, which eliminates the penalty for *all* skills – and in a ***Martial Arts*** campaign, fighters may need several versions of OHWT to be proficient in their style. As a perk, OHWT is cheaper than Ambidexterity for those with fewer than five specialties . . . and if someone is *that* dedicated, the GM should let him replace his five perks with Ambidexterity for the same points!

### Power Grappling

You're adept at applying force precisely when wrestling. *Except* when rolling to hit or for an active defense, you may opt to base normally DX-based grappling rolls on ST. Moreover, whenever you make a ST roll that usually enjoys a ST bonus from Sumo Wrestling or Wrestling – e.g., the roll to break free – you may waive your bonus and attempt a ST-based Judo, Sumo Wrestling, or Wrestling roll *instead*.

### Quick-Sheathe†

You've practiced sheathing your weapon *quickly*. After switching to a Reversed Grip (pp. 111-112) using a Ready maneuver, you can try a Fast-Draw roll to scabbard your weapon on the same turn. You can even attempt rolls against both the Reverse Grip technique (p. 78) *and* Fast-Draw to sheathe the weapon as a free action; see *Quick Sheathing* (p. 102). Specialties match those for Fast-Draw (pp. 56-57): Quick-Sheathe (Sword), Quick-Sheathe (Tonfa), etc.

### Quick-Swap†

You've perfected the art of juggling a one-handed weapon between hands. Once per turn, *on your turn,* you can switch hands as a free action. The receiving hand must be empty. You must specialize by weapon skill: Quick-Swap (Knife), Quick-Swap (Rapier), etc.

### Rapid Retraction†

You punch or kick so quickly that it's difficult for your opponent to trap your limb. You get +1 on all rolls to avoid such techniques as Arm Lock and Leg Grapple when they follow an enemy parry. You must specialize in Rapid Retraction (Punches) or Rapid Retraction (Kicks). The GM may allow Rapid Retraction (Bites) for nonhumans.

### Shield-Wall Training

You've drilled extensively at fighting from behind a shield wall. You can sacrifice your block defense to block an attack on an ally standing *beside* you. Furthermore, you may ignore the -2 to attack when holding a large shield (see p. B547).

### Shtick†

As noted under *Shtick* (p. B101), a "cool move" that provides no combat bonuses is a valid perk if it might occasionally be useful. Styles with Combat Art skills often teach such flourishes. An example is *chiburi:* flicking blood off a sword blade. Such Shticks require a combat skill roll to perform. Most either allow an Intimidation attempt as a free action (chiburi works this way) *or* give the maximum +4 for "displays of strength" listed for Intimidation (p. B202) if you use your entire next turn to make a deliberate attempt.

### Skill Adaptation†

A style's skills represent its basic "subsystems." The techniques that normally default to each skill are that subsystem's core moves – but you know some less-orthodox tactics. You can learn techniques that *don't* default to a skill as if they did, at the usual default penalties. If a technique notes several penalties, use the easiest; e.g., Drop Kick defaults to Brawling-1, Sumo Wrestling-1, or Wrestling-2, so adapting it to Karate makes your default Karate-1. The GM sets the scope of each specialty. It may be as sweeping as Skill Adaptation (Brawling techniques default to Karate) or as narrow as Skill Adaptation (Breakfall defaults to Karate). A few examples important enough to get special names:

*Acrobatic Feints:* You've practiced using gymnastics to catch enemies off-guard. You may use the Acrobatics skill to feint and may improve the Feint (Acrobatics) technique. Similar perks might exist for other skills (e.g., "Dancing Feints" for the Dancing skill); see *Feints Using Non-Combat Skills* (p. 101).

*Acrobatic Kicks:* You've learned to kick as a natural extension of flips, jumps, and spins. You can default kicking techniques to Acrobatics instead of to Brawling or Karate. Acrobatic kicks *never* receive Brawling or Karate damage bonuses.

*Clinch:* You've integrated limited grappling moves into your Boxing, Brawling, or Karate skill – choose one. Whenever you grapple a *standing* opponent's head, neck, or torso (only), use your striking skill for the attack roll. This is rarely worth the point if you already know a grappling skill!

### Special Exercises†

You pursue an exercise regimen that grants access to a capability that's normally cinematic or off-limits for your race. This is a perk-level Unusual Background – the ability itself has its own cost. Each trait requires its own perk: Special Exercises (DR 1 with Tough Skin), Special Exercises (Striking ST +1), Special Exercises (Arm ST +1), Special Exercises (HP can exceed ST by 100%), and so on.

### Special Setup†

Certain techniques require a specific "setup" before you can execute them. You've learned an alternative setup. Your specialty must name *one* technique and spell out the change. For instance, if you can use Arm Lock after a Karate parry instead of after a Judo parry, you have Special Setup (Karate Parry > Arm Lock).

### Strongbow

You've learned how best to draw a heavy bow. If you know Bow at DX+1, you can shoot a bow of your ST+1 instead of your ST. Bow at DX+2 or better lets you use a bow of your ST+2. You need a strong bow to see range and damage improvements; there's no effect when shooting a bow of your ST or less.

### Style Adaptation†

You've adapted other styles' techniques for use with your style. Merge the techniques lists of all the styles involved, including yours. You may improve any technique on the combined list, provided it defaults to one of your style's skills. The GM specifies the styles adapted, which might be one or many; the number doesn't affect point cost. Style Adaptation (All) *is* legitimate for modern mixed styles.

### Suit Familiarity†

You've learned special moves that offset the limitations of a bulky environment suit. You may ignore the DX penalties for such a suit. The Environment Suit skill (p. B192) still sets an upper limit on effective combat skill – you just don't suffer any *extra* DX penalties. You must specialize by Environment Suit skill: Suit Familiarity (Diving Suit), Suit Familiarity (Vacc Suit), etc.

### Sure-Footed†

You've studied low, stable stances for fighting on shaky ground. This lets you ignore the -2 to attack and -1 to defend for a specific type of bad footing. You must specialize. Sure-Footed (Slippery) covers mud, oil, and blood, but not grappling an *opponent* with the Slippery advantage or an oily coating. Sure-Footed (Uneven) covers hills, piles of corpses, etc. The GM may allow other versions, such as *Naval Training* (p. 50).

### Teamwork†

You've practiced fighting in a team. To use this perk, everyone in the squad must take a Ready maneuver to "form up." After that, the entire group acts at the same point in the combat sequence as its *slowest* member. On the team's collective turn, each member may select any maneuver he likes. The only requirement is that after everyone in the original formation has taken his turn, they're all still adjacent to one another (in adjoining hexes). If anyone gets separated, the team must form up again – with or without the straggler. A fighter who's formed-up may:

- Brace a teammate in *front* of him and within a yard, adding 1/5 (round down) of his ST or HP, as applicable, to his ally's score when his friend resists a slam (p. B371), executes a shove (p. B372), or suffers knockback (p. B378). This is a free action.
- Feint or make a Ruse and transfer the benefits to another teammate who can reach the same foe.
- Ignore the -2 to attack enemies in close combat with teammates (p. B392).
- Sacrifice a parry or block to defend a teammate *behind* him from a long weapon or missile that passes within a yard (through his hex).

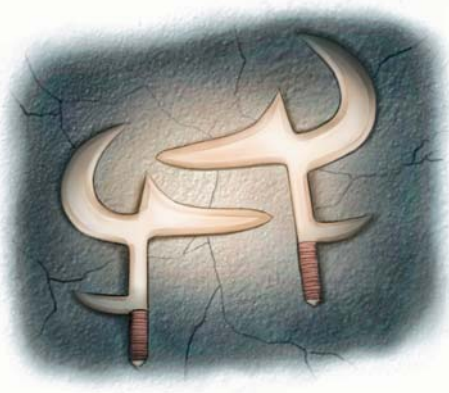
You must specialize by style *or* in working with a particular small group (such as an adventuring party). Only those with the *same* perk can form up and enjoy these benefits.

### Technique Adaptation†

You've internalized your style's methodology so completely that you can adapt one of its techniques to skills it doesn't teach. You must specialize by technique: Technique Adaptation (Feint), Technique Adaptation (Ground Fighting), and so on. Once you've spent at least a point to improve that technique for a skill that's part of your style, you can buy that technique for other combat skills you know, provided it normally defaults to them. For instance, if you've learned Technique Adaptation (Feint) and bought up Feint (Karate) as part of your style, and studied Shortsword on your own, you could raise Feint (Shortsword).

### Technique Mastery†

You've trained so intensively at a technique that you enjoy a higher maximum level. You must specialize in a technique – commonly a kick or a throw – that's part of your style and that appears in Chapter 3 (the GM may make exceptions). It must have a normal maximum of full skill or better, which disqualifies techniques based on active defenses and those that "cannot exceed prerequisite skill-*x*." A skill's core uses aren't eligible; e.g., Technique Mastery (Judo Throw) and Technique Mastery (Kicking) are fine, but Technique Mastery (Judo Grapple) and Technique Mastery (Karate Punch) aren't. If the standard maximum is skill, *yours* is skill+4. If the limit is ordinarily greater than skill, your maximum is two levels higher than usual (e.g., skill+6 with Arm Lock).



*Hungamungas*

### Unique Technique†

You can use and improve a technique that's otherwise forbidden by *Creating New Techniques* (pp. 89-95). All such techniques are Hard. Each exemption requires its own perk. This is a perk-level Unusual Background.

### Unusual Training†

With sufficient training, certain cinematic skills and techniques might work in reality. You've studied one of these. Unusual Training is an Unusual Background that lets you buy a cinematic capability *without* Trained by a Master or Weapon Master. Since what's "cinematic" is often not the feat but the ability to perform it unrestricted, the perk might specify a set of "believable" circumstances that must be true to use the skill or technique. For instance, Unusual Training (Dual-Weapon Attack, Both attacks must target the same foe) permits a fighter to improve Dual-Weapon Attack for use on one opponent; he still has the full -4 if he attacks *adjacent* adversaries simultaneously, because he lacks Trained by a Master and Weapon Master. *Tameshiwari* – realistic breaking techniques – is Unusual Training (Breaking Blow, Only vs. well-braced objects out of combat).

### Weapon Adaptation†

You've adapted the moves used with one group of melee weapons to another class of weapons. This lets you wield the weapons covered by one weapon skill using a different skill and its techniques, with all of the benefits and drawbacks of that skill, provided the replacement skill defaults to the usual one at no worse than -4 *and* uses the same number of hands. Each adaptation is a separate perk; e.g., Weapon Adaptation (Shortsword to Smallsword) lets you use the Smallsword skill to fight when equipped with a Shortsword weapon – complete with fencing parries, superior retreats, and encumbrance penalties. The GM may permit silly adaptations, such as Knife to Halberd, as cinematic perks.

### *Weapon Bond*

You own a weapon that's uniquely suited to you. Its quality might be no better than normal, but when *you* use it, you're at +1 to effective skill. This isn't a mystical attunement but a physical matter of balance, fit to your hand, and the like. If the weapon is lost or destroyed, the bond doesn't transfer to a new weapon, but you can acquire a new Weapon Bond in play.

You can have a bond to a weapon of any quality. The price paid for the weapon reflects the quality but not your special bond with it.

## DISADVANTAGES

Martial artists will find physical disadvantages unusually crippling – especially such things as Bad Back, Blindness, Lame, Neurological Disorder, One Arm, One Eye, One Hand, Quadriplegic, and Wounded. These problems *do* suit veterans who've suffered injuries, but they're best avoided when creating warriors as new PCs. Other traits that can make life difficult for fighters are Cannot Learn, Combat Paralysis, Hemophilia, Low Pain Threshold, Pacifism (Total Nonviolence), and Post-Combat Shakes.

The availability of cinematic abilities can alter what's truly "crippling," however. For instance, Blind Fighting (p. B180) can mitigate Blindness, while those with Flight thanks to the Chi Projection power (p. 46) won't be tied down by Lame. Only Cannot Learn and Quadriplegic make it genuinely impossible to be a martial artist.

Below are new forms of existing disadvantages that won't cripple martial artists but that can influence combat in interesting ways. They're ideal for ***Martial Arts*** campaigns.

### *Code of Honor*

**see p. B127**

Three Codes from the ***Basic Set*** – Gentleman's, Soldier's, and Chivalry – suit martial artists well. Two additional Codes are important for historical campaigns:

*Code of Honor (Bushido):* The Japanese warrior code (see *The Samurai,* pp. 12-13). You must be absolutely loyal to your master and single-minded in the execution of his orders or those dictated by your station. You're expected to die rather than to fail in your task, and to commit ritual suicide without hesitation if so ordered. You must answer any challenge or insult to your lord. You must face pain, discomfort, and even death stoically. You must always be polite to your equals and superiors, and never overlook disrespect from social inferiors; such disrespect is usually punished by death. *-15 points.*

*Code of Honor (Xia):* The way of the Chinese knights-errant (see *Xia,* p. 8). You must be skilled at arms. You must keep your word, honor your pledges, be humble, and uphold justice for those in need. You must be brave and not spare yourself harm to help others. You must be willing to use force but also to show restraint when force isn't needed. You must respect and honor your teacher. *-10 points.*

### *Delusions*

**see p. B130**

Martial artists occasionally harbor Delusions about their own or others' skills. Except when such problems lead one fighter to insult another, though, it's unrealistic for them to cause reaction penalties. Non-fighters tend to ignore warriors' braggadocio unless they're being threatened – they're likely to assume that's simply how fighters behave! Such Delusions have other effects instead.

On any turn in combat when such a Delusion would apply (GM's decision), you must attempt a self-control roll; see *Self-Control Rolls* (p. B121). Delusions don't usually have a self-control number, so use the "default" value of 12. The GM may permit other self-control numbers for combat-related Delusions, with the usual effect on point value.

Success lets you take your turn normally. Failure means you must do something *risky* – much as if you were suffering from On the Edge (p. B146). You might All-Out Attack, try an elaborate move that reduces effective skill to 3 (making any roll of 13+ a critical failure), or turn your side or back to an enemy in order to fight a more worthy foe. On a critical failure, you must do something that will affect the rest of the combat; e.g., discard a perfectly good weapon or piece of armor to show derision, or cut yourself for at least 1 HP of injury to demonstrate your toughness.

### Common Disadvantages

Many martial artists are honorable warriors, dedicated athletes, or respectful traditionalists. These individuals frequently have such disadvantages as Code of Honor (p. B127); Disciplines of Faith (p. B132), typically Asceticism in historical settings; Pacifism (p. B148), most likely Reluctant Killer or Self-Defense Only; Sense of Duty (p. B153), to fellow students or a master; and Vow (p. B160).

The martial arts also attract more than their share of intemperate, obsessed, vengeful, and violent people who want to learn to maim or kill – or who believe in victory at any cost. These individuals often have some combination of Bad Temper (p. B124); Berserk (p. B124); Bloodlust (p. B125); Bully (p. B125); Callous (p. B125); Fanaticism (p. B136); Intolerance (p. B140); Obsession (p. B146); and Sadism (p. B152).

Either kind of fighter might find his confidence in his training blossoming into Overconfidence (p. B148). From an outsider's perspective, the dedication of a career martial artist looks like Workaholic (p. B162). Both disadvantages are almost universal among movie action heroes!

Finally, a few disadvantages are actually *desirable* for certain martial artists. Overweight, Fat, and Very Fat (p. B19) benefit those who practice Sumo (pp. 198-199), by reducing knockback from shoves and slams. Gigantism (p. B20), by granting +1 SM, gives a discount on the point cost of ST and a bonus to pin attempts (p. B370), making it valuable to grapplers.

*Minor Delusions* affect combat against a rare category of foes, apply just once per battle, *or* only come up under uncommon circumstances. *Examples:* "Western boxers are pansies, and no match for my karate." "If I start the bout with my secret technique, I'll almost certainly win." "I'm invincible if I fight in a temple." *-5 points.*

*Major Delusions* affect combat against a large category of foes *or* concern situations that might arise in almost any fight. *Examples:* "My skill at Asian martial arts makes me more effective than any Westerner." "Fighters who kick are weaklings and cowards." "Wounding me only makes me more dangerous." *-10 points.*

*Severe Delusions* affect almost all combat, all of the time. *Examples:* "I'm the best brawler in the world." "Being of good breeding, I can defeat any lower-class foe." "My style is the ultimate martial art." *-15 points.*

## *Reputation*

**see p. B26**

You can have a Reputation for always targeting a certain hit location, overusing a combat option or technique, playing dirty tricks, and so forth. Price this as you would a bad Reputation – but the effect is to make you *predictable* rather than to cause others to react poorly. "Foes in combat" is a small class of people; multiply point value by 1/3. Frequency of recognition further modifies cost, as usual.

An opponent who recognizes you is ready for your "signature move," making it less likely to work. If this move requires a Quick Contest (like a feint, or the Quick Contest of IQ discussed under *Dirty Tricks,* p. B405), apply your Reputation level to your roll as a *penalty.* If it involves an uncontested attack roll, add your level to your rival's defense roll as a *bonus* instead. This is cumulative with the benefits your enemy gets from Style Familiarity (p. 49) and Evaluate (see *Countering Feints and Deceptive Attacks,* p. 100) against your feints and Deceptive Attacks, and with the +1 he has to defend against repeated uses of Targeted Attack (p. 68).

*Example:* Louis Lafouine is notorious for stabbing at the eyes – so much so that what would be a surprising tactic from anyone else is expected from him. He buys four levels of Reputation for this. He gets ×1/3 for "foes in combat" and he's recognized on a 10 or less – about half the time – for a further ×1/2. His Reputation is worth -3 points. Those who recognize Louis get +4 to defend against blows to the eyes.

If you don't attempt your "signature move" in every fight, the GM is within his rights to require you to buy off your Reputation with earned points. If you always do the same thing in combat (and leave witnesses), the GM might *assign* you this kind of Reputation!

# Skills

Obviously, the most important skills for martial artists are combat skills (see *Combat Skills,* p. 55). The skills discussed here are mainly *non*-combat skills that merit additional notes for ***Martial Arts*** games. For combat techniques, see Chapter 3. To learn which skills are associated with a particular fighting style, see Chapter 5.

Skills marked with an asterisk (*) are *cinematic,* and unavailable in most realistic settings. In worlds where they exist, you need Trained by a Master or Weapon Master to learn them. Skills with a † *require* you to select a specialty.

## *Acrobatics*

**see p. B174**

Acrobatics is as important as any combat skill for *capoeiristas,* action heroes, and other flashy fighters. It's required to use combat rules such as *Acrobatic Attack* (p. 107), *Acrobatic Dodge* (p. B375), *Acrobatic Movement* (pp. 105-107), and *Acrobatic Stand* (p. 98), which are at least semi-realistic, and *Chambara Fighting* (pp. 128-130), which is cinematic. Some fighting styles allow an "Acrobatic Feint," too; see *Feints Using Non-Combat Skills* (p. 101).

## *Autohypnosis*

**see p. B179**

This skill is valuable to martial artists who wish to "fight through" pain and fatigue. In a cinematic campaign, the GM may want to replace the mandatory (20 - skill) seconds of concentration with a variable concentration time and apply the time-based modifiers used for Breaking Blow and Power Blow: -10 if used *instantly,* dropping to -5 after a turn of concentration, -4 after two turns, -3 after four turns, -2 after eight turns, -1 after 16 turns, and no penalty after 32 turns.

## *Blind Fighting**

**see p. B180**

Those who have Inner Balance (p. 47) and ESP Talent (p. B256) or Telepathy Talent (p. B257) may add only the *highest* of the three Talents to their roll. These bonuses don't "stack."

## *Body Control**

**see p. B181**

Body Control can replace HT when resisting Pressure Points (p. B215), Hand of Death (see *Innate Attack,* pp. 45-47), or chi powers (see *Chi Projection,* p. 46). Because it's also effective against the Affliction advantage and poisons, as stated in the ***Basic Set,*** and can resist chi-based afflictions, the GM might find it simpler to let it replace HT for *all* rolls to resist the afflictions on pp. B428-429, regardless of origin. Use the rules for flushing poisons to end enduring effects. The skill for identifying chi-based ailments is Esoteric Medicine (p. B192).

In fiction, Body Control is often used to manage injury. It can replace First Aid and Physician when you treat yourself (only) under the rules on pp. B423-425. Effective TL is that of Esoteric Medicine in the campaign – TL3, unless specified otherwise. Body Control serves as First Aid for bandaging and treating shock. If your level is HT+2 or better, you're considered to be in a physician's care when figuring long-term recovery. If you also receive external medical care, you must choose between it and this skill's benefits; the two don't "stack."

## Combat Skills

Where rules in ***Martial Arts*** refer to "combat skills," they mean skills that let you attack or defend in melee combat (but not necessarily both – Garrote and Lance can only attack, and Parry Missile Weapons can only defend), or strike from afar using an innate or muscle-powered ranged weapon. The complete list appears below, sorted into subcategories commonly used by the rules. Combat Art and Sport skills (p. B184) *aren't* combat skills.

### *Melee Combat Skills*

Axe/Mace (p. B208), Broadsword (p. B208), Cloak (p. B184), Flail (p. B208), Force Sword (p. B208), Force Whip (p. B209), Garrote (p. B197), Jitte/Sai (p. B208), Knife (p. B208), Kusari (p. B209), Lance (p. B204), Main-Gauche (p. B208), Monowire Whip (p. B209), Net (p. B211), Parry Missile Weapons (p. B212), Polearm (p. B208), Rapier (p. B208), Saber (p. B208), Shield (p. B220), Shortsword (p. B209), Smallsword (p. B208), Spear (p. B208), Staff (p. B208), Tonfa (p. B209), Two-Handed Axe/Mace (p. B208), Two-Handed Flail (p. B208), Two-Handed Sword (p. B209), Whip (p. B209), and all unarmed combat skills.

*Unarmed Combat Skills:*

- *Grappling Skills:* Judo (p. B203), Sumo Wrestling (p. B223), and Wrestling (p. B228).
- *Striking Skills:* Boxing (p. B182), Brawling (p. B182), and Karate (p. B203).

### *Ranged Combat Skills*

*Thrown Weapon Skills:* Bolas (p. B181), Dropping (p. B189), Lasso (p. B204), Net (p. B211), Spear Thrower (p. B222), Throwing (p. B226), and Thrown Weapon (p. B226).

*Missile Weapon Skills:* Blowpipe (p. B180), Bow (p. B182), Crossbow (p. B186), Innate Attack (p. B201), and Sling (p. B221).

## *Boxing*

**see p. B182**

This skill isn't specifically associated with the Boxing style (pp. 152-153). *Any* fighting style that teaches a "scientific" approach to punching – but not other unarmed strikes – might include it.

There's rarely a reason to learn Boxing if you know Karate. However, encumbrance penalizes attacks and parries with Karate but not with Boxing. Karate-users who believe that they could end up fighting unarmed while clad in heavy armor might therefore wish to invest in Boxing as well (but see *Armor Familiarity,* p. 49).

The damage bonus for Boxing only applies when attacking with that skill. It doesn't "stack" with Brawling or Karate bonuses.

## *Brawling*

**see p. B182**

The Brawling skill has a more modest damage bonus than Boxing and Karate, doesn't grant the improved retreating bonus that those skills provide when parrying, and (unlike Karate) is at -3 to parry weapons. It also gives no defaults to "fancy" techniques such as high kicks, exotic hand strikes, and lethal cinematic attacks. Point for point, though, it can be just as deadly as Boxing or Karate . . . under the right circumstances.

First, Brawling is Easy, which means that the same investment in points buys +1 or +2 to hit relative to Boxing (Average) or Karate (Hard). This lets the brawler more easily target vulnerable body parts. Second, Brawling includes the ability to use a blackjack or sap, which largely equalizes damage. Third, Brawling is one of the few ways to improve one's skill and damage with biting, which can be a potent attack in close combat (see *Teeth,* p. 115), and can replace DX in a slam or when smashing foes into walls (see *Grab and Smash!,* p. 118). Finally, Brawling gives defaults to several vicious techniques that Boxing and Karate *don't* cover, including Drop Kick (p. 70), Elbow Drop (pp. 70-71), Eye-Gouging (p. 71), Knee Drop (p. 76), and Two-Handed Punch (p. 81). The last two points in particular mean that fighters with Boxing or Karate might want to invest in Brawling to expand their close-combat options.

The damage bonus from Brawling only applies when using that skill to attack. It doesn't "stack" with Boxing or Karate bonuses.

## *Breaking Blow**

**see p. B182**

Breaking Blow normally only affects unarmed attacks. However, legendary warriors routinely use massive axes, mauls, and swords to lay waste to castles and splinter mighty trees. In a high-powered cinematic game, the GM may permit those who know Breaking Blow and Forced Entry (p. B196) to use this skill when attacking *inanimate objects* with melee weapons (and even battering rams!).

## *Combat Art or Sport†*

**see p. B184**

In a real fight, martial artists with Combat Art or Sport skills function as if their skill were three levels lower. This is because of the -3 default penalty between Art/Sport skills and combat skills. If a combat skill enjoys special benefits – such as the +3 for a retreat when parrying with Boxing, Judo, Karate, or a fencing skill – these *do* apply to its Art and Sport forms. When these benefits depend on skill level, though, use the level *after* the -3 default penalty. For instance, to claim +1 damage for knowing Karate at DX level, a *karateka* with Karate Sport would need DX+3 level.

The reason why Combat Art skills aren't as effective as combat skills in a real fight isn't always that they "emphasize graceful movements and perfect stances," however. Just as often, these skills teach techniques that look impressive in a staged fight without regard for combat effectiveness *or* traditional aesthetics! Stunt fighters learn such Combat Art skills to put on an entertaining show for the camera or a live audience.

Even so, stunt fighters are still fighters. They may use combat and Combat Sport skills at the usual penalty (-3). To create an actor who knows nothing about fighting but who can *simulate* a fight by following directions, take Stage Combat (p. B222). This gives no default to combat skills. For more on simulated combat, see *Faking It* (p. 130).

The distinction between combat, Combat Art, and Combat Sport skills is a realistic one. It doesn't always suit fantastic and cinematic settings. The GM is free to waive the -3 default penalty between these skills and allow martial artists who know one skill to use the other two at the same level. This is suitable for action heroes, who use the same moves to pose and show off (Combat Art), compete in tournaments (Combat Sport), and wipe the floor with the bad guys (combat skills).

*Qian Kun Ri Yue Dao*

See *Techniques and Combat Art/Sport Skills* (p. 64) and *Untrained Fighters* (p. 113) for other important rules pertaining to Art/Sport skills.

## *Connoisseur†*

**see p. B185**

A specialty of importance in ***Martial Arts*** games is Weapons. This skill defaults to any Armoury or armed-combat skill at -3. A successful roll lets you estimate a weapon's quality and value, identify a legendary weapon, or impress martial artists (may give +1 on Savoir-Faire (Dojo) or reaction rolls, at the GM's option). Craftsmen and fighters generally rely on their defaults unless they're also collectors.

## *Esoteric Medicine*

**see p. B192**

In a realistic setting, the chi-based attacks of martial-arts myth are so much mumbo-jumbo. They're normal strikes and grapples, and the injury they inflict is treatable with mundane medical skills. A Psychology roll might be needed to convince the patient that he's suffering from a bruised kidney and not the dreaded *dim mak,* of course!

In a cinematic setting where such abilities as chi powers (see *Chi Projection,* p. 46) and the Pressure Points and Pressure Secrets skills (p. B215) exist, though, only Esoteric Medicine can recognize these things and treat their effects. Mundane medicine can heal lost HP, but it can't halt further injury from an ongoing effect or alleviate its symptoms. At the GM's option, Esoteric Medicine might rival mundane medicine when it comes to treating *ordinary* illness and injury, too. If so, it can do everything that Physician can do, and any skill with a Physician default (e.g., Diagnosis, First Aid, Pharmacy, Physiology, Poisons, and Surgery) defaults to Esoteric Medicine at the same penalty.

## *Expert Skill†*

**see p. B193**

For general rules governing Expert Skills, see the ***Basic Set.*** A new Expert Skill is important in ***Martial Arts*** games:

*Hoplology:* This is the study of how people fight, invented by explorer Sir Richard F. Burton in the 19th century and championed by martial artist Donn F. Draeger in the 20th. Its goals are to classify weapons and fighting styles by their origins and capabilities, and understand *why* they evolved. Hoplology can stand in for Anthropology, Psychology, or Sociology to identify known types of ritual combat or combative behavior; Archaeology, Geography, or History to answer questions about who used a weapon or style, where, and when; and Armoury or Connoisseur (Weapons) to identify a weapon. A successful roll while watching a fight will identify the combatants' styles (but to identify *secret* styles, you'll need Hidden Lore, p. 57) and give an idea of what techniques to expect.

## *Fast-Draw†*

**see p. B194**

In combat-heavy campaigns – like ***Martial Arts*** games – it's crucial to know *exactly* what weapons each Fast-Draw specialty covers. This list isn't exhaustive, but it's a start:

*Force Sword:* Any ultra-tech weapon that retracts into its hilt and requires the user to toggle a power switch to ready it. Includes all Force Sword, Force Whip, and Monowire Whip weapons.

*Knife:* All Knife and Main-Gauche weapons, and any weapon hurled using Thrown Weapon (Dart) or Thrown Weapon (Knife).

*Sword:* Weapons that call for Broadsword, Jitte/Sai, Rapier, Saber, Shortsword, or Smallsword skill – including *sticks* covered by those skills. The GM may extend this to such sticks as boomerangs and spear throwers, which use Thrown Weapon (Stick) and Spear Thrower, respectively.

*Two-Handed Sword:* All Two-Handed Sword weapons, plus any 1- or 2-yard Spear or Polearm weapon carried tip-down in a back sheath, like a naginata.

The GM may allow these *new* specialties for exotic weapons:

*Balisong:* Used to open or close a *balisong* (p. 213) that's already in hand. Roll against skill to do either. Critical failure causes a point of cutting damage to the hand; critical success gives +1 to Intimidation. Use Fast-Draw (Knife) to *draw* a balisong. If you use Fast-Draw (Balisong) on the same turn, it's at -2; see *Multiple Fast-Draw* (p. 103).

*Flexible:* Any chain, rope, or thong used as a weapon, including all Kusari and Whip weapons, and slings (use Sling skill). In cinematic campaigns, add nunchaku (use Flail skill) to the list.

*Shuriken:* Any weapon hurled using Thrown Weapon (Shuriken).

*Stone:* Sling ammo and throwing stones, when carried in a container. Works like Fast-Draw (Arrow).

*Tonfa:* Any baton with a protruding side handle, for use with Tonfa skill.

For special Fast-Draw rules, see *Multiple Fast-Draw* (p. 103), *Fast-Draw from Odd Positions* (pp. 103-104), *Who Draws First?* (p. 103), and *Quick-Readying Nearby Weapons* (p. 104).

## *Flying Leap**

**see p. B196**

Flying Leap is vital for *chambara* or *wuxia* fighters! See *Special Feats for Cinematic Skills* (p. 129) for optional rules that greatly enhance this skill in highly cinematic games.

## *Games†*

**see p. B197**

Judges of competitive martial-arts events *must* know Games, unless the standards are very low. Most contenders get by with IQ-based rolls against Combat Sport (p. B184). Any style with a sport version in Chapter 5 has its own Games specialty – or *several,* if there are multiple competition types in the setting.

All-in fighting championships are a special case. Some have a Games specialty that's unassociated with a style. Others have *no* rules . . . and no Games skill.

## *Group Performance†*

**see p. B198**

See *Faking It* (p. 130) for rules for using the Fight Choreography specialty with Stage Combat. This skill also lets you coordinate demo bouts between fighters using Combat Art or Sport skills.

## *Hidden Lore†*

**see p. B199**

A new specialty is available in ***Martial Arts*** games:

*Secret Styles:* You know about styles not widely taught in your world – their legends, living masters (and where to find them), techniques, and cinematic abilities, if any. This *doesn't* mean you know how to use them.

## *Hobby Skill†*

**see p. B200**

The following skill is DX/Easy and often learned by martial artists in settings where they moonlight as fakirs and strongmen:

*Feats of Strength:* You collect tricks that show off your physical grit. Base the skill roll on the score that suits the feat (see p. B172): ST to tear a phone book in half or lift in a showy way (e.g., using teeth or a body piercing), DX to "punch out" a candle flame, Will to walk on hot coals or rest on a bed of nails, and so on. A -4 for lack of familiarity applies to tricks you haven't practiced. This skill doesn't improve your capabilities. You can only lift what your ST allows – and while a roll might mean you don't flinch when punched, you're still hurt. Also, while you know the secrets of hot coals and beds of nails, you suffer injury if you fail. In a cinematic game, Body Control, Power Blow, etc., replace this skill and *do* add new capabilities.

## *Judo*

**see p. B203**

Judo is the generic skill of "advanced" unarmed grappling. It's part of any style that incorporates a systematic body of grabs, grapples, sweeps, and throws, regardless of the style's provenance. It isn't uniquely associated with the Judo style (p. 166); in fact, that art teaches the Judo Sport skill, not Judo!

Sumo Wrestling and Wrestling don't lend their ST bonuses to Judo techniques – even techniques that also default to those skills. Unless a rule explicitly states otherwise, you only receive these bonuses when using Sumo Wrestling or Wrestling, or their techniques.

## *Jumping*

**see p. B203**

Jumping is necessary to get the most out of several optional combat rules, including *Acrobatic Movement* (pp. 105-107) and *Flying Attack* (p. 107) in any campaign, and *Chambara Fighting* (pp. 128-130) in cinematic games.

> *Though we cannot make it possible to fly to the heavens like Superman or to make your body transparent like the Invisible Man, we can make things that are impossible for ordinary people possible, if you practice diligently.*
>
> *– Mas Oyama,* ***This Is Karate***

## *Karate*

**see p. B203**

Despite its name, the Karate skill isn't exclusively associated with Karate styles (pp. 169-172). It's the generic skill of "advanced" unarmed striking. It constitutes part of any art that teaches a complete system of strikes with hands, elbows, knees, and feet – whether that style comes from Okinawa, ancient Greece, or Alpha Centauri.

The damage bonus from Karate only applies when attacking with the Karate skill or one of its techniques. It never "stacks" with damage bonuses from Boxing or Brawling. At the GM's option, though, martial artists who gain Claws or Strikers as part of their training – or who belong to races with *natural* Claws or Strikers – may wield them with Karate to further enhance damage. To be able to apply Karate bonuses to *biting* damage, take the Biting Mastery perk (p. 49).

## *Kiai**

**see p. B203**

This skill has a Japanese name but isn't restricted to practitioners of Japanese styles. It can represent *any* kind of war cry, and suits cinematic warriors of all stripes. The GM may want to waive the Trained by a Master or Weapon Master prerequisite. He might even allow those with Musical Instrument skills to gain the Intimidation bonus (but not stun enemies) at fairly long distances by playing instruments such as bagpipes.

## *Knot-Tying*

**see p. B203**

Use Knot-Tying to tie up a foe after entangling him with a whip (p. B406) or a lariat (p. B411). You must enter close combat with him and roll a *Regular* Contest of Knot-Tying vs. his DX or best grappling skill each turn. This counts as an Attack. If you win, you bind his arms to his sides. If you lose, he's free of your weapon.

See *Binding* (pp. 82-83) for a more cinematic way to tie someone up with this skill.

## *Light Walk**

**see p. B205**

This skill offers additional combat options in highly cinematic *chambara-* or *wuxia*-style campaigns. See *Special Feats for Cinematic Skills* (p. 129).

## *Main-Gauche*

**see p. B208**

It's permissible to use Main-Gauche with your master hand to receive the benefits of a fencing parry while wielding a knife. Armed this way, you can also attack at your full Main-Gauche level. If you *just* want to attack with a knife, you can save a few points by learning Knife (DX/Easy) instead of Main-Gauche (DX/Average).

## *Mental Strength**

**see p. B209**

In addition to helping resist the abilities mentioned in the ***Basic Set,*** Mental Strength can replace Will when resisting chi powers (see *Chi Projection,* p. 46) or the Hypnotic Hands skill (p. 61). It's also good against *mental* effects contested by a score other than Will, such as Mind Control spells and truth drugs that target HT – make a DX-, IQ-, HT-, or Per-based Mental Strength roll to resist, as appropriate. Finally, Mental Strength can substitute for Will to "stare down" a foe or resist the same; see *The Contest of Wills* (p. 130).

## *Parry Missile Weapons*

**see p. B212**

Parry Missile Weapons isn't a cinematic skill, but it's far more effective in the hands of martial artists who enjoy cinematic abilities. For one thing, since fighters with DR 2+ on the hands can use this skill to parry with their hands, those who have DR 2 or more from "iron hands" (see *Damage Resistance,* p. 43) don't need weapons or armor to parry projectiles. Other "iron body parts" may parry, too, at the GM's discretion.

Warriors with both Enhanced Parry and Weapon Master for a weapon gain their Enhanced Parry bonus when using Parry Missile Weapons with that weapon. Those with Trained by a Master and "iron hands" likewise get a bonus for any Enhanced Parry that includes bare hands. The GM may also permit an Enhanced Parry variant that benefits attempts to parry ranged weapons by any means; see *Enhanced Defenses* (pp. 43-44).

Those with Enhanced Time Sense (ETS) can actually parry bullets, blaster bolts, and other slower-than-light firearms attacks; see *Enhanced Time Sense* (p. 44). Such parries are at -5. ETS doesn't normally allow parries against light-speed weapons such as lasers . . . but the GM may allow this, still at -5, if the defender *also* has Precognition (p. B77). For another option, see *Precognitive Parry* (p. 62).

The penalties for multiple parries in a turn are halved as usual for those with Trained by a Master or Weapon Master; see *Parrying* (p. B376). Don't roll separately to parry each hit from a rapid-fire attack, though. Roll just once. Success means you deflect one hit plus additional hits equal to your margin of success. Critical success parries all the hits!

## *Power Blow**

**see p. B215**

At the GM's option, those who know Power Blow at Will+1 or better may use it in lieu of Will when attempting extra effort with physical feats or chi powers. Use *Extra Effort* (p. B356), not the usual Power Blow rules. The only change is that Power Blow replaces Will.

## *Pressure Points**

**see p. B215**

The GM might want to let martial artists who know this skill attack pressure points that produce some of the effects under *Realistic Injury* (pp. 136-139), even in a cinematic game that doesn't otherwise use those rules. All of these attacks work as usual for Pressure Points: the attacker must strike the target hit location at an extra -2, inflict at least a point of injury, and *win* a Quick Contest of Pressure Points against the victim's HT.

- *Arm or Leg:* You can stop short of fully crippling a limb, inflicting any of the three levels of lesser effects under *Partial Injuries* (p. 136) – the most severe of which counts as torture for the purpose of Interrogation (p. B202). Duration is still 5d seconds. You can also target joints, as explained under *New Hit Locations* (p. 137). This gives the victim -2 on his HT roll to resist but otherwise produces the usual effects of a limb hit.
- *Neck, Skull, or Vitals:* You can temporarily induce any of the unpleasant effects on the table give for the targeted hit location under *Lasting and Permanent Injuries* (pp. 138-139). (*Exception:* You can't inflict Wounded.) Duration is 2d seconds, making attribute and Basic Speed penalties the most useful effects.

● *Other Hit Locations:* You may target a few of the other body parts discussed in *New Hit Locations*. Striking the ear causes Deafness (p. B129); the jaw, Mute (p. B125); and the nose, No Sense of Smell/Taste (p. B146). Disadvantage effects last 2d seconds. A successful attack on the spine causes immediate knockdown and stunning, regardless of injury. The victim gets the usual HT roll each turn to recover.

## *Pressure Secrets**

**see p. B215**

In a cinematic game that generally ignores *Realistic Injury* (pp. 136-139), the GM may opt to apply those rules selectively to Pressure Secrets attacks. For instance, Pressure Secrets might be able to target the hit locations defined under *New Hit Locations* (p. 137) and count as an impaling weapon where favorable – notably, when attacking veins and arteries. The GM might even rule that if a Pressure Secrets attack inflicts twice the injury needed to cripple an ear or a nose, it plucks off the body part, much as a cutting attack would. To make Pressure Secrets truly frightening, the GM could ignore *Lasting and Permanent Injuries* (pp. 138-139) for most attacks, even deadly high-tech weapons, but enforce those rules when Pressure Secrets inflicts a major wound on the neck, skull, veins and arteries, or vitals.

## *Push**

**see p. B216**

You may opt to substitute Push for ST (*not* skill) whenever you attempt an unarmed technique intended to knock an opponent down or back without grappling or injuring him. For shove-like techniques, use Push's special knockback-only "damage" instead of the usual roll. These benefits affect Push Kick (p. 78), Sweep (p. 81), Trip (p. 81), and any shove- or sweep-based technique (see *Basic Attacks,* p. 59).

## *Savoir-Faire†*

**see p. B218**

Most formally trained martial artists know Savoir-Faire (Dojo). The effectiveness of this skill depends greatly on Style Familiarity (p. 49) and Cultural Familiarity (p. B23). A martial artist who has Style Familiarity with a style has no penalty to use Savoir-Faire (Dojo) to show proper respect, issue challenges, or otherwise interact with the style's practitioners *as martial artists* – even if he's unfamiliar with their culture. If he lacks Style Familiarity, he rolls at -1. If the unfamiliar style is from an unfamiliar culture, he suffers an additional -3.

## *Sports†*

**see p. B222**

Competitive martial arts use Combat Sport skills (p. B184), not Sports. A lot of sports are essentially "bloodless" gladiatorial contests, though. Team sports in particular often involve violent contact. Sometimes, it's even legal.

*Forget about winning and losing, forget about pride and pain: let your opponent graze your skin and you smash into his flesh; let him smash into your flesh and you fracture his bones; let him fracture your bones and you take his life! Do not be concerned with your escaping safely – lay down your life before him!*

*– Bruce Lee*

Optionally, the GM may permit Sports rolls in combat; e.g., Sports (Rugby) to connect with a slam or Sports (Hockey) to attack with a two-handed stick. He might even allow techniques to default to Sports, where logical: Evade (p. 71) might default to Sports (Rugby), Hook (p. 74) might default to Sports (Hockey), and so on. Sports and techniques based on them are at -3 in a real fight – just as Combat Sport skills default to combat skills at -3. For a related topic, see *Techniques and Combat Art/Sport Skills* (p. 64).

## *Stage Combat*

**see p. B222**

This skill has nothing to do with knowing how to fight – for real or for show. It's the ability to *fake* a fight by performing specific, rehearsed moves according to a script. To be a stunt fighter, learn Combat Art skills. For more on simulated combat, see *Faking It* (p. 130).

## *Sumo Wrestling*

**see p. B223**

This skill is named after a traditional Japanese form of ritual combat (see *Sumo,* pp. 198-199) but could be part of *any* style that alternates shoves, slams, and sweeps to unbalance the enemy. In the real world, this combination is uncommon but not unknown – see *T'ai Chi Chuan* (pp. 200-201). Sumo Wrestling also suits practitioners of synthetic "strong man" styles (*sumotori* have competed at no-holds-barred fighting, and other contenders have no doubt adopted their best techniques), rugby players-turned-action heroes, and super-strong comic-book characters.

The ST and damage bonuses from Sumo Wrestling only apply when using the skill. They don't "stack" with Brawling or Wrestling bonuses in situations where more than one skill could apply.

## *Tactics*

see p. B224

Tactics *is* a martial-arts skill, but it works before the action starts. Below are two options for the GM to use in place of the rules on p. B224.

*Abstract:* If not using a map, roll a Quick Contest of Tactics between the leaders of the two sides before the battle. The winner receives "rerolls" equal to his margin of victory. If his side has 10+ fighters, multiply this by 10% of the size of his force and round down; e.g., for 15 warriors, victory by four gives six rerolls.

In battle, a leader may grant his rerolls to any ally who has just attempted a combat-related die roll. The recipient rolls twice more and selects the best result. The leader's player *must* describe how such tactical factors as cover and formation altered the outcome. If the GM disagrees, the reroll is wasted. Unused rerolls disappear at the end of the fight.

*Mapped:* This method is intended for tactical combat (pp. B384-392) in which the plot doesn't dictate force placement. The GM must first designate what part of the battlefield each side controls when hostilities begin. It's fairest to bisect the map – north/south, left/right, etc. – unless the story demands otherwise. In player vs. player conflict, any division that both sides agree on is acceptable.

Next, roll a Quick Contest of Tactics between the leaders, recording the margin of victory. The winner chooses whether he or his rival puts warriors on the map first. In a tie, flip a coin or roll a die. The leaders then take turns placing one man – or 10% of their forces, if larger – on *their* side of the map.

Once everyone is on the map, the winner may move one ally (or 10% of his men, if larger) to a more favorable position on the "friendly" side of the map *or* one opponent (or 10% of the enemy, if larger) into adverse circumstances on the "hostile" side per point of victory. He may move fighters toward or away from bad footing, cover, concealment, support, etc. He may not move his warriors *behind* the foe or turn enemies to face the wrong way.

## Wildcard Skills for Styles

In a silly or highly cinematic game, the GM may want to introduce wildcard skills (see p. B175) that encompass entire fighting styles. A "Style!" skill replaces all the skills of a single style – including optional skills that the GM believes every student should know. If the martial artist has Trained by a Master or Weapon Master, this includes the style's *cinematic* skills. Style! skills are DX-based, but allow IQ-, HT-, Per-, and Will-based rolls for skills controlled by those scores.

A Style! skill removes the need to learn individual techniques. The stylist may roll against the maximum level allowed for any technique his style offers, using his Style! skill as the underlying skill. If the technique has no maximum, use skill+3. Techniques that aren't part of the style but that default to the style's core skills default to Style! at the usual penalties. To improve such techniques above default, learn a new Style! skill that covers them.

Even DX-3 level in a Style! skill grants Style Familiarity with that style. Don't buy it separately. The stylist may purchase his style's Style Perks for a point apiece without regard for total points in the style. If a perk requires specialization by skill, the Style! skill *is* a valid specialty and the perk works with all applicable skills of the style.

*Example:* Escrima (pp. 155-156) requires students to learn Karate, Main-Gauche, and Smallsword. It has many optional skills – the GM might rule that all but Bow, Shield, and Tactics suit modern-day fighters. Escrima! would replace all of these skills. With Trained by a Master or Weapon Master, it would replace Mental Strength, Power Blow, and Pressure Points, too. A stylist with Escrima! could use any of his style's techniques at its maximum level; for instance, he could try Dual-Weapon Attack at Escrima! or Feint at Escrima!+4 when using Escrima weapons.

A martial artist with Escrima! gains the benefits of Style Familiarity (Escrima) without having to buy it. He may ignore limits on points in style when he takes Style Perks, buying as many as he wants for a point apiece. If he selects the Off-Hand Weapon Training perk, it's for Escrima! and lets him ignore the off-hand penalty whenever he uses that skill.

## *Throwing Art**

see p. B226

The damage bonus for Throwing Art only applies to purpose-built throwing weapons and doesn't "stack" with the damage bonus for Weapon Master. Neither bonus improves the damage listed for improvised weapons in the ***Basic Set.*** Martial artists with Throwing Art may find this expanded list of improvised weapons helpful:

**Thrust-4 –** *Crushing:* BB*, bottle cap, button, matchstick*, or wadded cigarette foil*. *Cutting:* Business card, creased cigarette foil, or folded dollar bill. *Impaling:* Paper dart ("airplane"), sewing needle*, straightened paperclip*, or 1" finishing nail*.

**Thrust-3 –** *Crushing:* Egg, ice cube*, pebble, small die, or 1" bolt. *Cutting:* Credit card, playing card, poker chip, or small coin (penny). *Impaling:* Blowgun dart*, chopstick, hairpin, hypodermic syringe, knitting needle, lockpick, pencil, or 2"-3" nail*.

**Thrust-2 –** *Crushing:* Large die, pistol cartridge, small tree nut, wristwatch, or 2"-3" bolt. *Cutting:* Large coin (silver dollar), pizza cutter, potsherd, or razor blade. *Impaling:* Dart (from the pub, not a war dart), fork, penknife, scalpel, or 4"-5" spike.

**Thrust-1 –** *Crushing:* Handball, pocket watch with chain, large tree nut, rifle cartridge, or 4"-5" bolt. *Cutting:* Metal ruler, paint scraper, or spatula. *Impaling:* Crossbow bolt, fondue fork, kebab skewer, screwdriver, table knife, or 6" spike.

**Thrust –** *Crushing:* Baseball, flashlight battery, machine gun cartridge (.50 or larger), or roll of coins. *Cutting:* Broken bottle, hand spade, hubcap, or metal plate. *Impaling:* Arrow, barbecue fork, marlinspike, piton, or railroad spike.

**Thrust+1 –** *Crushing:* Beer can or bottle (full), coconut, flashlight, horseshoe, purse of coins, rolling pin, telephone, or whetstone. *Cutting:* Cleaver, metal serving tray, or rotary saw blade. *Impaling:* Hedge trimmer, lawn dart, or pool cue (javelin-style).

**Swing+1 –** *Crushing:* Baseball bat, golf club, ham (whole), pistol, pool cue (end over end), small household appliance (swung by power cord), or tire iron.

* At the GM's option, these items can also be blown from the mouth at full skill.

## *Tonfa*

**see p. B209**

Learn this skill only if you want to be able to switch quickly between a regular grip (to swing a tonfa like a club) and a Reversed Grip (to strike and parry with a tonfa in close combat), or if you plan to buy an Arm Lock technique (p. 65) for use with a tonfa. If you carry a tonfa merely to enhance "unarmed" strikes and parries, Brawling or Karate will suffice. For more information, see *Reversed Grip* (pp. 111-112).

## *Wrestling*

**see p. B228**

This skill is part of any style that teaches grapples, pins, and takedowns – many of which don't have "wrestling" in their name (see *Wrestling,* pp. 204-206). It represents a *combat* skill, not a sport, and offers defaults to many damaging techniques for knocking down or crippling foes: Backbreaker (p. 82), Drop Kick (p. 70), Elbow Drop (pp. 70-71), Knee Drop (p. 76), Piledriver (p. 85-87), and Wrench Spine (p. 82). These feats of strength nicely complement the sweeps and throws of Judo. Fighters who know one skill would certainly benefit from the other.

Wrestling and Sumo Wrestling differ, too. Wrestling can't substitute for DX in a shove or a slam – and doesn't include sweeps – but makes up for this by giving a ST bonus that extends to chokes, locks, neck snaps, pins, and wrenches (unlike that of Sumo Wrestling). A fighter with both skills could slam or sweep a foe to the ground and follow up with a pin . . . or an elbow drop!

Like the bonus for Sumo Wrestling, Wrestling's ST bonus becomes a damage bonus when making an attack that inflicts damage: +1 *per die* at DX+1, increasing to +2 at DX+2 or better. The ST and damage bonuses for these skills never "stack." You only receive the bonus of the skill you're using.

## *Zen Archery**

**see p. B228**

Those who have the Heroic Archer advantage (p. 45) and Bow at 18+ may learn this skill *without* having Trained by a Master, Weapon Master, or the Meditation skill.

# New Skills

Some additional cinematic skills may be available to those with Trained by a Master or Weapon Master in ***Martial Arts*** games.

## *Hypnotic Hands**

**IQ/Hard**

*Defaults:* None.
*Prerequisites:* Trained by a Master and Hypnotism at 14+.

You can induce a trancelike state in others through hypnotic hand motions. You can only affect a single victim, who must see your *hands.* Hypnotic Hands doesn't work on those who are blind, facing away, etc., and is affected by any defense effective against hypnotism or chi-based mind control.

To use your skill, take a Concentrate maneuver. At the end of your turn, you can either roll to influence your target or opt to continue the motions. If you continue, take another Concentrate maneuver . . . and so on, until you decide to attempt your skill roll. The total focus and complex motions required by this skill give you -2 to all active defenses while concentrating.

Once you decide to project your chi to influence your victim, spend 1 FP and roll a Quick Contest of Hypnotic Hands against his Will.

*Tetsubo*

*Modifiers:* -1 per two *full* yards of distance between you; any visibility penalties (for darkness, smoke, etc.); +1 after two turns of concentration, +2 after four turns, +3 after eight turns, +4 after 16 turns, and a further +1 per doubling of time, with no upper limit.

If you win, your opponent is mentally stunned (see p. B420) for seconds equal to your margin of victory. After that, he may roll against IQ each turn to recover. Until he does, you can use your Hypnotism skill on him – even in combat! This takes the usual five seconds, but your subject resists at Will instead of at Will+5. See *Hypnotism* (p. B201) for effects. If you know Invisibility Art (p. B202) and choose to use it, your victim is at -5 in the Quick Contest to notice you.

## *Lizard Climb**

**DX/Hard**

*Defaults:* None.
*Prerequisites:* Trained by a Master, and both Acrobatics and Climbing at 14+.

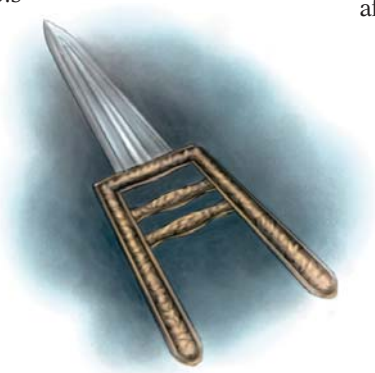
This skill lets you scale vertical or near-vertical surfaces – walls, steep hills, large tree trunks, etc. – like a gecko. You must climb facing the surface, using (empty) hands and feet, or with your back to it, using elbows and heels. Roll once per *second* of climbing.

*Modifiers:* A penalty equal to encumbrance level (e.g., -1 for Light). The type of surface matters: +2 for rough natural materials (bark or a rock face), +0 for most walls (wood, brick, or stone), or -2 for smooth surfaces (glass or steel); +2 if sloped rather than vertical. Add -1 if wet, -3 if icy or slimy, or -5 if greased. Freeing a hand or foot gives -2 per extremity less than four (minimum one) in contact with the surface. Claws (p. B42) or artificial claws (*neko-de*) give +2 when climbing any surface but a smooth one – but only when *facing* it.

Success lets you travel half your Move up, down, or across the surface, or simply cling to it without moving. For instance, with Move 7, you could climb 3.5 yards – about one story – up a sheer wall in a second! Lizard Climb *isn't* Clinging (p. B43), though. In particular, you can't move along ceilings.

Failure means you fall, but you can try to catch yourself (see below). On a critical failure, you fall *away* from the surface and can't reach it in order to stop your fall.

If falling past a surface close enough that you can reach it, you can try to break your fall. Make a DX roll to touch the surface, and then a Lizard Climb roll at -1 per 5 yards already fallen, plus the above modifiers. Success stops your fall. Failure means you continue to fall; you can't make a repeated attempt.



*Katar*

You can dodge normally while climbing and retreat by skittering up the wall. If you make a skill roll at a suitable penalty to free a limb, you can even attack and parry at no penalty. However, any combat result that causes a fall – knockback, knockdown, critical miss, etc. – knocks you *off* the wall. You can try to stop yourself if you're not stunned, but shock penalties (if any) apply.

When climbing something other than a flat surface (e.g., a rope), a successful Lizard Climb roll gives a bonus to Climbing. This equals half your margin of success, rounded down. Minimum bonus is +1. In a *chambara-* or *wuxia*-style campaign, other stunts are possible – see *Special Feats for Cinematic Skills* (pp. 129-130).

## *Precognitive Parry**

**IQ/Hard**

*Defaults:* None.
*Prerequisites:* Trained by a Master or Weapon Master; Danger Sense or Precognition; and one melee combat skill at 18+.

This skill allows you to parry attacks that normally come in too fast to parry – bullets, beams, etc. – *without* having Enhanced Time Sense. You must be aware of your attacker for Precognitive Parry to work; it's worthless against true surprise attacks. Whenever an attack that satisfies these criteria would hit you, make a Precognitive Parry roll.

*Modifiers:* Add the *higher* of your ESP Talent (p. B256) or Forceful Chi (p. 47).

On a failure, you can't parry. You may still dodge, if the attack is one that permits a Dodge roll. On a critical failure, though, you believe that the attack will miss and don't even *bother* to dodge!

On a success, you're alerted to the attack far enough in advance that you can move a weapon or limb to intercept it. You may attempt to parry just as if you were defending against a melee attack. Combat Reflexes and Enhanced Parry give their usual bonuses.

Failure on the parry means you're hit. Success means you interpose your weapon or limb in time. The attack inflicts its damage on whatever you're using to parry. If using a weapon, it's destroyed if reduced to -5×HP after DR (see *Damage to Objects,* p. B483) – but only damage in excess of this affects *you,* and your DR protects normally. If using a limb, you're simply hit in the limb instead of in the attack's original hit location. Success by five or more on the parry, or critical success, deflects the attack without harm to your weapon or limb.

A force sword or force whip doesn't have DR or HP – it's made of energy. A successful parry with such a weapon deflects an energy attack harmlessly and burns up a projectile. Against a *really big* projectile, the GM may want to roll damage for the force weapon and compare it to the projectile's DR and HP.

Knowing when and where a melee attack, thrown weapon, or slower missile will hit is also useful. You may opt to try a Precognitive Parry roll before an active defense against such an attack. Success gives +1 to your defense. Failure means you misjudge, giving -2. As usual, critical failure means you believe the attack will *miss* and don't even bother to defend.

## *Sensitivity**

**Per/Very Hard**

*Defaults:* None.
*Prerequisites:* Trained by a Master or Weapon Master.

Sensitivity represents skill at being hyperaware of a nearby enemy's stance and intent. Choose *one* opponent – who must be in close combat with you *and* either touching you, visible, or detected with Blind Fighting – and roll against Sensitivity. This is a free action on your turn.

*Modifiers:* +2 for Sensitive Touch; +2 for Vibration Sense; the *higher* of Telepathy Talent (p. B257) or Inner Balance (p. 47); -1 per failed attempt against the subject this combat.

Success gives +1 to all close-combat attacks and defenses against that opponent, and to Blind Fighting, Immovable Stance, Precognitive Parry, and Push rolls made to combat him. Success by 3 or more, or critical success, gives +2. These benefits last for as long as you and your rival stay in close combat. If you leave and return, roll again. You may opt to reroll each turn. You *must* reroll if you change subjects.

# Chapter Three
# Techniques

*The big American lunged, but his attack was off-target thanks to Kai's jab. Kai saw where the punch was going and sideslipped. It was suddenly clear to Kai why Americans had invented the telegraph: they insisted on advertising everything – even a punch.*

*The thug yelled, "My name is Boris Howard Fine. I'm the bare-knuckles champ 'round here. No* ***GIRL*** *is gonna get the better of me!" He emphasized his point by launching another all-out punch.*

*Kai deflected it with her hand and followed through with a lightning-fast riposte. "Whipping Branch Strikes Ape!"*

*"Who you callin' an ape?" Boris took the hit and swung again.*

*Kai evaded by tumbling acrobatically between Boris' legs, striking as she went. "Cunning Rat Picks Grapes!"*

*"Gah!" Boris looked startled and then fell over.*

*Kai turned to the growing crowd with a slight bow. "Excuse me, which way to San Francisco?"*

A *technique* is any feat of skill that one can improve independently of the governing skill. The techniques in this section, being intended for martial artists, depend mainly on combat skills. They represent attacks, defenses, weapon-handling routines (grip changes, weapon retention, etc.), and strategies for coping with less-than-ideal circumstances (for instance, fighting from the back of a galloping mount).

Martial-arts techniques obey all of the rules under *Techniques,* pp. B229-230. Their properties in brief:

*Specialties:* The buyer of a technique must specify the combat skill he's learning it for. (*Exception:* This isn't necessary for a technique associated only with Dodge or an attribute.) This is the technique's *specialty.* Most techniques offer a limited selection of specialties – perhaps one of the subcategories under *Combat Skills* (p. 55), often an even shorter list. A warrior *can* learn a given technique for several different skills, but he must study and pay for each specialty separately.

*Defaults:* A technique defaults – typically at a penalty – either to the skill chosen as its specialty or to an active defense or another technique based on that skill. (*Exception:* A technique associated with Dodge or an attribute defaults to that score.) The penalty occasionally differs from specialty to specialty. A warrior who hasn't spent points to *improve* a technique can still *attempt* it at default.

*Prerequisites:* To improve a technique above default, the buyer must have at least one point in any skill listed as a *prerequisite.* This always includes the chosen specialty skill and may include others.

*Difficulty:* Techniques come in two difficulties: Average and Hard. This affects only the point cost to improve the technique; see the *Technique Cost Table* (p. B230).

*Maximum:* Nearly every technique has an upper limit relative to the parent skill. Once the martial artist reaches this level, he must raise the underlying skill to improve further.

*Description:* Some techniques raise or lower the attacker's defenses, or those of his target. Others affect damage. Many require a skill roll and/or specific action for setup or recovery. Several are new versions of such maneuvers as All-Out Attack and Move and Attack, and *replace* the usual rules for those maneuvers. A few have unique effects. Read the *entire* entry to learn the technique's strengths, weaknesses, and peculiarities.

## *Techniques and Combat Art/Sport Skills*

A technique that defaults to a combat skill also defaults to the related Combat Art and Combat Sport skills at the same penalty. The Art version is for exhibition, the Sport version is for competition. If you improve the technique, however, you need only buy it *once.* Your level relative to the controlling skill – default, default+1, etc. – applies when using the technique with *any* of these skills. On your character sheet, you can note the specialty and associated skill level for any of the three skills.

*Example:* Kanjo Tosho knows Karate Art at 16 and learns Jump Kick (p. 75). Jump Kick defaults to Karate-4, so it also defaults to Karate Art-4. His default is 12. He improves this to default+3, giving him Jump Kick (Karate Art) at 15. This is mainly for show – it looks great! However, Tosho also has Karate at 15, so default+3 means he could use Jump Kick (Karate) at 14 in a real fight. And with Karate Sport at 14, he could even try Jump Kick (Karate Sport) at 13 in competition. Tosho's player decides which one of the three appears on his character sheet, but he only pays points to improve *one* technique.

This is a special case! Normally, when Skill A defaults to Skill B, Skill A's techniques *don't* default to Skill B's techniques. For instance, Shortsword defaults to Broadsword-2, so a fighter with Broadsword at 20 has Shortsword at 18 by default. Back Strike (p. 67) defaults to skill-2; therefore, if he improves Back Strike to default+2 for Broadsword, he gets Back Strike (Broadsword) at 20. But this *doesn't* give him Back Strike (Shortsword) at default+2, or 18. He only gets his usual default, or 16.

*Sodegarami*

## *Using Techniques Together*

Some techniques can be used together in a way that combines all of their effects in a single success roll. For instance, you could use Ground Fighting (p. 73) with Kicking (pp. 75-76) to kick from the ground, rolling only once to attack. In such situations, determine the *relative level* of each technique by taking the difference between its level and that of its parent skill. Like relative skill level (p. B171), this is helpful information to note on your character sheet. To calculate your level with the combined technique, sum the relative levels of all the techniques involved and add the total to the underlying skill.

*Example:* With Karate at 14, Kicking at 13, and Ground Fighting (Karate) at 12, your *relative* level with Kicking is 13 - 14 = -1. Your *relative* level with Ground Fighting is 12 - 14 = -2. When kicking from the ground, add relative levels and roll at Karate-3, or 11.

# Learning Techniques

Each style in Chapter 5 emphasizes specific techniques that those who know it (see *Components of a Style,* pp. 141-143, and *Buying a Style,* pp. 146-148) may elect to study and improve. A fighter can attempt *any* technique that defaults to *any* of his skills, regardless of what style he practices or whether he even studies a style. Instruction in a martial art is simply a justification for buying the art's techniques above default, if the martial artist wishes.

It's fairest if individuals who receive systematic training learn fastest, although the GM may make exceptions. If using the rules on p. B292, dedicated training at a style counts as *Intensive Training.* Martial artists who receive instruction outside their style (e.g., from friends or visiting masters) advance according to *Education,* or half as fast. Those who learn from books, videos, etc., improve as per *Self-Teaching,* or 1/4 as fast. Studying opponents' techniques in bouts is *Learning on the Job* and 1/8 as fast – but the entire duration of the tournament counts, not just time spent competing.

The GM decides whether adventurers can use earned points to improve techniques outside their style. This is probably fair if a warrior routinely attempts a technique at default in mortal combat. See *Quick Learning Under Pressure* (p. B292) for rules.

Whatever the justification for improving a technique, find the point cost using the *Technique Cost Table* (p. B230). It's sometimes tempting to invest in many techniques, but it's rarely cost-effective to spend points on more than a few – perhaps only a single Hard one – per skill. Players on a budget should check whether improving the underlying skill would be better, particularly at low skill levels where 1 or 2 points could buy up the entire skill. It's most efficient to work on the skill until it costs 4 points/level, then pick one or two techniques as "signature moves" and raise them until they're at or near the maximum. A fighter can end up with a sizeable list of techniques if he does this for several skills.

*Example:* Bridget has DX 13 and Karate-15 [12]. She gets Feint-15 and Kicking-13 by default. Buying Feint-16 [2] and Kicking-14 [2] would cost 4 points, but it would be more effective to invest those points in Karate. Karate-16 [16] would give Feint-16 and Kicking-14 by default, and improve every other use of Karate, too. Of course, Feint-18 [4] would give the highest Feint for 4 points and be the best choice if Bridget wanted Feint as a signature move!

# Realistic Techniques

Many of these techniques are *difficult* – and some are dangerous to the user – but all are realistic. The GM could allow even the flashiest of them in a high-realism campaign.

## *Acrobatic Stand*

**Average**

*Default:* Acrobatics-6.
*Prerequisite:* Acrobatics; cannot exceed Acrobatics skill.

This represents training at quickly regaining your feet in a fight; see *Acrobatic Stand* (p. 98) for details. A successful roll lets you go from lying down to standing as a single Change Posture maneuver; on a critical success, you do so as a "step." Failure means you go to a sitting posture. Critical failure leaves you lying down, wasting your turn.

You can also use Acrobatic Stand to go from crawling or sitting to standing as a step. In this case, failure means you stand as a Change Posture maneuver, not as a step. Critical failure means you fall down!

*Modifiers:* A penalty equal to your encumbrance level.

## *Aggressive Parry*

**Hard**

*Default:* prerequisite skill Parry-1.
*Prerequisite:* Boxing, Brawling, or Karate; cannot exceed prerequisite Parry.

Only a few "hard" styles teach this tactic. Instead of merely deflecting a blow, you attempt to *injure* your attacker with an especially forceful parry. This is incompatible with Cross Parry (p. 121).

Roll against Aggressive Parry to defend, at the usual -2 for Boxing vs. a kick, or -3 for Boxing or Brawling vs. a swung weapon. You cannot retreat. Failure means you're hit; your attacker may choose to hit his original target, your parrying arm, or your parrying *hand.* Success means you parry and may roll against the underlying skill to strike the attacking body part or weapon, modified as follows.

*Modifiers:* Against unarmed, -2 to hit an arm or leg, -4 to hit a hand or foot; -2 for Boxing vs. a leg or foot; -1 if your foe knows Rapid Retraction (p. 51). Against armed, a basic -3; another -3 to -5 for weapon size (see p. B400); a further -3 for Boxing or Brawling vs. a swung weapon.

Success on this skill roll inflicts thrust-4 crushing damage or thrust-2 at -1 per die, whichever is *worse,* on the targeted weapon or body part. Skill bonuses apply normally. Failure means you didn't parry forcefully enough to inflict damage.

Weapon parries against unarmed attacks are essentially aggressive "for free"; see *Parrying Unarmed Attacks* (p. B376).

## *Arm or Wrist Lock*

**Average**

*Default:* prerequisite skill.
*Prerequisite:* Judo, Wrestling, or appropriate Melee Weapon skill; cannot exceed prerequisite skill+4.

An arm (or wrist) lock is an attempt to restrain or cripple an opponent by twisting his arm. It normally uses Judo or Wrestling skill. This technique lets you improve effective skill for this purpose only.

To use Arm Lock, you must have two hands free and make a successful barehanded parry with Judo or Wrestling against your opponent's melee attack. On your first turn following the parry, you may attempt to capture your attacker's arm *if he's still within one yard.* This is an attack: step into close combat and roll against Arm Lock to hit. Your foe may use any active defense – he *can* parry your hand with a weapon! If his defense fails, you trap his arm.

Your foe may attempt to break free (p. B371) on his next turn, but you're at +4 in the Quick Contest. If he loses, he has a cumulative -1 on future attempts to break free.

On your *next* turn – and each turn thereafter, until your foe breaks free – you may try to damage the trapped arm. Roll a Quick Contest: the *higher* of your ST (including your Wrestling bonus) or Arm Lock vs. the *higher* of your victim's ST or HT. If you win, you inflict crushing damage equal to your margin of victory. The target's *rigid* DR protects normally. Flexible armor, including natural DR with the Flexible or Tough Skin limitation, has no effect.

If you cripple your victim's arm, he drops anything in that hand. You can inflict no further damage on a crippled limb but you can continue to roll the Contest each turn. If you win, your target suffers shock and stunning just as if you had inflicted damage.

Rolls to inflict damage are completely passive and don't count as attacks. You can simultaneously make close-combat attacks on your opponent, who defends at -4 in addition to any penalties due to injury caused by the lock itself. If you decide to throw him using the lock, this *does* count as an attack; see *Throws from Locks* (pp. 118-119).

You can use this ability *offensively* as well. Instead of waiting to parry an attack, grapple your foe normally with Judo or Wrestling. If he fails to break free on his next turn, you may try Arm Lock on your next turn, just as if you had parried his attack.

You can also apply this lock with a weapon. Default and prerequisite skills become a weapon skill. To initiate the lock requires a weapon parry or an Armed Grapple (p. 67). A reach C weapon gets +1 in the Quick Contest to cause damage; anything longer gets +2. Edged weapons can inflict crushing *or* cutting damage, but you must make a DX roll when you roll to inflict injury. Failure does thrust cutting damage to your off hand (DR protects normally). Otherwise, use the rules above.

Arm Lock uses precision and skill to cripple a foe's limb. For a brute-force technique, see *Wrench (Limb)* (p. 82).

# Techniques That Aren't

Martial artists practice dozens of distinct attacks and defenses that they call "techniques." The majority of these aren't techniques in the sense of pp. B229-233. ***GURPS*** lets fighters use their combat skills to try *hundreds* of permutations of maneuvers, movement, and combat options; e.g., a swordsman can use Attack to turn in place and stab to the face, which is nothing like using All-Out Attack to dart forward and hack at a foot. Most "techniques" that martial artists study are simply variations of this kind. To underline this, the GM may opt to deny certain actions to the relatively untrained (see *Limited Maneuver Selection,* p. 113).

Below are examples of "non-techniques." Warriors generally can't improve these independently of skill – although highly optional Targeted Attacks (p. 68) and Combinations (p. 80) can remove hit location and Rapid Strike penalties.

## Stances

Every martial art has specialized stances, many of which bear interesting names: "cat stance" (from Karate), "boar's tooth" (from Longsword Fighting), and so on. Defensive stances allow the Defensive Attack (p. 100) and All-Out Defense maneuvers. Forward-leaning, aggressive stances justify All-Out Attack (Long) (pp. 97-98). Low, broad stances are less vulnerable to takedowns, and explain why high grappling skills help resist such attacks. Knowledge of effective fighting stances isn't an independent technique – it's one of the most basic elements covered by any combat skill.

## Punches

Any straight or crossing blow with a closed fist is a basic punch at Boxing, Brawling, or Karate skill. The name for such a strike depends on the style and the combat maneuver. Crosses, hooks, and reverse punches are typical Attacks; a jab is the archetypal Defensive Attack; and a lunge punch, roundhouse, or haymaker is a Committed Attack (pp. 99-100) or All-Out Attack.

Many famous punches from sports and cinema are nothing more exotic than punches that use specific combat options. For instance, a "rabbit punch" is a punch to the back of the head or neck; the opening strike of Bruce Lee's "straight blast" is a Deceptive Attack that relies on sheer speed (see *Jeet Kune Do,* pp. 164-165); and the classic two-jab combination favored by boxers is a Rapid Strike.

Only punches that use unorthodox striking surfaces – the side of the hand, an open hand, an extended finger, two clasped hands, etc. – or that deliver extra damage *without* going "all-out" merit distinct techniques. These strikes are tricky without extra training. Examples include Exotic Hand Strike, Hammer Fist, Two-Handed Punch, and Uppercut.

## Kicks

Almost every standing kick to a frontal target – including crescent, rising, side, and snap kicks – is a straight kicking attack at Karate-2 or Brawling-2. Short, jabbing kicks are Defensive Attacks. Hard-hitting hook and roundhouse kicks are Committed Attacks or All-Out Attacks. Combat options often enter the equation, too. For instance, the "double side kick" of Tae Kwon Do is a Rapid Strike – and also a Telegraphic Attack (p. 113).

To improve all of these kicks, raise Kicking (pp. 75-76) – or increase Karate or Brawling. Only kicks from unusual positions (Back Kick), those with limited target selection (e.g., Axe Kick and Stamp Kick), and those that require the attacker to hop, spin, or jump (such as Jump Kick, Spinning Kick, and Drop Kick) can justify distinct techniques. The additional training is needed to work around the risk or awkward angles involved.

## Weapon Strikes

Armed stylists – especially swordsmen – often name or number their art's basic guard positions, thrusts, and swings. These are by definition *standard* attacks and parries, not explicit techniques. Most "advanced" methods add in maneuvers other than Attack. Draw cuts, flicking blows from the wrist, and so on are Defensive Attacks. Aggressive tactics – flèche, lunge, pass, stab-and-twist, etc. – are Committed Attacks or All-Out Attacks. The "floor lunge" is an All-Out Attack (Long).

Even some *unusual* modes of attack are normal blows combined with combat options. A dramatic, circular sword cut (called a *moulinet* by saber fighters) is a Telegraphic Attack. Sliding a weapon along the enemy's to bypass his guard (a "glide" or *coulé*) is a Deceptive Attack. Using the tip of a blade to cut is a Tip Slash (p. 113). Striking a two-handed blow using a one-handed weapon is an application of Defensive Grip (pp. 109-111). Attacking with an inverted blade is an example of Reversed Grip (pp. 111-112).

Weapon techniques are mainly for difficult combat conditions (horseback, close combat, etc.) or non-striking attacks (especially sweeping and grappling).

## Grappling

Grapples, takedowns, and pins – and many follow-ups, such as strangling and the options in *Grab and Smash!* (p. 118) – are possible even for average, untrained people. The Judo, Sumo Wrestling, and Wrestling skills teach moves that make such actions more effective, but these are left abstract, not bought as techniques. Grappling the arms from behind is called a "full nelson" and a takedown made by hooking your leg around your opponent's, a "reap" . . . but Full Nelson and Reap aren't techniques. The same applies to so-called "sticking hands": situational awareness is simply part of basic skill, and explains why more skilled fighters have a higher Parry and better odds in Quick Contests.

Grappling techniques are reserved for locks, breaks, and throws that require precise body positioning to be effective. Anyone can grab a foe, but it takes training to apply an arm bar. Examples include Arm Lock, Neck Snap, and Piledriver.

## Setup Tactics

Attacking into an adversary's attack is a Stop Hit (p. 108), and a standard option for anybody who takes a Wait maneuver. Converting a parry into an attack is a Riposte (pp. 124-125), and possible for any fighter who can parry. To be successful at either, one must be good at attacks and parries in general. It makes little sense to train at these things exclusively!

## *Armed Grapple*

**Hard**

*Defaults:* Cloak, or other prerequisite skill-2.
*Prerequisite:* Cloak or appropriate Melee Weapon skill; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

Many armed styles teach how to step close to a foe, maneuver a weapon past him, and then pull it in tightly to restrain him. This results in an actual grapple of his body in close combat. To snag an opponent at full reach, use Entangle (p. 71) for a flexible weapon or Hook (p. 74) for one with a hook or other projection. To lock blades with him, use Bind Weapon (see below).

To initiate an armed grapple, roll against weapon skill at -2 – this is an awkward and unconventional attack for most weapons. It's a standard move with a *cloak,* however, and uses your unpenalized Cloak skill (see p. B404). Use the hit location penalties for grappling, not those for striking.

Your opponent may use any normal defense. If he fails to defend, you've successfully grappled him with your weapon. While using your weapon to grapple, you can neither attack nor defend with it. On your turn, you can follow up with a takedown, pin, choke, or Arm Lock (options depend on the body part grappled). Releasing the grapple is a free action.

A one-handed weapon other than a cloak can only grapple if you grip it in two hands first. This requires a Ready maneuver.

## *Attack from Above*

**Average**

*Default:* prerequisite skill-2.
*Prerequisite:* Any unarmed or Melee Weapon skill; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

Some styles teach techniques for pouncing on a foe from above. This technique lets you buy off the -2 to attack described in *Attack from Above* (p. B402). It's particularly suitable for cinematic ninja!

## *Axe Kick*

**Hard**

*Default:* Karate-4.
*Prerequisite:* Karate; cannot exceed Karate skill.

This kick involves lifting a leg and smashing it down onto the target heel-first. It's a special option for Committed Attack (pp. 99-100) and All-Out Attack (p. B365). Use the rules below *instead* of the normal rules for those maneuvers.

An Axe Kick has reduced *vertical* reach. If your foe's SM exceeds yours by +1, you can't target his head while he's standing. If he's larger, you can't hit his head unless he's crawling or on the ground. Resolve an attack to the foot as a Stamp Kick (pp. 80-81) rolled at your Axe Kick level.

As a Committed Attack, an Axe Kick does thrust+1 crushing damage – or thrust at +1 per *two* dice, if better – plus skill bonuses. Roll against Axe Kick to hit. Afterward, you can't dodge or retreat until your next turn, and are at -2 on all remaining active defenses.

As an All-Out Attack, an Axe Kick does thrust+2 – or thrust at +1 per die, if better – plus skill bonuses. Hit or miss, you have *no* defenses until your next turn!

An Axe Kick is difficult to back away from. If your opponent's retreat bonus makes the difference between a hit and a miss for an attack aimed above the foot, the kick still hits a lower body part. Head or neck shots strike the torso; torso, arm, or hand blows hit a leg; and kicks to the groin or leg stomp a foot.

This move also beats down the target's guard. A successful attack roll gives the defender -1 to parry any attack *following* the Axe Kick until his next turn – even if his defense against the kick succeeds. Axe Kick is a good opener for a Rapid Strike or Combination!

## *Back Kick or Back Strike*

**Hard**

*Defaults:* prerequisite skill-2, or -4 for a kick.
*Prerequisite:* Karate or any Melee Weapon skill; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

This technique lets you kick or use a melee weapon against a foe to your rear without making a Wild Swing or changing facing – although your legs must be free in order to change *stance.* Back Kick defaults to Karate-4. Back Strike defaults to Melee Weapon-2 and you must specialize; e.g., Back Strike (Staff). To throw a "back punch," use Elbow Strike (p. 71).

To use this technique, you *must* know that your adversary is behind you! Roll against Back Kick or Back Strike to hit, at an extra -1 if you target a specific hit location.

A Back Kick has standard reach and damage for a kick. A Back Strike can only reach an enemy within one yard, regardless of weapon length. Thrusting attacks do their usual damage; swinging attacks have -2 damage or -1 damage per die, whichever is worse. A Back Strike from a Reversed Grip (pp. 111-112) uses the reach and damage effects of that grip *instead* of those given here.

In all cases, you're at -2 to all active defenses until your next turn. This *is* cumulative with the -2 to parry with a weapon in a Reversed Grip!

## *Bind Weapon*

**Hard**

*Default:* prerequisite skill-3.
*Prerequisite:* Jitte/Sai or any fencing weapon skill; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

Fencers with swords that have crosspiece hilts can lock blades or hilts in a so-called bind. With a pronged weapon such as the *jitte* (p. 217), it's possible to bind any weapon. This technique covers all such tactics.

To bind, you must first successfully parry your opponent's fencing blade with your own such sword – or use a Jitte/Sai weapon to parry *any* weapon. On your first turn after the parry, roll against Bind Weapon to try to bind the weapon you parried; this is an attack. If you're using a fencing weapon, your adversary must be within a yard and you must step into close combat. With a Jitte/Sai weapon, the target weapon must merely be in reach (see p. B400).

Your foe's only legal defenses are a dodge or a parry with the targeted weapon. He may retreat for the usual bonus. If his defense fails, you bind weapons – and if he tried to retreat, he can't step back.

You can use Bind Weapon *offensively* rather than after a parry. Step into range (see above) and roll against Bind Weapon to hit. The only difference is that your foe may try any defense, not just a dodge or a parry with the target weapon.

While a bind is in effect, neither fighter can use the weapons involved to attack or defend. All other actions taken by defender and attacker alike are at -2 DX.

Your foe may attempt to free his weapon on his turn. This counts as an attempt to break free (p. B371), and requires a full turn and a Quick Contest of his weapon skill against your Bind Weapon technique. If he uses finesse to disengage, make DX-based rolls. If he uses brute force, the rolls are ST-based. If he *wins,* the bind ends – and if he used ST, *you* must make a skill or Retain Weapon roll or drop the weapon you used to bind!

Either of you can escape by dropping the weapon in the bind. This is a free action at any time. *You* can end the bind without losing your weapon. This, too, is a free action – but only on your turn.

This tactic is common for two-weapon fencers – especially those with a main-gauche. The objective is to bind the enemy's blade and attack with a secondary weapon. Jitte/Sai fighters use paired weapons to similar effect.

## *Breakfall*

**Average**

*Defaults:* Acrobatics, Judo, or Wrestling.

*Prerequisite:* Acrobatics, Judo, or Wrestling; cannot exceed prerequisite skill+5.

## Optional Rule: Targeted Attacks

Attacks on "high-value" targets – face, chinks in armor, weapons, etc. – are effective fight-stoppers, which is why so many fighting styles teach them. These rules let warriors study such moves as Hard techniques called *Targeted Attacks.* For each Targeted Attack (TA), the martial artist must specify three things:

*Skill:* The Melee Weapon or unarmed combat skill used.

*Attack:* The specific strike or grapple involved. For weapon skills, this is either "Swing" or "Thrust." For unarmed striking skills, this is generally "Punch." Either can instead name a striking technique such as Disarming, Kicking, Lethal Strike, or Return Strike. For grappling skills, options are "Grab," "Grapple," and – for Judo – "Throw."

*Target:* This can be a hit location other than the torso (Eye, Face, Arm, etc.), chinks in armor at a specific hit location (Torso Chinks *is* valid, although the GM may rule that some hard armor isn't vulnerable), or Weapon. The attack must be able to target the location in the first place – a condition that most often affects attacks to the vitals, eye, or chinks in armor (see pp. B399-400).

The default penalty equals the modifier to hit the target. For strikes, this is -2 for Arm or Leg, -3 for Groin or Vitals, -4 for Hand or Foot, -5 for Face or Neck, -7 for Skull, or -9 for Eye. It's -10 for chinks in armor on any of these locations (this *replaces* the usual penalty), but only -8 for chinks in torso armor. All strikes at weapons default at -4. Blows (Swing, Punch, etc.) intended to *break* a weapon have no extra penalty; attempts to disarm must specify Disarm as their attack and have a further -2 except with a fencing weapon (see p. B400).

Grapples use *half* the usual hit location penalty: -1 for Arm or Leg, -2 for Hand or Foot, -3 for Face or Neck, etc. *Grabs* for weapons are at -4. Judo throws can target any body part but the Eye, Vitals, or Groin, at the penalties given for strikes. Such throws damage the targeted location *and* require a HT roll to avoid stun (see *Judo Throw,* p. 75).

If defaulting from a skill, add the penalty for any special attack: -1 for Knee Strike; -2 for Elbow Strike, Kicking, or Lethal Strike; -4 for Lethal Kick; and so on. If defaulting from a technique, *don't* apply this penalty – the technique's default already includes it! Disarms default to skill *and* Disarming at the same penalty.

By improving Targeted Attack, the fighter can buy off up to *half* of his default penalty (round up) for a strike, grab, or throw, or the *whole* penalty for a grapple. Write the TA as "TA (**Skill** *Attack*/Target)." Some examples:

*TA (Boxing Punch/Face):* Defaults to Boxing-5; cannot exceed Boxing-2.

*TA (Broadsword Disarm/Weapon):* Defaults to Broadsword-6 or Disarming (Broadsword)-6; cannot exceed Broadsword-3 or Disarming (Broadsword)-3.

*TA (Broadsword Swing/Neck):* Defaults to Broadsword-5; cannot exceed Broadsword-2.

*TA (Judo Throw/Skull):* Defaults to Judo-7; cannot exceed Judo-3.

*TA (Karate Knee Strike/Groin):* Defaults to Karate-4 or Knee Strike-3; cannot exceed Karate-2 or Knee Strike-1.

*TA (Rapier Thrust/Vitals Chinks):* Defaults to Rapier-10; cannot exceed Rapier-5.

*TA (Wrestling Grab/Weapon):* Defaults to Wrestling-4; cannot exceed Wrestling-2.

*TA (Wrestling Grapple/Arm):* Defaults to Wrestling-1; cannot exceed Wrestling.

Roll against Targeted Attack to hit. A TA against a weapon assumes -4 to hit; roll at +1 vs. large weapons (-3 to hit), -1 vs. small ones (-5 to hit).

Repeating a Targeted Attack makes you predictable. If you use the same TA twice on a foe in a fight, he defends at +1 against your third and later uses!

Targeted Attacks are realistic but complex. The GM is welcome to forbid them if they seem too fussy.

This technique covers ways of controlling or absorbing the shock of a fall: shoulder rolls, slapping the ground, and so on. When you're thrown for damage (see *Judo Throw,* p. 75), a successful Breakfall roll deducts one plus your margin of success from damage. If this prevents *all* damage, you may opt to end up crouching instead of lying down. You can also try to end up crouching after a non-damaging throw, but the lack of momentum makes it tricky: roll at Breakfall-3. Finally, you may substitute Breakfall for Acrobatics when rolling to reduce the effective distance of a fall (see *Falling,* p. B431); any success lets you end up crouching, if you wish.

## *Cavalry Training*

**Hard**

*Default:* Melee Weapon skill-2.
*Prerequisites:* Riding *and* any Melee Weapon skill; cannot exceed Melee Weapon skill.

This technique lets a mounted warrior buy off the -2 for attacking on the same turn as his mount (see *Attacks by Mounts,* p. B397). It also helps when he attacks while his mount's velocity is 7 or more relative to his target. Such an attack is normally at +1 to damage and -1 to skill (see *Cavalry Weapons,* p. B397), but improving Cavalry Training to Melee Weapon skill-1 eliminates this -1. Raising Cavalry Training to full skill eliminates *both* penalties. Remember that skill with a mounted attack can't exceed Riding skill – or Combat Riding (see below), if better.

## *Choke Hold*

**Hard**

*Defaults:* Judo-2, Wrestling-3, or appropriate weapon skill-3.
*Prerequisite:* Judo, Wrestling, or appropriate weapon skill; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

This close-combat attack involves locking the target's neck and applying pressure. It requires two hands. Roll against Choke Hold to hit. If you come from in front of your victim, you're at -1.

Your victim may try any legal defense. If he fails, you apply the hold, which counts as a grapple. If you struck from behind, he can only defend if he knew you were coming (see p. B391). Otherwise, all he can do is attempt to tuck his chin to counter your hold. This is a parry at -2 with a grappling skill. He can't retreat. If he succeeds, you grapple him but get no hold; critical success means he completely ducks your attack.

On your foe's next turn and on subsequent turns, he may try to break free. You're at +5 in the Quick Contest for using two hands. You control only his neck and head, not his arms and legs. He *can* attack you at the usual -4 for being grappled. If you came from behind, he may only try the strikes detailed under *Pain and Breaking Free* (p. 119) or attempt to grapple your arm, which allows the usual follow-up techniques on later turns.

*Jian*

On your *next* turn – and on each turn thereafter, until your prey breaks free – you may apply pressure to your victim's carotid arteries to subdue him or to his trachea to choke him. This counts as an attack. Roll the Quick Contest described in *Choke or Strangle* (p. B370). Your hold gives you +3 ST. A carotid ("blood") choke inflicts fatigue damage. A tracheal ("air") choke delivers crushing damage.

You can apply this hold using a weapon. Default and prerequisite skills become a weapon skill. The lever gives a *further* ST bonus to restrain or injure your victim: +1 if reach C, +2 if longer. You can choke with the flat or the edge of a sword; if using the edge, you may only choke for *cutting* damage. You must grasp a sword with one hand on the handle, one on the blade. Make a DX roll when you roll to inflict injury. Failure does thrust cutting damage to your off hand (DR protects normally).

## *Close Combat*

**Hard**

*Defaults:* prerequisite skill-4, -8, or -12.
*Prerequisite:* Any Melee Weapon skill; cannot remove more than half the default penalty.†

In close combat (p. B391), a weapon without "C" in its Reach statistic gives a skill penalty based on its reach: -4 for reach 1, -8 for reach 2, or -12 for reach 3. In addition, swing damage is at -1 per yard of reach; e.g., a broadsword does -1 damage, a greatsword gets -2, and a full-sized halberd has -3. Thrusting attacks do normal damage. Calculate skill and swing damage penalties using the weapon's *longest* reach, not the reach at which it's currently ready.

This technique lets you buy off *half* the skill penalty. You may buy it up to skill-2 for a reach 1 weapon, skill-4 for a reach 2 weapon, or skill-6 for a reach 3 weapon.

All of this assumes a normal grip. See *Reversed Grip* (pp. 111-112) for an alternative. Hilt punches and the like use *Pummeling* (p. 111) instead of these rules; this technique doesn't apply.

† Close Combat is also available for ranged weapons. This lets you buy off the entire Bulk penalty for close-combat purposes only; see *Weapons for Close Combat* (p. B391). Those with Heroic Archer (p. 45) don't *need* this technique.

## *Combat Riding*

**Hard**

*Default:* Riding.
*Prerequisite:* Riding; cannot exceed Riding+4.

This technique represents training at riding under combat conditions. Use it instead of Riding whenever you roll to *control* your mount in battle. It doesn't cover fighting – for that, learn Cavalry Training (see above) or Mounted Shooting (p. 77) – but where the rules limit weapon skill to Riding, your limit is Combat Riding instead. Combat Riding never aids Riding rolls to mount up, stay mounted, or direct your mount hands-free – see *Hands-Free Riding* (p. 73), *Quick Mount* (p. 78), and *Staying Seated* (p. 81) for those tricks – or for such non-combat activities as dressage, racing, and travel.

## *Counterattack*

**Hard**

*Default:* prerequisite skill-5.
*Prerequisite:* Any unarmed combat or Melee Weapon skill; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

Counterattack represents attacking as soon as possible after defending in order to take advantage of the momentary "hole" an attacker must leave in his defenses. You can only attempt it on your turn immediately following a successful active defense – and only vs. the foe against whom you defended. If you blocked or parried, the Counterattack doesn't *have* to use the hand(s) you used to defend, although it can if you wish.

Roll against Counterattack to hit. Your foe is at -2 to Parry, or to his resistance roll if you tried a grappling move that uses a Quick Contest (e.g., takedown), or at -1 to Block or Dodge. If you hit, your attack inflicts its usual damage. You *can* use another technique as your counterattack; see *Using Techniques Together* (p. 64) to find effective skill level.

## *Crack*

**Average**

*Default:* Whip-4.
*Prerequisite:* Whip; cannot exceed Whip skill.

You can "crack" any ordinary whip – this is the sound of the tip breaking the sound barrier! Such an attack is at -4 to skill but +2 to damage. Crack lets you buy off the skill penalty. In a cinematic (or silly) campaign, Crack might work with anything whip-like: ropes, belts, long braids, wet towels . . .

## *Disarming*

**Hard**

*Default:* prerequisite skill.
*Prerequisite:* Any unarmed combat or Melee Weapon skill; cannot exceed prerequisite skill+5.

If you know this technique above default, you may use it *instead* of the underlying skill whenever you attack to disarm (see *Knocking a Weapon Away,* p. B401) – both for the roll to hit and in the ensuing Quick Contest. For instance, if you have Broadsword-14 and Disarming (Broadsword)-17, you disarm as if you had Broadsword-17. Penalties to hit the target weapon, including the -2 for using a non-fencing weapon, and modifiers in the Quick Contest (such as the +2 for Jitte/Sai and Whip weapons) apply normally.

## *Drop Kick*

**Hard**

*Defaults:* Brawling-1, Sumo Wrestling-1, or Wrestling-2.
*Prerequisite:* Brawling, Sumo Wrestling, or Wrestling; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

This attack uses two feet in an attempt to injure and knock down an opponent. It's a special option for Move and Attack. Use the following rules *instead* of the normal rules for that maneuver.

A Drop Kick is a type of slam (p. B371). You must move at least a yard towards your target. The kick itself has a reach of 2 yards. Roll against Drop Kick to hit. Damage is as for a slam, at +2 for going feet first (or +3 if wearing heavy boots). Brawling, Sumo Wrestling, or Wrestling adds its usual damage bonus. Succeed or fail, you immediately fall down. Until your next turn, you may block or parry from the ground at the usual penalties, but you can't dodge or retreat.

In a cinematic game, GMs may allow an Acrobatics-5 roll for the attacker to land on his feet after a successful Drop Kick. A miss results in a fall!

## *Ear Clap*

**Average**

*Defaults:* Boxing-3, Brawling-3, or Karate-3.
*Prerequisite:* Boxing, Brawling, or Karate; cannot exceed prerequisite skill-1.

This is an attack on your foe's ear using a cupped or open hand. The goal is to pop his eardrum, stunning and deafening him. You must be in close combat and have at least one free, *empty* hand.

Roll against Ear Clap to hit. Your opponent may use any active defense. If the attack succeeds, it does thrust-3 crushing damage plus skill bonuses. In addition, roll a Quick Contest: Ear Clap vs. the victim's HT. If you win, your target is physically stunned (p. B420); he's also at -1 DX and deaf in one ear (treat as Hard of Hearing) for 1d seconds. On a critical failure on the HT roll or critical success on Ear Clap, the victim must roll as if for a crippling injury to see how long he's partially deaf; see p. B422. Permanent harm is possible!

Ear Clap works best if you box both ears simultaneously. To do a double Ear Clap, you must have *two* free, empty hands and use All-Out Attack (Double) or another form of multiple attacks. Dual-Weapon Attack with the appropriate unarmed combat skill is one option; add the penalties for that technique to Ear Clap to determine effective skill. If only one hand hits, resolve it as above. If both hit, roll *one* Quick Contest. If you win, your victim is deaf in *both* ears (treat as Deafness) for 2d seconds. Once again, a critical failure on HT or critical success on Ear Clap indicates a crippling injury that could become permanent.

## *Elbow Drop*

**Hard**

*Defaults:* Brawling-4 or Wrestling-5.
*Prerequisite:* Brawling or Wrestling; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

This is a devastating elbow strike delivered using the whole body. It's normally done by dropping from a standing posture, driving an elbow into the victim and landing on top of him. You can use it against a kneeling, sitting, or lying foe, making it an ideal follow-up to a takedown. Elbow Drop is a special option for Committed Attack or All-Out Attack. Use the rules here *instead* of the usual ones for those maneuvers.

Roll against Elbow Drop to hit. The victim may dodge or block, or parry at -2. If he parries, your body counts as a weapon with weight equal to your ST; see *Parrying Heavy Weapons* (p. B376).

As a Committed Attack, Elbow Drop inflicts thrust+2, or thrust at +1 per die if better. Brawling adds its usual damage bonus; Wrestling adds damage equal to its ST bonus (+1 at DX+1, +2 at DX+2 or better) instead. As an All-Out Attack, damage is thrust+3, or thrust-1 at +2 per die if better, plus skill bonuses. If an Elbow Drop causes knockback, the target goes nowhere – but if he's sitting or kneeling, he must make the usual DX roll or be knocked down.

If you miss, you hit the ground and suffer the damage you would have inflicted. The same thing happens if your opponent blocks with a shield.

Succeed or fail, you end up lying face-up on the ground. After a Committed Attack, you're at -2 to defend and unable to retreat. After an All-Out Attack, you're defenseless!

## *Elbow Strike*

**Average**

*Defaults:* Brawling-2 or Karate-2.
*Prerequisite:* Brawling or Karate; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

You can jab an elbow into an enemy *behind* you in close combat. Roll against Elbow Strike to hit. There's no modifier for not facing him, but add an extra -1 if you target a specific hit location. A hit inflicts thrust-1 crushing damage, plus skill bonuses. Treat an elbow to someone in *front* of you as a punch.

Elbows are short-ranged and hard to hurt. You may not select All-Out Attack (Long) (pp. 97-98). *Hurting Yourself* (p. B379) applies, but damage is 1/10 of what you roll – not 1/5 – and both it and injury from enemy parries affects the *arm,* not the hand.

## *Entangle*

**Hard**

*Defaults:* Kusari-4 or Whip-4.
*Prerequisite:* Kusari or Whip; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

You can use a flexible weapon such as a whip or a kusari to entangle a foe. Roll against Entangle to hit. If your opponent fails to defend, the weapon wraps around him.

If you hit your victim's arm or torso, you ensnare it. On subsequent turns, you must take a Ready maneuver to keep your opponent snared. Roll a Quick Contest of ST each turn. If you win, you immobilize your foe. If you lose, he pulls your weapon from your grasp. On a tie, he immediately breaks free without disarming you.

If you entangle the neck, use the same rules but your opponent has -5 in the Contest. If you win, the whip or kusari cuts off the victim's breathing – see *Suffocation* (p. B436).

If you entangle a foot or a leg, the target must make a DX roll to remain standing (this is *instead* of the Contest above). He's at -4 if he was running. If he falls, he takes 1d-4 crushing damage – or 1d-2 if running. On subsequent turns, use the rules above to keep him entangled.

You must keep your weapon taut at all times to immobilize or suffocate your victim. This requires a Ready maneuver each turn. If you're mounted and your mount is trained to do this for you, substitute its ST for yours in the Quick Contest.

To escape from a *taut* whip or kusari, you must attack and cut it (the damage required depends on the weapon). To escape from a *limp* weapon – including one pulled from the attacker's grasp – you need a free hand and must make three successful DX rolls. Each attempt counts as a Ready maneuver, during which you may take no other action.

## *Evade*

**Average**

*Defaults:* Acrobatics or Judo.
*Prerequisite:* Acrobatics or Judo; cannot exceed prerequisite skill+5.

This technique represents training at avoiding opponents who wish to obstruct your movement. Evade (Acrobatics) lets you flip over, tumble under, or twist around your foe, while Evade (Judo) allows you to ward off your enemy's hands as you run past. Either replaces DX when trying to evade (see *Evading,* p. B368). All normal penalties apply.

## *Exotic Hand Strike*

**Average**

*Default:* Karate-1.
*Prerequisite:* Karate; cannot exceed Karate skill.

Certain hand strikes use unusual striking surfaces: the edge of the hand, a single protruding knuckle, a claw-shaped fist, etc. These do extra damage to fleshy or fragile targets at the cost of being much more vulnerable to injury when striking a hard surface such as armor or bone. Roll against Exotic Hand Strike to hit. Standard hit location penalties apply. Damage is thrust crushing plus Karate bonuses. *Hurting Yourself* (p. B379) applies if your target has *any* DR – not just DR 3+.

## *Eye-Gouging*

**Hard**

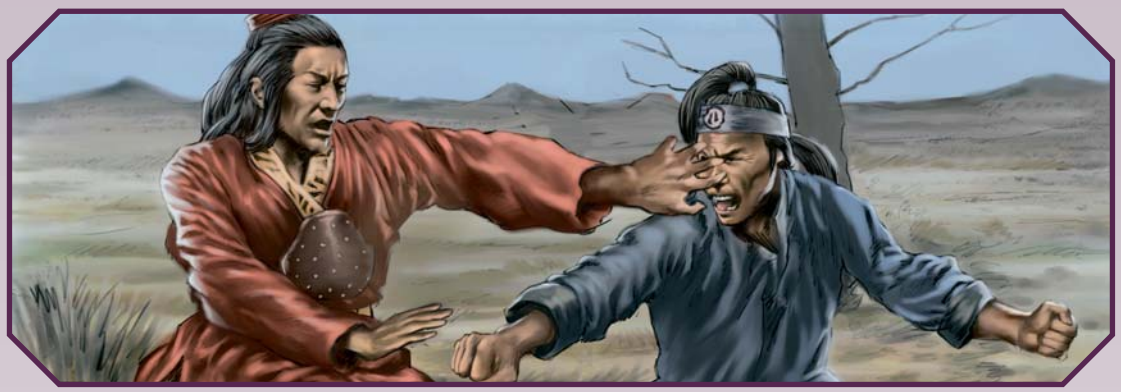
*Defaults:* Brawling-5, Judo-5, or Wrestling-5.
*Prerequisite:* Brawling, Judo, or Wrestling; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

This close-combat attack consists of grabbing someone's head and pressing your thumbs into his eyes. It usually requires *two* empty hands. Roll against Eye-Gouging to hit.

Your foe may defend normally. If he fails, you grapple him and he cannot see! He can try to break free (p. B371) as usual on his turn.

Until your victim breaks free, you can drive your thumbs into his eyes on subsequent turns. This counts as an attack but doesn't require an attack roll. *Each* eye takes thrust-4 crushing damage. This can cripple and blind the eyes but never gets the ×4 wounding modifier for the skull – the thumbs are too short! (*Exception:* The GM may give some nonhumans the perk "Long Thumbs," in which case the wounding modifier *does* apply. The same goes for fighters with Talons or Long Talons.)

You *can* gouge one-handed. The attack roll is against Eye-Gouging-4. Only one eye takes damage on later turns.



# "Go for the eyes!"

Blinding your foe is an effective tactic – but while the eyes are fragile, they're also too small for most strikes to get at them effectively. Eye-Gouging (p. 71) is one solution but hardly the *only* one!

All of these close-combat strikes require an empty hand. If one of them hits and the target fails to defend, the victim must roll vs. Will. Any failure means he *flinches* and has -1 to attack and defense rolls until the end of his next turn, in addition to the technique's other effects.

## *Eye-Pluck**

**Hard**

*Defaults:* Brawling-10 or Karate-10.
*Prerequisite:* Brawling or Karate; cannot exceed prerequisite skill-4.

This cinematic technique involves using the clawed fingers of one hand to grab an enemy's eye and pull it out. It's a strike, not a grapple. You can try it repeatedly but you can't "hold onto" your enemy's eye. Roll against Eye-Pluck to hit.

Damage is thrust-3 *crushing,* plus your Brawling or Karate bonus. Injury over HP/10 cripples the eye. Any excess is lost. The difference between this and Eye-Poke is that if you cripple the eye, your victim must make an immediate HT roll. Failure means you pluck out his eye – a *permanent* crippling injury! See p. B422.

If your foe's Size Modifier exceeds yours by +5 or more, his eye is too big for you to grab and your Eye-Pluck counts only as an Eye-Poke.

## *Eye-Poke*

**Hard**

*Defaults:* Boxing-9, Brawling-9, or Karate-9.
*Prerequisite:* Boxing, Brawling, or Karate; cannot exceed prerequisite skill-4.

This is a jab to the eye using an extended finger. It can blind but it never gets the ×4 wounding modifier for the skull (compare *Lethal Eye-Poke,* below). Roll against Eye-Poke to hit.

A hit inflicts thrust-3 *crushing* damage. Injury over HP/10 cripples the eye. Any excess is lost. A miss by 1 strikes the protective bone around the eye, damaging the face instead – but as you're hitting bone, skull DR (usually DR 2) protects. *Hurting Yourself* (p. B379) applies if your target has *any* DR, not just DR 3+, or if you hit bone.

Due to the risk of finger injury, many fighters pull this blow (see *Subduing a Foe,* p. B401). Little damage is needed to cripple an eye in any event!

## *Eye-Rake*

**Hard**

*Defaults:* Brawling-5 or Karate-5.
*Prerequisite:* Brawling or Karate; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

This technique attempts to blind the foe by scratching a clawed hand across his face and eyes. It's easier than most strikes to the eyes because you're using a broad striking surface against a large target (the upper face), but actual injury is superficial at best.

On a successful hit, roll thrust-1 *crushing* damage. However, this isn't a hard strike and normally inflicts *no* injury. Instead, the victim must make a HT roll at a penalty equal to the damage that penetrates DR. Failure means he's blinded for 1 minute times his margin of failure. Critical failure means one eye suffers HP/10 of real injury (round down) and is crippled!

## *Lethal Eye-Poke**

**Hard**

*Default:* Karate-11.
*Prerequisite:* Karate; cannot exceed Karate-5.

This is an attempt to drive an extended finger through an eye socket and into the *brain.* Treat it as Targeted Attack (Karate Lethal Strike/Eye) for all purposes. It inflicts thrust-2 *piercing* damage, plus Karate bonuses. It can blind *and* gets the ×4 wounding modifier for the skull – just like any other piercing attack. With sufficient damage, it can kill.

## *Feint*

**Hard**

*Default:* prerequisite skill.
*Prerequisite:* Any unarmed combat or Melee Weapon skill†; cannot exceed prerequisite skill+4.

Feints aren't always phony attacks. They include breaks in rhythm, false steps, head fakes, and other ploys to misdirect the foe. This technique represents training in all such methods. If you know it above default, use it *instead* of the underlying skill whenever you feint (p. B365) or someone tries to feint you. For instance, with Broadsword at 14 and Feint (Broadsword) at 16, you would make and resist feints at 16.

*Hook Swords*

Feint includes knowledge of Beats (pp. 100-101) and Ruses (p. 101). Make a ST-based roll to attempt a Beat or to use ST to resist one, an IQ-based roll to try a Ruse, or a Per-based roll to use Per to resist a Ruse. To find your level, add the difference between the relevant score and DX to Feint; e.g., DX 12, IQ 14, and Feint at 16 would allow a Ruse at 18.

† Some styles include a Style Perk that permits a default to Acrobatics, Dancing, or another non-combat skill; see *Feints Using Non-Combat Skills* (p. 101).

## *Finger Lock*

**Hard**

*Default:* Arm Lock-3.
*Prerequisite:* Arm Lock; cannot exceed Arm Lock technique.

This technique lets you grab fingers and twist them painfully. Use the rules under *Arm or Wrist Lock* (p. 65), except that damage is to the *hand* – which is easier to cripple than the arm.

## *Ground Fighting*

**Hard**

*Default:* prerequisite skill-4.
*Prerequisite:* Any combat skill; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

This technique lets you buy off the -4 to attack while crawling, lying face-up, or lying prone. Roll against Ground Fighting *instead* of the prerequisite skill when you use that skill to attack from the ground. For instance, if you had Wrestling at 14 and Ground Fighting (Wrestling) at 13, you could grapple from the ground at skill 13.

For every two points invested in Ground Fighting, you may also ignore -1 of the -3 to *defend* from the ground. Ground Fighting at skill-3 or skill-2 means you're at -2, while at skill-1 or full skill, you have only -1. This replaces the rule on p. B231.

## *Hammer Fist*

**Average**

*Defaults:* Brawling-1 or Karate-1.
*Prerequisite:* Brawling or Karate; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

A "hammer fist" is a punch using the *side* of a clenched fist. This technique includes both the true hammer fist and similar attacks meant to prevent injury to the attacker at the cost of less damage to the target: forearm smashes, punches with the palm or heel of an open hand, etc. In all cases, the striking surface is larger and less rigid than for a normal fist, reducing damage – but it's much harder to injure yourself, making this strike ideal for hard targets.

Roll against Hammer Fist to hit. Damage is thrust-2 plus skill bonuses. If *Hurting Yourself* (p. B379) would apply, damage is 1/10 of what you roll, not 1/5. Furthermore, you suffer a point less damage if your hand is parried aggressively or with a weapon, or otherwise stopped painfully.

If your hand is crippled, you may use Hammer Fist to deliver a forearm smash. Use the above rules, but any self-inflicted injury affects the arm instead of the hand.

## *Handcuffing*

**Average**

*Defaults:* Binding, DX-2, Judo-1, or Wrestling-2; cannot exceed Binding, DX, Judo, or Wrestling.

This is a limited, realistic version of Binding (pp. 82-83) for handcuffing a target quickly. It only works in close combat – and only if you grappled your target on a previous turn or parried his melee attack immediately prior to your turn.

On your turn, roll a Quick Contest: Handcuffing vs. the *higher* of your victim's DX or best grappling skill. This counts as an attack. Victory means you've handcuffed a limb of your choice. On later turns, you can repeat the process to cuff another limb or make an uncontested Handcuffing roll to attach the cuff to an inanimate object (pole, car door, bomb . . .) within a yard.

You can handcuff a *pinned* opponent automatically in 2d seconds. A successful, unopposed Handcuffing roll reduces this to two seconds (one second on a critical success).

Escape attempts use the Escape skill (p. B192) or Slip Handcuffs technique (p. B233). This takes a minute. Time reductions give the usual penalties; see *Time Spent* (p. B346). The GM may permit cinematic heroes *one* attempt at -10 to escape in a turn – effectively instantly.

## *Hands-Free Riding*

**Hard**

*Default:* Riding-3.
*Prerequisite:* Riding; cannot exceed Riding skill.

Using only one hand to control your mount gives -1 to all Riding rolls, while using no hands at all gives -3; see *Mounted Combat* (p. B396). This technique represents training to buy off these penalties. Roll against Hands-Free Riding instead of Riding to control your mount using no hands. If you've improved this technique at all, you may *ignore* the -1 for using only one hand.

## *Head Butt*

**Hard**

*Defaults:* Brawling-1 or Karate-1.†
*Prerequisite:* Brawling or Karate; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.†

This is a close-combat strike using the forehead. Natural targets are the face (-5) and skull (-7) of a standing adversary, but you can attack anything! However, while the skull is hard, it has poor reach and leverage for striking.

Roll against Head Butt to hit. Damage is thrust-1 crushing. Your victim may defend normally; if he parries, any damage this causes affects your *face*. Self-inflicted injury for a target with DR 3+ applies to the *skull;* however, your skull's DR 2 protects normally. If you have rigid head protection – e.g., a metal helm – add +1 to damage and apply your armor's DR against self-inflicted injury.

† Head Butt requires practice to be effective; fighters without Brawling or Karate strike at DX-2 and do only thrust-2 damage. This move is sometimes used while grappling and (illegally) in boxing matches, but it doesn't benefit from Boxing, Judo, Sumo Wrestling, or Wrestling. Races with Strikers (p. B88) on their head don't *need* Head Butt – they attack at full skill and do superior damage.

## *Head Lock*

**Hard**

*Defaults:* Judo-3 or Wrestling-3.
*Prerequisite:* Judo or Wrestling; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

This attack involves controlling an enemy's head and neck using two arms. It targets similar body parts to Choke Hold (p. 69). However, the goal is to lock your victim's neck in a way that lets you injure it or his throat – not to cut off his blood or air supply.

To apply this lock, you must first grapple your opponent by the neck; see *Grappling* (p. B370). Your victim may attempt to break free on his turn. If he fails, then on your *next* turn, you have two ways to injure him: you may attempt to choke him as described under *Choke or Strangle* (p. B370), substituting Head Lock for ST if better, or you may try to throw him as explained in *Throws from Locks* (pp. 118-119). You can alternate between these attacks for as long as you maintain the lock.

Treat sports-wrestling locks that seek to avoid causing injury as simple head or neck grapples. The same goes for the so-called head lock seen on the street (an arm around the neck).

## *Hook*

**Hard**

*Default:* prerequisite skill-5.
*Prerequisite:* Any appropriate Melee Weapon skill; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

This is the technique of using a weapon with a projection – usually a hook – to snag a foe's head, limb, weapon, or shield in order to pull him off-balance. You can *learn* it for any Melee Weapon skill, but you'll need a suitable weapon to *use* it.

Hook is a common technique for Axe/Mace, Polearm, and Two-Handed Axe/Mace, but while picks and most axes can hook, maces and knobbed clubs can't – and only a few polearms sport hooks. It's possible to add hooks to weapons that normally lack them, such as spears and staffs. Some swordfighting schools even taught (gauntleted!) fighters to grab their weapon by the *blade* and hook with the pommel and crosspiece. Swords wielded this way use the Axe/Mace or Two-Handed Axe/Mace skill, and are *unbalanced*. See Chapter 6 for more on suitable weapons and the associated skills.

Roll against Hook to hit, modified for the target as noted below. Your adversary may defend normally. Hook doesn't *usually* inflict damage, but some weapons have an edged hook (see below). While using a weapon to hook a foe, you can't use it to attack or parry. You can always release or drop it as a free action on your turn, however.

If hooking the head or a limb, apply standard hit location penalties. If you succeed, then on subsequent turns you may attempt to pull your victim off-balance or even to the ground. Roll a Quick Contest of ST. If you win, you drag your opponent into a kneeling posture; if he's kneeling or crouching, he falls down. He can't stand until he breaks free or you release him. If you lose or tie, nothing happens. If you critically fail, you drop your weapon! Your foe may try to break free normally on his turn.

Hooking a weapon is an attempt to disarm; see p. B401. Apply the usual penalty to hit the weapon but ignore the -2 for a non-fencing weapon. You get +2 in the ensuing Quick Contest, in addition to the usual modifiers. If you lose the Contest, your opponent retains his weapon and escapes from your hook.

If hooking a shield, roll to hit at -4 *plus* its DB. If you succeed, you may attempt to pull it out of line. Treat this as an attempt to disarm, but your opponent gets *+4* in the Quick Contest if his shield is strapped to his arm. You get +2 if hooking with a two-handed weapon. If you win, the shield becomes unready – it's still on your foe's arm but he can't block with it or benefit from its DB until he breaks free and takes a Ready maneuver to reorient it.

Certain weapons designed for hooking are sharpened on the inside of the hook. These include the Chinese hook sword and the European bill. Such weapons inflict the damage listed for their hook in addition to the above effects. If using the optional *Pain and Breaking Free* rule (p. 119), such weapons are very effective against lightly armored foes!

## *Horse Archery*

**Hard**

*Default:* Bow-4.
*Prerequisites:* Bow *and* Riding; cannot exceed Bow skill.

"Horse Archery" is shorthand for Mounted Shooting (Bow/Horse). See *Mounted Shooting* (p. 77).

## *Jam*

**Hard**

*Default:* prerequisite skill Parry-1.
*Prerequisite:* Brawling or Karate; cannot exceed prerequisite Parry.

A Jam is an attempt to parry a low-line attack – typically a kick – by interposing a foot or leg aggressively enough to injure the attacker. It's only useful against attacks on your lower body (feet, legs, or groin). You may attempt it *instead* of a non-damaging leg or foot parry once per turn; see *Parries with Legs or Feet* (p. 123).

Roll against Jam to defend, at the usual -3 for Brawling vs. a swung weapon. You cannot retreat. Failure means you're hit; your attacker may choose to hit his original target, your parrying leg, or your parrying *foot*. Success means you parry and may roll against the underlying skill to strike the attacking body part or weapon, modified as follows.

*Modifiers:* The usual -2 for kicking. Against unarmed, +0 to hit a leg, -2 to hit an arm or foot, -4 to hit a hand; -1 if your foe knows Rapid Retraction (p. 51). Against armed, a basic -3; another -3 to -5 for weapon size (see p. B400); a further -3 for Brawling vs. a swung weapon.

Success on this skill roll inflicts thrust-3 crushing damage or thrust-1 at -1 per die, whichever is *worse,* on the targeted weapon or body part. Skill bonuses apply normally. Failure means you didn't parry forcefully enough to inflict damage.

> *Punches and kicks are tools to kill the ego.*
>
> *– Bruce Lee,*
> ***The Tao of Jeet Kune Do***

## *Judo Throw*

**Hard**

*Default:* Judo.
*Prerequisite:* Judo; cannot exceed Judo skill.

This is the primary attack of the Judo skill. On the turn immediately after a successful Judo parry, you may attempt to throw your attacker if he's within a yard. You must have at least one hand free to do so. This counts as an attack. Roll vs. Judo to hit. (On an All-Out Attack, you can't try two throws but you can make one attempt at +4.) Your foe may use any active defense – he *can* parry your hand with a weapon! If his defense fails, you throw him.

A thrown foe falls where you please. On a battle map, he lands in any two hexes near you. One of these hexes must be his starting hex, your hex, or any hex adjacent to one of those hexes. Your victim must roll against HT. Failure means he's stunned. If you throw him into someone else, that person must roll vs. the higher of ST+3 or DX+3 to avoid being knocked down.

The intent of Judo Throw is normally to put your rival on the ground – not to injure him – but you *can* throw him in a way that maximizes the impact of the fall on a specific location, injuring it. This is frowned upon in sport matches! Treat a damaging throw like any other, but at -1 to hit plus any hit location penalty (*not* halved for grappling). Any location but the eye, vitals, or groin is valid; common targets are the skull, neck, and arm. Damage is thrust-1 crushing; there's no bonus for skill. The victim may attempt a Breakfall (pp. 68-69) roll to reduce injury. Other effects are as for a regular Judo Throw.

You may also throw a grappled foe. Instead of parrying first, you must grapple your opponent. On a later turn, try to throw him. This is an attack resolved as a Quick Contest: Judo vs. the *highest* of your adversary's ST, DX, or best grappling skill. If you attempt a damaging throw, the extra penalties *do* modify your roll. If you win, you throw your victim as above. Otherwise, you don't – but unless you critically failed, you retain your grapple and may try again on a future turn.

## *Jump Kick*

**Hard**

*Default:* Karate-4.
*Prerequisite:* Karate; cannot exceed Karate skill.

This showy, dangerous move lets you leap into the air to increase range and damage with a kick. Some sources claim it was used to unhorse riders! It's a special option for Committed Attack (pp. 99-100) and All-Out Attack (p. B365). The rules below *replace* the standard ones for those maneuvers.

As a Committed Attack, a Jump Kick involves a short jump forward or sideways that ends in a sharp kick. You *must* take two steps toward your foe; this effectively gives an extra yard of reach. Roll against Jump Kick to hit. A hit does thrust+1 crushing damage – or thrust at +1 per *two* dice, if better – plus Karate bonuses. Afterward, you cannot dodge or retreat until next turn, and have -2 on all other active defenses. On a miss, make the usual DX roll to avoid a fall; see p. B274.

An All-Out Attack involves hurling your body at your opponent foot-first. You must move at least half your Move (minimum 2 yards) forward. Roll against Jump Kick to hit. Your target parries at -2. A hit inflicts thrust+2 – or thrust at +1 per die, if better – plus skill bonuses. If you miss, or if your target successfully defends, you *fall down* unless you can make a DX-4 or Acrobatics-2 roll. Hit or miss, you have no defenses at all until next turn!

These rules are intended for ***Martial Arts*** campaigns. The GM is free to use the less-realistic version on p. B231 in games that don't focus on the martial arts.

## *Kicking*

**Hard**

*Defaults:* Brawling-2 or Karate-2.
*Prerequisite:* Brawling or Karate; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

Kicking covers all kicks not defined as standalone techniques: crescent kicks, hook kicks, rising kicks, roundhouse kicks, snap kicks, etc. Knowledgeable players are free to embellish, but in all cases, a kick requires an attack roll against Kicking and inflicts thrust crushing damage. Use Brawling or Karate skill – *not* Kicking – to determine the damage bonus, and use only the *highest* bonus. If you miss, roll vs. Kicking or DX to avoid falling down.

Combine Kicking with Committed Attack (pp. 99-100) or All-Out Attack for devastating kicks like roundhouses or stepping side kicks, or with Defensive Attack (p. 100) for close, jabbing kicks. Add in Deceptive Attack (p. B369) for fast snaps and other tricky moves, or Telegraphic Attack (p. 113) for slow kicks with big windups.

## *Knee Drop*

**Hard**

*Defaults:* Brawling-3 or Wrestling-4.
*Prerequisite:* Brawling or Wrestling; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

This brutal attack involves dropping your entire weight onto your foe knee-first. It's normally executed from a standing posture by driving your knee into your adversary and landing on top of him. You can only use it against an opponent who's lying down, but it's an ideal follow-up to a takedown. Knee Drop is a special option for Committed Attack or All-Out Attack. Use these rules *instead* of the usual ones for those maneuvers.

Roll against Knee Drop to hit. Your victim may dodge or block, or parry at -2. If he parries, your body counts as a weapon with weight equal to your ST; see *Parrying Heavy Weapons* (p. B376).

As a Committed Attack, Knee Drop inflicts thrust+2, or thrust at +1 per die if better. Brawling adds its usual damage bonus; Wrestling adds damage equal to its ST bonus (+1 at DX+1, +2 at DX+2 or better) instead. As an All-Out Attack, damage is thrust+3, or thrust+1 at +1 per die if better, plus skill bonuses.

On a miss, you hit the ground and one leg takes the damage you would have inflicted. If your opponent blocks with a shield, it has the same effect.

Succeed or fail, you end up kneeling. You're at -2 to defend and unable to retreat after a Committed Attack. After an All-Out Attack, you're defenseless!

## Dirty Tricks

Which tactics are considered "dirty tricks" depends on exactly where, when, and whom you're fighting. In a sporting match, anything that's against the rules for fairness or safety reasons – dangerous holds, biting, blows to the groin, dirt in the eyes, etc. – is "dirty," and getting caught means a forfeit and possible legal action. These things may be overlooked in a duel or a joust (even an "honorable" knightly one), but unequal or poisoned weapons would be "dirty," with results ranging from a career-destroying reputation to bloody vendetta. On the street, in prison, or at war, of course, all bets are off!

Throwing dirt, sand, beer, etc., in the eyes is a popular dirty trick. Treat this as an attack based on DX, at -5 for the face but +3 for the width of the cloud or splash. The victim may dodge or block, but not parry. If hit, he must roll against HT. Failure means he's blinded for 1d-3 seconds (minimum 1). Critical failure means he's blinded for 1d-3 *minutes* (minimum 1) – he looked right into the attack with two open eyes!

An unexpected illegal blow in a sporting match or duel may take a defender by surprise. Treat the first illegal blow as a free feint resolved immediately before the attack is resolved, on the same turn. Defenses against subsequent illegal blows of any kind suffer no penalties – the defender won't be caught out twice! This won't work on a battlefield, because nothing is against the "rules."

## *Knee Strike*

**Average**

*Defaults:* Brawling-1 or Karate-1.
*Prerequisite:* Brawling or Karate; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

This is a snapping blow with the knee. Unlike a kick, it's only useful in close combat (reach C). Roll against Knee Strike to hit. If you've grappled your opponent, he defends at -2; if you grappled from the front, you may attack his groin at *no penalty!* On a hit, roll thrust crushing damage, plus your Brawling or Karate bonus.

Some fighters like to grab an opponent's head and pull it down into a Knee Strike. For details, see *Grab and Smash!* (p. 118).

## *Leg Grapple*

**Hard**

*Defaults:* DX, Wrestling, or Judo; cannot exceed DX+4, Wrestling+4, or Judo+4.

Leg Grapple is an attempt to catch the leg of a kicking foe. It's a common response to high kicks. To use it, you must have one hand free and successfully parry a kick to your upper body – skull, eye, face, neck, torso, vitals, arm, or hand.

On your first turn following the parry, you may attempt to capture your opponent's leg *if he's within a yard*. This is an attack. Step into close combat and roll against Leg Grapple to hit. Your foe can only dodge; this represents retracting his kick before you can catch him. If you succeed, you've grabbed his leg.

Your foe may attempt to break free (p. B371) on his next turn, but you're at +4 in the Quick Contest. Most fighters follow this technique with Leg Lock (see below) or a takedown (p. B370). If you try a takedown, you're at +3 in the Quick Contest.

This technique is frowned upon in competition – and often outright illegal in the ring – but very common in street fights. If the campaign emphasizes high-kicking cinematic warriors, the GM may not want to let fighters improve Leg Grapple.

## *Leg Lock*

**Average**

*Defaults:* Judo or Wrestling.
*Prerequisite:* Judo or Wrestling; cannot exceed prerequisite skill+4.

A leg lock is an attempt to restrain or cripple an opponent by twisting his leg. This technique allows you to improve your effective Judo or Wrestling skill for this purpose only.

To use Leg Lock, you must have *two* hands free and already have a successful Leg Grapple (p. 76) on your opponent. On your first turn following the Leg Grapple, you may attempt to place your foe's leg in a lock. This is an attack. Roll against Leg Lock to hit. Your victim may use any active defense – he *can* parry your hand with a weapon! If his defense fails, you trap his leg in a lock.

Your foe may attempt to break free (p. B371) on his next turn. If he loses, he has a cumulative -1 on future attempts to break free.

On your *next* turn – and each turn thereafter, until your opponent breaks free – you may try to damage the trapped leg. Roll a Quick Contest: the *higher* of your ST (including your Wrestling bonus) or Leg Lock vs. the *higher* of your victim's ST+4 or HT+4. If you win, you inflict crushing damage equal to your margin of victory. The target's *rigid* DR protects normally. Flexible armor, including natural DR with the Flexible or Tough Skin limitation, has no effect.

If you cripple your victim's leg, he'll be unable to stand on it. You can inflict no further damage on a crippled limb, but you can continue to roll the Contest each turn. If you win, your target suffers shock and stunning just as if you had inflicted damage.

Rolls to inflict damage are completely passive and don't count as attacks. You can simultaneously make close-combat attacks on your opponent, who defends at -4 in addition to any penalties due to the damage caused by the lock itself. An attempt to throw him using the lock *does* count as an attack; see *Throws from Locks* (pp. 118-119).

You can also apply this technique *offensively.* You must first use Judo or Wrestling to grapple your victim's leg with two hands. If he fails to break free on his next turn, you may try Leg Lock on your next turn.

Leg Lock uses finesse to cripple a foe's limb. For a brute-force technique, see *Wrench (Limb)* (p. 82).

## *Low Fighting*

**Hard**

*Default:* prerequisite skill-2.
*Prerequisite:* Any combat skill; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

This technique lets you buy off the -2 to attack from a kneeling or crouching posture. Roll against Low Fighting *instead* of the prerequisite skill whenever you use that skill to attack from a low posture. For instance, if you had Wrestling at 14 and Low Fighting (Wrestling) at 13, you could grapple from your knees at skill 13.

Low Fighting affects the -2 to *defend* while kneeling in the same way. If you know it at skill-1, you're at -1 to defend, while at full skill, you have no penalty.

## *Low-Line Defense*

**Hard**

*Default:* prerequisite skill Parry-2.
*Prerequisite:* Boxing or Sumo Wrestling; cannot exceed prerequisite Parry.

Kicking is illegal in the boxing or sumo ring, so boxers and *sumotori* don't normally train to face it – which is why Boxing and Sumo Wrestling parries are at -2 against kicks. Fighters who cross-train against kicking martial artists or use their skills outside the ring can certainly learn to parry kicks, however! This technique lets them buy off the -2.

## *Mounted Shooting*

**Hard**

*Default:* ranged weapon skill-4.
*Prerequisites:* Riding or a vehicle-operation skill (Bicycling, Driving, Teamster, etc.), *and* a ranged weapon skill; cannot exceed ranged weapon skill.

You've practiced shooting a ranged weapon from a moving mount or vehicle – chariot, horse, howdah, etc. You must specialize by both weapon skill *and* mount or vehicle type. Use the specialties listed for the two skills chosen as prerequisites. Mounted Shooting (Bow/Horse) is extremely common and called "Horse Archery" for brevity (p. B231).

If you've *improved* this technique, modifiers for a rough ride and/or limited mobility (see *Attacking from Moving Vehicle or Mount,* p. B548) – including those for turning in the saddle to shoot – can't reduce your weapon skill below your Mounted Shooting level when using your chosen weapon from the specified platform. Other penalties apply normally. For instance, if you had Thrown Weapon (Spear)-13 and Mounted Shooting (Thrown Spear/Chariot)-11, the penalties for a bumpy chariot ride couldn't reduce Thrown Weapon (Spear) below 11, before other modifiers.

Remember that your skill with a *mounted* attack can't exceed Riding skill (p. B397). Combat Riding (p. 69) mitigates this for the rider himself, but his passengers are limited by his Riding skill.

## *Neck Snap*

**Hard**

*Default:* ST-4; cannot exceed ST+3.

This brute-force attack consists of grabbing and suddenly twisting the victim's head, with the intent of snapping the neck. Unlike most techniques, Neck Snap defaults to ST, not a skill. Wrestling gives its usual skill-based ST bonus.

To use this technique, you must first grapple your opponent by the neck using two hands; see *Grappling* (p. B370). Your victim may attempt to break free on his turn. If he fails, then on your *next* turn, roll a Quick Contest: Neck Snap vs. the *higher* of his ST or HT. This counts as an attack.

If you win, you inflict swing crushing damage on your victim's neck, with the usual ×1.5 wounding modifier for hit location. The target's *rigid* DR protects normally, but flexible armor – including natural DR with the Flexible or Tough Skin limitation – has no effect. Neck injury can have serious consequences; see *Lasting and Permanent Injuries* (pp. 138-139).

Otherwise, you inflict no damage. You may make repeated attempts on later turns. Your opponent may attack you or attempt to break free during this time, subject to the usual limitations of being grappled.

## *Push Kick*

**Hard**

*Defaults:* Brawling-3 or Karate-3.
*Prerequisite:* Karate or Brawling; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

This is a kick that shoves your adversary away instead of injuring him. You hit him with the flat of your foot and *push*. Many kickboxing styles use this technique to shove an opponent into the ropes or far enough away to allow a full-extension finishing move.

A Push Kick is a shove (p. B372) in all respects except that it's done as a kick. Roll against Push Kick to hit. Your opponent may defend normally. If you succeed, roll your usual kicking damage and *double* it. This damage causes no injury – use it only to work out knockback (p. B378).

The above rules assume a Push Kick to the torso. A Push Kick to the leg gives the victim -2 to any DX roll to avoid falling down as a result of knockback. Targeting the skull, face, or neck makes the penalty -3. No other hit locations are valid.

## *Quick Mount*

**Average**

*Defaults:* Acrobatics-3, Jumping-3, or Riding-3.
*Prerequisite:* Acrobatics, Jumping, or Riding†; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

This technique represents training at quickly mounting a horse or similar beast. Roll against it instead of Acrobatics, Jumping, or Riding for this purpose. See *Mounting Up* (p. B396).

† The GM may allow Quick Mount for motorcycles and even cars (a speedy slide through an *open* window into the driver or passenger's seat). This technique requires Acrobatics, Jumping, or the appropriate *Driving* skill.

## *Retain Weapon*

**Hard**

*Default:* prerequisite skill.†
*Prerequisite:* Any weapon skill; cannot exceed prerequisite skill+5.†

If you know this technique above default, you may use it instead of the underlying skill whenever somebody *actively* tries to disarm you (see *Knocking a Weapon Away,* p. B401). For instance, if you have Staff-13 and Retain Weapon (Staff)-16, you resist disarms as if you had Staff-16.

Should an adversary try to disarm you using brute strength, you may make a ST-based Retain Weapon roll instead of a ST roll. Find your level by subtracting DX and adding ST. For example, if you have ST 14, DX 12, and Retain Weapon-15, your ST-based level is 15 - 12 + 14 = 17.

† When learning this technique for missile weapons such as guns and bows, it defaults to DX and cannot exceed DX+5.

## *Return Strike*

**Hard**

*Defaults:* Flail-5 or Kusari-5.
*Prerequisite:* Flail or Kusari; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

This technique capitalizes on a kusari or flail's flexibility to strike the enemy from behind while facing him. To attempt it, you must have sufficient reach to attack a yard *beyond* your opponent – that is, reach equal to his range from you plus a yard.

Roll against Return Strike to hit. If the target has never seen this move (GM decides), treat it as an attack from behind. This usually allows no active defense! Otherwise, it's considered an attack from the side, which gives -2 to most defenses. See pp. B390-391 for detailed rules. Damage is unchanged, but only the DR on your victim's *back* applies.

You can combine Return Strike with Close Combat (p. 69) to do a "wrap shot" while in close quarters; see *Using Techniques Together* (p. 64). Treat this as striking *into* close combat (p. B392). If you miss your target or he dodges, you may hit yourself!

## *Reverse Grip*

**Average**

*Defaults:* prerequisite skill-6 for most one-handed weapons, skill-4 for two-handed ones, or full skill for Tonfa (only).
*Prerequisite:* Any Melee Weapon skill; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

This technique – useful only with weapons that can make thrusting attacks – lets you avoid the need for a Ready maneuver to switch between a regular overhand grip and an underhand grip more suitable for close-quarters stabbing. A successful Reverse Grip roll lets you change grips *instantly.* Failure means you drop the weapon and your turn ends . . . and critical failure also inflicts Tip Slash (p. 113) damage on your torso!

Once reversed, most weapons work differently – see *Reversed Grip* (pp. 111-112) for details. The main uses for this technique are to prepare a long weapon for close combat and to sheathe your weapon more quickly (see *Quick Sheathing,* p. 102).

You can also use this technique to spin a tonfa (p. 225). It defaults to full Tonfa skill, as the weapon's side handle makes this move exceptionally easy.

## *Sacrifice Throw*

**Hard**

*Default:* Judo.
*Prerequisite:* Judo; cannot exceed prerequisite skill level.

This technique involves grappling your opponent, falling with him, and using your entire weight to throw him. It's risky, but difficult to resist. You may only attempt it if a regular Judo Throw (p. 75) would be possible; that is, on your turn immediately following a successful Judo parry or grapple. Sacrifice Throw is a special option for All-Out Attack (p. B365). Use these rules *instead* of the standard ones for All-Out Attack.

Before you attempt the throw, you must declare whether you intend to land face-up, face-down, or kneeling, as well as where you plan to end up. One of your landing hexes – the only one, in the case of kneeling – must be your hex, your foe's hex, or a hex adjacent to one of these. You must

## Using Your Legs

Much as you can kick as well as punch, you can use your legs to grapple. To do so, you must be facing your adversary and not pinned. You have -2 to DX or skill, but +2 to ST. The DX penalty stems from using your legs, not from posture. You only suffer penalties for a non-standing posture against a *standing* foe; Low Fighting and Ground Fighting affect these normally. Your enemy's posture might give additional penalties to grapple certain hit locations from some postures; see *Postures, Hit Locations, and Techniques* (pp. 98-99). If you grapple with legs from a standing start, you avoid all posture penalties but end your turn lying face-up. It counts as a step to leap up, use your legs, and fall; see *Change Posture* (pp. 98-99).

Grapples using legs allow all the usual follow-ups – takedown, pin, strangle, bear hug, Neck Snap, etc. – at -2 DX, +2 ST. You can learn leg-based versions of grappling techniques for this. Each is a *separate* technique with an extra -2 on its default. All get +2 ST – or +1 to damage, if there's no ST roll. Options include:

*Leg Throw:* As Judo Throw (p. 75), but defaults to Judo-2.

*Lower-Body Arm Lock:* As Arm Lock (p. 65), but defaults to Judo-2 or Wrestling-2.

*Lower-Body Head Lock:* As Head Lock (p. 74), but defaults to Judo-5 or Wrestling-5.

*Lower-Body Leg Lock:* As Leg Lock (p. 65), but defaults to Judo-2 or Wrestling-2.

*Triangle Choke:* As Choke Hold (p. 69), but defaults to Judo-4 or Wrestling-5.

also state whether you want your *victim* to end up face-up or face-down, and where, subject to identical restrictions. You *can* end up in the same place; that is, you can land atop him or pull him down on top of you.

After stating your goal, roll against Sacrifice Throw to hit. Succeed or fail, *you* immediately end up in your declared posture and location, defenseless due to your All-Out Attack! Your opponent has -1 to dodge or block. He's at -3 to parry if you fell or at -2 if you only dropped to your knees. If he fails to defend, you throw him exactly as you planned. If you were grappling him, you may let go as a free action, but you don't have to – it's common to hang on and follow a Sacrifice Throw with a pin or choke.

This throw is dangerous in combat but common and useful in point-based matches.

### *Scissors Hold*

**Hard**

*Default:* Wrestling-2.

*Prerequisite:* Wrestling; cannot exceed Wrestling skill level.

This technique allows you to grapple an adversary's legs using your own. You must have both legs free. You must also be lying face-up, sitting, or standing – but if you're standing, then successful or not, you automatically end your turn on the ground. Scissors Hold isn't possible from other postures (kneeling, crouching, etc.).

Roll against Scissors Hold to hit. Your opponent defends normally. If you succeed, you've grappled his legs with yours. He may try to break free on his turn. If he fails, or chooses not to try, you've locked your legs around his. He may attempt to break free on subsequent turns, but at a cumulative -1 per turn.

If your foe is standing, Scissors Hold leads naturally to a takedown (p. B370). Having both of his legs grappled this way gives you +3 in the Quick Contest!

### *Spinning (Attack)*

**Hard**

*Defaults:* prerequisite skill-2, or -3 for a kick.

*Prerequisite:* Karate or any Melee Weapon skill; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

This technique involves turning in a circle before attacking. You must specialize. Spinning Punch defaults to Karate-2, and covers all forms of spinning hand and arm strikes. Spinning Kick defaults to Karate-3. Spinning Strike defaults to Melee Weapon-2, and you must specify the skill; e.g., Spinning Strike (Knife). All of these are special options for All-Out Attack or Committed Attack (pp. 99-100) – use the rules below *instead* of the normal ones for those maneuvers.

The goal behind spinning before attacking is to deceive your opponent. This might work on a less-skilled adversary, but a skilled fighter is likely to detect your ploy and defend more easily. To simulate this, roll a Quick Contest of Spinning Attack against your opponent's best melee combat skill *before* you make your attack roll. If you win, you may subtract your margin of victory from your victim's defense roll against the blow. If you lose, you "telegraph" your intentions and your foe may add *his* margin of victory to his defense! Thus, this move is risky . . . but it's still common in tournaments and sport martial arts.

Next, make an attack roll against Spinning Attack. Your target may use any active defense, adjusted by the modifier determined in the Contest. This *does* add to the penalty for a feint, Deceptive Attack, etc. – a well-executed Spinning Attack can increase the defense penalty while a bad one can cancel it out (or worse). However, if you wish to try a Deceptive Attack, you must apply the penalty for that option to both your roll in the Contest *and* your attack roll.

As a Committed Attack, a Spinning Attack does normal damage for your punch, kick, or weapon. It leaves you at -3 on all defense rolls and unable to retreat. If you struck with a hand or a weapon, you can't use it to parry. If you kicked, you can't dodge at all. These penalties last until your next turn.

## Optional Rule: Combinations

Martial artists often practice executing a particular sequence of techniques in rapid succession with the goal of economizing movement to the point where the separate moves become a single, fluid motion. A skilled fighter can perform such a "combination" almost as quickly as he could a single technique. Reflecting this reality in the game adds significant complexity; thus, this section is *optional.*

A Combination is a technique that lets a warrior buy off the Rapid Strike penalty for a specific sequence of two or three attacks. A three-attack Combination *does* enable a martial artist to exceed the two-attack limit for a realistic Rapid Strike . . . *if* he spends points on it (see below).

To design a Combination, specify two or three Targeted Attacks (TAs) and their order. Almost any TA is "legal," including a basic attack to the torso or a TA the fighter hasn't improved; e.g., treat an ordinary rapier thrust to the torso as TA (Rapier Thrust/Torso). An attack *can* appear multiple times if it doesn't involve a weapon that becomes unready (or stuck) after attacking. Grapples and grabs are acceptable, but the only subsequent attacks that the grappling hand(s) can make are those that *require* a grip on the target; e.g., Judo Throw.

A Combination lets a fighter eliminate the Rapid Strike penalty – bypassing the usual "precision for speed" tradeoff – by omitting the extra step of matching attacks to targets. This means it always goes off the same way. Thus, it cannot include *untargeted* attacks or leave the *order* of attacks unspecified.

A Combination is a special technique with "split" skill levels, one per attack, written as follows:

Combination (**Skill 1** *Attack 1*/Target 1 + **Skill 2** *Attack 2*/Target 2 + **Skill 3** *Attack 3*/Target 3)-Level 1+Level 2+Level 3

Each portion defaults to the underlying attack at -6 for two attacks or -12 for three, *halved* for Trained by a Master or Weapon Master. When improving the Combination, buy it as a Hard technique but add an extra point cost equal to the number of attacks: default+1 costs 4 points for a two-attack combo, 5 points for a three-attack one. Fighters without one of the two advantages above can only use a three-attack technique if they've spent the minimum 5 points to raise it above default. Improvements adjust all levels by the same amount and can at most buy off the default penalty.

*Example 1:* Don Ortiz has Rapier-18 with TA (Rapier Thrust/Vitals)-16 and Brawling-15 with Kicking (Brawling)-15. He knows a Combination that involves a rapier thrust to the vitals using his TA and then a Brawling kick to the torso using Kicking. At -6 for two attacks, his default is Combination (Rapier Thrust/Vitals + Brawling Kick/Torso)-10+9. He could improve this to 16+15 for 9 points.

*Example 2:* Sifu Chen has Trained by a Master, Judo-20, and Karate-22. He uses a Combination to grab and then throw his foe (both at his unmodified Judo level), and then boot him in the head (Karate at -2 for a kick and -5 for the face, or 15). Three attacks default at -12 but Chen halves this to -6 for Trained by a Master. His default is Combination (Judo Grapple/Torso + Judo Throw + Karate Kick/Face)-14+14+9. He can raise this as high as 20+20+15 for 10 points.

Treat a Combination like any Rapid Strike – subject to all the usual rules for multiple attacks (see *Multiple Attacks,* p. 126-128) – with these exceptions:

- Certain attacks require an earlier attack as a "setup"; e.g., a Judo Throw requires a grapple. If the setup attack fails, the follow-up attack is impossible. This immediately ends the Combination, even if it has a third attack.
- The target of the Combination defends normally, but if he makes his defense roll against an attack – or if his attacker misses with one – he gets +3 to defend against the remainder of the Combination.
- If you use the same Combination twice on a given opponent in a fight, he defends at +1 against your third and later uses.

*Two-Handed Combinations:* A two-attack Combination consisting of a one-handed attack with either hand works the same way but the penalty is -4 (not -6). Adding a third attack to the Combination – either before or after attacking with either hand – makes the penalty -9 (not -12). Cinematic warriors are generally better off learning Dual-Weapon Attack (p. 83).

*Defensive Combinations:* Many realistic "combinations" involve a defense that leads into an attack. Don't use these rules for that! Instead, see *Riposte* (pp. 124-125).

As an All-Out Attack, a Spinning Attack involves putting your full weight behind the blow, using an exaggerated spin (360° or more!), and/or a making a wide, looping attack. You're at -2 to skill for both the Contest and your attack roll. However, your damage is at +2 or +1 per die, whichever is better. You have *no* defenses.

In either case, if you throw a Spinning Kick, balancing during the spin is especially difficult. If your kick misses or your foe successfully defends, the roll to avoid falling is against DX-2.

You can combine Spinning Punch with Elbow Strike (p. 71), Exotic Hand Strike (p. 71), Hammer Fist (p. 73), or Lethal Strike (p. 85). Likewise, you can mix Spinning Kick with Lethal Kick (p. 85). The GM may permit other techniques, and may allow armed techniques to work with Spinning Strike. See *Using Techniques Together* (p. 64) to find effective skill level.

### *Stamp Kick*

Hard

*Defaults:* Brawling-3 or Karate-3.

*Prerequisite:* Brawling or Karate; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

This kick consists of a swift, downward stamp with the heel, using your entire body weight to give additional force to the kick. It does more damage than a normal kick, but it can only target an opponent who's lying down or the foot or leg of a standing foe.

Roll against Stamp Kick to hit. Damage is thrust+1, plus your Brawling or Karate bonus. On a miss, you stomp the ground and must make a DX roll to avoid ending up off-balance and unable to retreat until your next turn.

## *Staying Seated*

**Average**

*Default:* Riding.
*Prerequisite:* Riding; cannot exceed Riding+4.

This technique represents special training in the art of staying on the back of a mount. Knights learn it to keep their seat in combat; rodeo riders practice it to win competitions! When rolling for any reason to avoid falling off your mount (for instance, the rolls on p. B397), use Staying Seated instead of Riding.

## *Sweep*

**Hard**

*Default:* prerequisite skill-3.
*Prerequisite:* Appropriate Melee Weapon or unarmed combat skill; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

This technique lets you knock down an opponent in a single attack rather than by grappling him and executing a takedown or throw. It *isn't* aimed at his center of mass with the goal of pushing him away, like a Push Kick or shove. It's an attempt to "clothesline" his neck or head, knock his legs out from under him, or otherwise unbalance him.

Roll against Sweep to hit. Hit location is a special effect – don't apply a penalty for it. Your target may defend normally. If he fails, roll a Quick Contest: your Sweep or ST vs. his ST, DX, Acrobatics, or best grappling skill. Use the *highest* value in both cases. If he loses, he falls down.

Many combat skills can Sweep. You can try an armed version with any two-handed weapon with reach 2+. This defaults to Polearm, Spear, Staff, Two-Handed Axe/Mace, Two-Handed Flail, or Two-Handed Sword, and has the weapon's usual reach. You can also Sweep with Judo, Karate, or Sumo Wrestling. When you attack, specify a stiff arm to the upper body (reach C, requires a free hand), a sweeping kick (reach C, 1, uses a leg), or a pull in a clinch (reach C, only when grappling). Those with Strikers, especially tails, can learn Sweep (Brawling) and attack at their usual reach.

Regardless of the weapon used, Sweep is a slow, pushing attack that doesn't inflict damage.

## *Trip*

**Hard**

*Default:* prerequisite skill Parry-1.
*Prerequisite:* Judo, Sumo Wrestling, or Wrestling; cannot exceed prerequisite Parry.

Trip lets you cause a two-legged foe to stumble and miss with a slam. It counts as a parry with the prerequisite skill. Success means you avoid the slam *and* your attacker must make a DX or Acrobatics roll at -5 or fall down!

Per p. B376, a charging fighter's "effective weight" as a weapon equals his ST. Since your weight limit with an unarmed parry equals your Basic Lift, Trip fails *automatically* if your foe's effective weight exceeds your BL. At ST 8 and BL 13, you couldn't stop a ST 14+ opponent. With ST 14 and BL 39, only ST 40+ giants would be a problem.

Shield DB doesn't benefit Trip. You can't retreat for a bonus, either – or use a Slip or Sideslip (see *Retreat Options*, pp. 123-124). You *can* Dive by assuming a crawling posture across your foe's path. Apply the usual modifier to your roll and use 2×BL to determine whom you can trip.

You can't attack with Trip – use Sweep (see above) for that. However, you can use Trip to intercept someone running past you (*not* merely stepping) within a yard. On a battle map, that's through *your* hex or an *adjacent* hex. This works like a regular Trip and counts as a parry.

Trip can use many body parts: arms, legs, a hip, etc. You *must* Dive or use a free foot to intercept a runner who isn't trying to slam you.

## *Two-Handed Punch*

**Average**

*Default:* Brawling-2.
*Prerequisite:* Brawling; cannot exceed Brawling skill.

This technique involves either knitting the fingers of two hands together to strike or striking with two fists held together. A common move in movies and on television, it's not terribly safe or effective in reality.

Roll against Two-Handed Punch to hit. Your opponent defends normally, but if he successfully parries and inflicts damage, *both* of your arms take full damage. If you take damage from striking DR 3+, *both* hands take full damage. Damage is thrust+1 crushing – or thrust at +1 per die, if better – plus your Brawling bonus.

On a turn when you attempt a Two-Handed Punch, you can only parry once with your hands. This *does* count as a Cross Parry (p. 121) – the parry is more effective but you only get one.

## *Uppercut*

**Average**

*Defaults:* Boxing-1, Brawling-1, or Karate-1.
*Prerequisite:* Boxing, Brawling, or Karate; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

This is a short punch directed upward from a low stance. It delivers a powerful blow to an opponent standing in close. You can only use Uppercut against the upper body – skull, eye, face, neck, torso, arm – of a standing foe. (*Exception:* If his SM exceeds yours, you can target everything but his feet.) Damage is thrust crushing plus skill bonuses. Your target defends normally.

Uppercut is a *very* close-range punch. Many fighters throw it after getting their adversary in a clinch with the other arm. Grappling an opponent around the back of his head and punching is illegal in modern sport boxing, but very effective (see *Grab and Smash!*, p. 118).

## *Wrench (Limb)*

**Hard**

*Default:* ST-4; cannot exceed ST+3.

This technique involves grabbing and suddenly twisting an enemy's limb to dislocate or break it. It defaults to ST – not a skill – and must be learned separately for each limb: Wrench Arm, Wrench Leg, and so forth. Wrestling gives its usual skill-based ST bonus.

To use this technique, you must first grapple your opponent by the desired limb using two hands; see *Grappling* (p. B370). He may attempt to break free on his turn. If he fails, then on your *next* turn, roll a Quick Contest: Wrench (Limb) vs. the *higher* of your victim's ST or HT. He gets +4 if you're wrenching his leg. This counts as an attack.

If you win, you inflict swing crushing damage on the limb. The target's *rigid* DR protects normally. Flexible armor – including natural DR with the Flexible or Tough Skin limitation – has no effect.

Otherwise, you inflict no damage. You may make repeated attempts on later turns. Your opponent may attack you or attempt to break free during this time, subject to the usual limitations of being grappled.

## *Wrench Spine*

**Hard**

*Defaults:* ST-4 or Wrestling-4; cannot exceed ST+3 or Wrestling+3.

Some old wrestling manuals depict techniques for breaking an opponent's back: pick him up, hoist him over both shoulders, and then pull his leg and arm (or *neck*) to snap his spine. While not difficult, this procedure is *slow* and requires great strength. For a rapid, cinematic spine-snapper, see *Backbreaker* (see below).

Wrench Spine takes several turns to execute. On your first turn, you must grapple your opponent with two hands around the torso. Resolve this as a normal grapple.

If your victim fails to break free on his turn, roll against Wrench Spine on your next turn to hoist him into position. Success means you lift him up and swing him over your shoulders. *Any* failure means you fall down with your foe on top of you and take thrust damage to your own neck. If your opponent's weight exceeds your BL×4, you simply can't pick him up; your attempt fails but you don't fall or hurt yourself.

On later turns, roll a Quick Contest of Wrench Spine vs. the *higher* of your victim's ST+4 or HT+4. If you win, you inflict swing crushing damage. The target is the spine. There's no wounding multiplier for this location but sufficient injury can mean severe and possibly permanent crippling; see *New Hit Locations* (p. 137). Even if the GM isn't using the spine hit location in general, he should use those rules for Wrench Spine.

The target's *rigid* DR protects normally. Flexible armor, including natural DR with the Flexible or Tough Skin limitation, has no effect. The spine's *own* DR doesn't help, either – you're not striking the spine but applying continuous pressure to break it.

You may make repeated attempts on later turns. Your opponent may attack you or attempt to break free during this time, subject to the usual limitations of being grappled.

# Cinematic Techniques

These techniques are so risky – or so unlikely to be effective in a real fight – that few reputable real-world schools teach them. This doesn't mean they're impossible, only that a martial artist needs Trained by a Master or Weapon Master to *improve* them. Anybody can *attempt* a cinematic technique at default, if the GM permits.

The GM is free to forbid a technique – even at default – if he feels it would spoil the game's "feel." This might be because the campaign is realistic, but cinematic techniques don't automatically fit every cinematic setting, either. Conversely, if the GM believes that a technique is realistic, it *is* . . . at least in his game.

## *Backbreaker**

**Hard**

*Defaults:* ST-3 or Wrestling-3; cannot exceed ST+3 or Wrestling+3.

Some cinematic wrestlers – and strongmen in general – can pick up an opponent and break his spine over their knee. To attempt this, you must first grapple your foe with two hands around the torso. Resolve this as an ordinary grapple.

If your opponent fails to break free on his turn, roll against Backbreaker on your next turn. Success means you lift up your victim, drop to one knee, and smash his back across your other knee. Failure means you drop him; he ends up face-up on the ground and you end up kneeling, but neither of you suffers damage. If his weight exceeds your BL×4, you simply aren't strong enough to pick him up – you waste a turn *trying* to lift him and can't proceed with the technique.

A successful Backbreaker does swing crushing damage to the *spine.* This location has no special wounding multiplier but sufficient injury can do serious harm; see *New Hit Locations* (p. 137). Even if the GM isn't using the spine hit location, he should use those rules for Backbreaker.

The target's *rigid* DR protects normally. Flexible armor, including natural DR with the Flexible or Tough Skin limitation, has no effect. The spine's DR *does* apply, as this is a direct blow to the spine.

## *Binding**

**Hard**

*Default:* prerequisite skill.

*Prerequisite:* Judo or Knot-Tying; cannot exceed prerequisite skill+4.

This is the technique of binding a victim limb-by-limb while parrying his attacks. In Japanese legend, guards and police used it to restrain criminals, while ninja used it for abductions. To use Binding, you must have a rope (or handcuffs) ready in *two* hands.

Binding only works in close combat. On your turn after a successful grapple or parry – unarmed or using the rope – you can attempt to bind a limb. To do so, *win* a Quick Contest of Binding vs. your foe's DX or best grappling skill. This is an attack. To tie up successive limbs, repeat the process. You can bind two limbs with cuffs, any number with a rope. Your victim *can* try to free himself on his turn; use the rules for Bolas (p. B410).

If you bind all of your victim's legs, he must roll vs. DX-6 every turn or fall down. His DX and ST are at -6 to resist takedowns and techniques intended to knock him down. If you bind *all* of his limbs, he's helpless – although he can attempt an Escape or DX-6 roll to free himself (see *Escape,* p. B192).

## *Dual-Weapon Attack**

**Hard**

*Default:* prerequisite skill-4.
*Prerequisite:* Any unarmed combat or one-handed Melee Weapon skill†; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

If you attack with two weapons at once, you're normally at -4 on each attack unless you All-Out Attack. This technique lets you buy off the penalty. To eliminate the *extra* -4 for the "off" hand, you'll also need Off-Hand Weapon Training (p. 50). See *Dual-Weapon Attacks* (p. B417) for other important details.

You must learn Dual-Weapon Attack (DWA) separately for each *skill.* For instance, attacking with two axes requires two DWA (Axe/Mace) rolls, but attacking with an axe and a whip requires a DWA (Axe/Mace) roll and a DWA (Whip) roll.

Dual-Weapon Attack is a valid *combat option* even in realistic games. The *technique* is cinematic because you need Trained by a Master or Weapon Master to improve it.

† This technique is also available for Guns (Pistol) even in realistic campaigns and for Bow in cinematic ones. DWA (Bow) lets you shoot two arrows at once from a bow, possibly at different targets! Heroic Archer halves the default penalty to -2. Readying a second arrow requires an extra Ready or use of *Multiple Fast-Draw* (p. 103).

## *Dual-Weapon Defense**

**Hard**

*Defaults:* prerequisite skill Block-1 or Parry-1.
*Prerequisite:* Any combat skill that gives a Block or Parry score; cannot exceed prerequisite Block or Parry.

You're normally at -1 to defend against a Dual-Weapon Attack (p. B417). This technique lets you buy off that penalty. To ward off both attacks, you must make two defense rolls *simultaneously:* a parry with either hand or a parry with one hand and a block with the other. Roll against Dual-Weapon Defense for the weapon or shield in each hand.

You can also learn Dual-Weapon Defense for use with a two-yard or longer Polearm, Spear, Staff, or Two-Handed Sword weapon. This lets you buy off the -1 to parry *both* halves of a Dual-Weapon Attack with a *single* parry; see *Parrying with Two-Handed Weapons* (p. 123).

## *Fighting While Seated**

**Hard**

*Default:* prerequisite skill-2.
*Prerequisite:* Any combat skill; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

Some cinematic martial artists show their contempt for lesser opponents by remaining seated when attacked. This technique *replaces* the prerequisite skill while seated; e.g., if you have Karate at 20 and Fighting While Seated (Karate) at 19, you can punch or feint from a seated position at 19, kick at 17, etc. Fighting While Seated also helps with the -2 to *defend* while seated. If you know it at skill-1, you're at -1 to defend, while at full skill, you have no penalty.

You may stand on your turn by taking a Change Posture maneuver. To stand *instantly,* roll against Acrobatic Stand (p. 65) at +4. Success lets you take any maneuver normally. Failure means you must take a Change Posture maneuver.

For rules on fighting while *sitting* on the ground rather than *seated* in a chair, see *Postures, Hit Locations, and Techniques* (pp. 98-99).

## *Flying Jump Kick or Flying Lunge**

**Hard**

*Defaults:* prerequisite skill-4, or -7 for a kick.
*Prerequisite:* Karate or any *thrusting* Melee Weapon skill; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

A "flying" attack is a devastating blow that gets extra power from a full run and jump at the enemy. Realistic martial artists practice this stunt for show – never for combat. In the movies, though, all bets are off! Flying Jump Kick defaults to Karate-7 and ends in a kick. Flying Lunge defaults to Melee Weapon-4 for any *thrusting* weapon, and involves hurling yourself weapon-first at the foe.

Either flying attack is a special option for Move and Attack (p. B365). Use the rules below *instead* of the normal ones for that maneuver. If you use this technique, it's *all* you can do that turn, no matter how fast or skilled you are.

To launch a Flying Jump Kick or Flying Lunge, you must first make a running broad jump; see *Jumping* (p. B352). This requires a DX or Jumping roll. If successful, then at the end of your jump, roll against your level with this technique to hit.

Your victim parries at -2. If you hit, you inflict your usual damage at +2 – or at +1 per die, if better. Start with kicking damage for Flying Jump Kick, your weapon's thrusting damage for Flying Lunge.

Afterward, you cannot retreat. Moreover, you cannot dodge if you kicked or parry if you used a weapon. All of your remaining active defenses are at -2. These effects last until your next turn.

This technique is *dangerous!* If you fail the roll for your jump or your attack – or if your target successfully defends – you *fall* unless you can make a DX-8 or Acrobatics-4 roll. On a fall, you suffer damage for a collision with an immovable object (the ground) at an effective Move equal to the full distance of your run and jump.

## *Grand Disarm**

**Hard**

*Defaults:* fencing weapon skill-9, other Melee Weapon skill-11, or unarmed combat skill-11.

*Prerequisite:* Any unarmed combat or Melee Weapon skill; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

Grand Disarm is a special All-Out Attack that lets you disarm *every* foe adjacent to you with lightning speed. Use these rules instead of the usual ones for All-Out Attack (p. B365). If you attempt a Grand Disarm, it's *all* you can do that turn, no matter how fast or skilled you are.

A Grand Disarm involves spinning in place – you *cannot* step – and trying to disarm every single foe within a yard. You *must* engage your enemies in either clockwise or counterclockwise order (your choice). You can't combine this with any technique except Disarming (p. 70).

*Shuriken*

Roll against Grand Disarm once per foe, in the order chosen above, to hit his weapon. Your opponents may defend normally. If you critically miss on any of these attacks, your Grand Disarm ends immediately and you must roll on the *Critical Miss Table* (p. B556).

After resolving all of the attack and defense rolls, you may try to disarm everyone who didn't successfully defend! Use the rules on p. B401; you roll against the higher of your weapon skill or your Disarming technique (*not* Grand Disarm). Resolve each disarming attempt completely before moving to the next. Should *you* be disarmed during one of these Contests, don't keep rolling – your turn ends immediately.

Since Grand Disarm is an All-Out Attack, you have no active defenses afterward. In a cinematic game, though, it's traditional for those disarmed this way to gape and gawk on their next turn – not to attack with another weapon or bare hands. The GM should make an IQ roll for each foe (in over-the-top games, at -1 per successful disarm after the first). Those who fail are mentally stunned (p. B420) by your awe-inspiring move!

## *Hand Catch**

**Hard**

*Default:* prerequisite skill Parry-3.

*Prerequisite:* Judo, Sumo Wrestling, or Wrestling†; cannot exceed prerequisite Parry.

This technique – popular with cinematic warriors, muscular henchmen, and super "bricks" – involves *catching* an incoming attack in your hand. It *isn't* realistic! It's a one-handed parry, even if the prerequisite skill usually parries with two hands, and incompatible with Cross Parry (p. 121).

Roll against Hand Catch to defend, at the usual -2 for Sumo Wrestling vs. a kick, or -3 for Sumo Wrestling or Wrestling vs. a weapon. You cannot retreat. Failure means you're hit. The attacker may choose to hit his original target, your parrying arm, or your parrying *hand*. Success means you parry and may roll against the prerequisite skill to grab your attacker, modified as follows.

*Modifiers:* Against unarmed, -2 to hit a hand or foot; -2 for Sumo Wrestling vs. a foot; -1 if your foe knows Rapid Retraction (p. 51). Against armed, a basic -3; another -3 to -5 for weapon size (see p. B400); a further -3 for Sumo Wrestling or Wrestling vs. a weapon.

Success on this skill roll means you grapple the extremity or grab the weapon! On later turns, you can use any combat option or technique that requires a grab or grapple to set up – Disarming, Finger Lock, Judo Throw, Snap Weapon, Wrench Limb, etc., as applicable. Failure means you deflect the attack but fail to catch your attacker.

The GM may let realistic fighters try this technique at default. The consequences of failure are steep enough to keep it under control.

† You can also learn Hand Catch for Parry Missile Weapons in order to catch ranged weapons. If you have Precognitive Parry, you can use *any* Hand Catch specialty for this. Hand Catch can only trap projectiles (not beams) that the underlying parry could deflect. Use the standard modifiers for such parries instead of those above. Success plucks the weapon from the air, regardless of hand DR. Failure means you're hit. Don't use Hand Catch to catch something thrown *to* you – use *Catching* (p. B355).

## *Hand-Clap Parry**

**Hard**

*Default:* prerequisite skill Parry-5.

*Prerequisite:* Judo or Karate; cannot exceed prerequisite Parry.

This often-foolhardy cinematic technique – common in samurai stories – lets you *trap* an opponent's weapon in mid-stroke. By clapping your hands together, you capture the weapon's blade, haft, or head.

Roll against Hand-Clap Parry to defend against an attacker's weapon. Success means you stop the attack and trap the weapon. Failure means you're hit, and your assailant may choose to hit his original target or *either* of your hands! Succeed or fail, this is the only parry you may make with your hands this turn.

If you trap the weapon, your enemy's turn ends *immediately*. He loses any additional attacks or maneuvers he might have had, and can't step. He can't use the trapped weapon to parry or attack until you relinquish it. On future turns, he may try to break free. If he opts to give up his weapon, it's a free action on his turn.

On your next turn, you may attempt to disarm or use Snap Weapon (p. 87). You don't have to do either – you can act normally while holding onto the weapon, as long as you leave two hands on the weapon and don't step away from your victim. Relinquishing the weapon is a free action on your turn.

If you make a successful disarm attempt – or your foe releases his weapon – you may try to reverse the weapon and ready it yourself on your next turn. This requires a DX roll. Success means you catch the weapon, which counts as a Ready maneuver. On a critical success, you ready the weapon *instantly!* Failure means you drop it. On a critical failure, you also inflict Tip Slash (p. 113) damage on your torso.

> *. . . Iros lunged, hitting the shoulder. Then Odysseus hooked him under the ear and shattered his jaw bone so bright red blood came bubbling from his mouth, as down he pitched into the dust, bleating, kicking against the dust, his teeth stove in.*
>
> *– Homer,* ***The Odyssey***

## *Initial Carving**

**Hard**

*Default:* prerequisite skill-4.
*Prerequisite:* Any fencing weapon skill; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

A cinematic swashbuckler can try to carve an initial using his blade. Determine where he'll carve the initial and the number of strokes he'll need to carve it – for instance, a Z takes three. The first stroke is at no penalty beyond that for hit location; it's at -0 on the torso, -5 on the face, and so on. If the stroke inflicts at least a point of cutting damage, it will mark anything but metal or similarly hard materials, ripping cloth (but not armor), scarring skin, and delivering any poison vile enough to need only a scratch. An impaling weapon can make a Tip Slash (p. 113) to do cutting damage.

It's more difficult to align the remaining strokes of the initial relative to the first. The attack roll is at -4 (in addition to hit location modifiers) for an initial roughly 4"×4". If a subsequent stroke fails by 4 or less, it makes a slash but it isn't properly connected to the earlier lines – there's a gap or an overlap (roll a die). This can be bad form; it might even change the initial to another letter! It's possible to connect lines that are too far apart; try again at the same modifier. The victim might object to the *erasing* process, however, as this involves at least half a dozen crisscross lines. Initial Carving is generally the realm of the incredibly skilled . . . or those named Inigo, Ignatz, or Irene.

You must learn a separate technique for each letter. It lets you buy off the -4 for the second and later strokes. To remove the penalties for carving in a specific hit location, buy a Targeted Attack (p. 68).

*Example:* Don Lorenzo Estrada wishes to leave the initials L.E. on the skin of several (unwilling) acquaintances, so he practices long and hard. He spends 4 points on the L and 5 on the E (which takes four strokes, so he wants to get it right the first time). His Rapier skill is 14; he'll make the first stroke of each letter on a 14 or less. The next part of the L is at default+3, giving a net -1 to skill – he needs a 13. The E is at default+4; he has no penalty to carve it at all.

## *Lethal Kick**

**Hard**

*Default:* Karate-4.
*Prerequisite:* Karate; cannot exceed Karate skill.

This kick focuses all of your strength onto a toe or toes, converting your blow from crushing to *piercing*. This lets you target the vitals or eyes. Roll against Lethal Kick to hit, applying the usual hit location penalties. Damage is thrust-1 plus your Karate bonus. *Hurting Yourself* (p. B379) applies if your target has *any* DR – not just DR 3+.

Lethal Kick is generally impossible while wearing fully enclosed shoes or boots, but the GM might allow it with such pointy footwear as cowboy boots and stiletto heels – especially in a cinematic campaign!

As *combat options,* Lethal Kick and Lethal Strike (below) are reasonable even in a realistic game. The *techniques* are cinematic because only warriors with Trained by a Master can improve them.

## *Lethal Strike**

**Hard**

*Default:* Karate-2.
*Prerequisite:* Karate; cannot exceed Karate skill.

This is a hand strike with stiffened fingers. It uses the rules for Lethal Kick, above, but damage is thrust-2 plus your Karate bonus. It's possible while wearing gloves with individual fingers, even gauntlets, but incompatible with mitts, boxing gloves, etc.

## *Piledriver**

**Hard**

*Defaults:* ST-5 or Wrestling-5.
*Prerequisite:* Wrestling; cannot exceed ST or Wrestling.

Piledriver involves grappling your opponent, turning him upside down, and driving his skull into the ground by sitting down *hard.* This is a clumsy, risky move, rarely seen outside professional ("entertainment") wrestling. It's a special All-Out Attack option – use these rules *instead* of the usual ones for that maneuver.

To execute a Piledriver, you must first grapple your opponent with two hands by the arms, torso, or legs. Resolve this as an ordinary grapple. Your foe may defend normally.

If your enemy fails to break free on his turn, then on your *next* turn, make a Piledriver roll to turn him head-down and drop to a sitting posture. This counts as an attack. If your victim's weight exceeds your BL×4, you aren't strong enough to pick him up – your attack fails automatically but you must still roll to see if you *critically* fail!

Your victim may defend at the usual penalties for being grappled. If he knows the Wrestling skill, he can counter your move by pivoting to make the attack mechanically difficult. This defense counts as a Wrestling parry and is possible even if your foe has no hands free.

A successful Piledriver does thrust+4 crushing or thrust+2 at +2 *per die,* whichever is greater, plus damage equal to your ST bonus from Wrestling (+1 at DX+1, +2 at DX+2 or better). Apply this to the skull. Immediately afterward, you can attempt a pin as a *free action.* Your opponent may resist as usual – but he's still grappled and may be stunned or otherwise suffering from his injuries.

If your Piledriver fails for any reason but being too weak to lift your foe, including a successful enemy defense, you still drop to a sitting posture. You must also roll vs. HT. A failed HT roll means you sit down too hard, strain your gut, etc. Apply the damage you would have inflicted to your own torso. Critical failure on the Piledriver roll means you end up sitting and injure yourself *automatically* (no HT roll).

## Secret Techniques

Martial-arts legend features countless "ultimate techniques" taught only to advanced students. Kung fu has *dim mak* – the "death touch" – with supposed origins in 13th-century Taoist medicine. The rapier masters of the 16th and 17th centuries reputedly attacked with the *botte segrete,* or "secret strike," while 18th-century smallsword masters defended with the *parata universale,* or "universal parry." These were the irresistible force and immovable object of European swordplay. The list goes on.

Most fabled techniques have prosaic origins. Death touches and similar strikes have their genesis in physiology, not esoteric medicine. When healers discover new human frailties, warriors seek to exploit them in battle; see *New Hit Locations* (p. 137) for examples. This isn't magic – a sufficiently skilled fighter can target any body part he wishes, given a reason to do so.

This doesn't stop rumors about secret techniques from arising when one man defeats another with a strike to an unusual target. An example is the *coup de Jarnac.* Guy de Chabot de Jarnac killed François de Vivonne de La Châtaigneraie (one of France's greatest swordsmen) on July 10, 1547, in France's last legal duel. He used a feint followed by a cut to the hamstring. This is immobilizing but not usually fatal, but La Châtaigneraie – mortified that an inferior defeated him in this way – refused medical aid and bled to death. It wasn't long before dishonest masters were offering to teach the *coup de Jarnac* to gullible, wealthy students!

Tactics, like medicine, developed gradually. Lunging with a sword seems obvious – anyone can attempt it in ***GURPS*** (see *All-Out Attack (Long),* pp. 97-98) – but it wasn't common before the 16th century. Until the lunge became widespread, swordsmen who used it to defeat foes were spreading the legend of a *botte segrete.* Similarly, when lighter blades enabled the sword to rival the buckler and main-gauche on defense, tales of the *parata universale* followed. This is just the standard fencing parry described in *Fencing Weapons* (p. B404).

In a realistic campaign, effective secret techniques shouldn't exist. If the GM enforces *Limited Maneuver Selection* (p. 113), however, an untrained fighter won't have access to all of the combat maneuvers and options in the ***Basic Set*** and Chapter 4, many of which *are* quite effective. Should he experience these at the hands of a well-trained opponent (and survive), he might spread rumors of secret techniques. The GM shouldn't let the truth slip until the PCs see this "amazing" move in action.

Still, every tactic *was* a brilliant new discovery at some point. The GM is welcome to forbid maneuvers or options that he feels warriors wouldn't know about in his setting. He might let skilled martial artists buy knowledge of these tactics as perks – one per option, maneuver, or rarely known hit location. Those who witness such moves can try them . . . but until they spend that point, treat their efforts as ordinary attacks and defenses.

In a cinematic game, secret moves definitely exist – as cinematic skills and techniques, or even as special powers (see *Chi Powers for Martial Artists,* p. 46). *Dim mak* might be the Pressure Secrets skill or the Hand of Death (see *Innate Attack,* p. 46). The *botte segrete* might be the Flying Lunge technique.

In any game, unethical instructors might *claim* to teach secret techniques. The GM may rule that these are totally ineffective, and work as described in *Useless Techniques* (p. 95). Alternatively, they might be horribly risky – like the infamous *coup de D'Artagnan,* a *botte segrete* from *The Three Musketeers.*

A typical "risky" secret technique is Hard, defaults to Melee Weapon-4 or Acrobatics-4, and can't exceed the controlling skill. When used, roll a Quick Contest between the attacker's technique and *highest* of the target's Per, Body Language, or best melee combat skill. If the attacker wins, his foe's active defense is reduced as per a successful feint (p. B365). If he loses or ties, his adversary automatically defends against the attack *and* the technique-user has -3 to defend against his opponent's next attack.

Whatever the truth about secret techniques, people tend to believe in them. Martial arts-related Delusions (see *Delusions,* pp. 53-54) about invincible moves are appropriate. In the interest of good player-GM relations, the GM should consider permitting PCs who pay points for risky secret techniques to take related Delusions to defray the cost!

A variation is to grapple your adversary, pick him up, and smash him skull-first into the floor, wall, or other fixed object. This is a common tactic for strong men in mixed martial arts bouts – often in response to being grappled. (If you do this *without* lifting your foe, use *Grab and Smash!*, p. 118, instead.) This move works as described above with three important differences:

1. If your foe is grappling *you* with two hands and you have a free hand, you can opt to grapple his head or arm with only *one* hand as your initial grapple. This is a standard grapple; your rival defends normally. However, if he lets go of you on his turn, you can't attempt a Piledriver on your next turn (you still keep your grapple).
2. The attack roll is at +3, because you're not trying to invert your victim after you pick him up.
3. Damage drops to thrust+2 crushing or thrust at +1 *per die,* whichever is greater, plus the Wrestling bonus.

## *Pole-Vault Kick**

**Hard**

*Default:* Karate-4.
*Prerequisites:* Jumping *and* Karate; cannot exceed Karate skill.

This technique is a variation on Jump Kick (p. 75) that uses a pole – typically a quarterstaff but sometimes a sword stuck in the ground or even a convenient banister – to vault into a kick. It involves a short pole-vault forward or sideways that ends in a sharp kick. It's a special option for All-Out Attack. Use the following rules *instead* of the normal ones for that maneuver.

To attempt a Pole-Vault Kick, you must have two hands on a pole, sword, or similar vertical lever. You *must* take at least two steps toward the foe; this effectively gives you an extra yard of reach. Roll against Pole-Vault Kick to hit. Your target parries at -2.

If you hit, you do thrust+3 crushing damage – or thrust+1 at +1 per die, if better – plus your Karate bonus. If you miss, or if your target successfully defends, you *fall down* unless you can make a DX-4 or Acrobatics-2 roll. Hit or miss, you have no defense at all until your next turn!

As strange as it may seem, some real-world martial artists *do* practice this kick, although its effectiveness is doubtful. At the GM's option, realistic warriors who practice especially flashy styles can buy a Style Perk that lets them improve this technique.

## *Pressure-Point Strike**

**Hard**

*Default:* prerequisite combat skill-2.
*Prerequisites:* Either Pressure Points or Pressure Secrets, *and* a combat skill that's useful with those skills; cannot exceed combat skill.

Attacks with the Pressure Points and Pressure Secrets skills are normally at -2 to hit. This technique lets you buy off this penalty.

## *Roll with Blow**

**Hard**

*Default:* prerequisite skill-2.
*Prerequisite:* Acrobatics or any unarmed combat skill; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

This represents special training at presenting little resistance to the force of a punch or other bludgeoning attack, resulting in less injury. Whenever you're hit by a *crushing* attack, you may roll against Roll with Blow to reduce damage.

Success means you take half damage (round up) *before* subtracting DR . . . but *double* the basic damage roll to calculate knockback (p. B378). This doubling is cumulative with the effects of attacks that normally cause extra knockback. Make a DX roll at -1 per yard of knockback to avoid falling down. Critical success on Roll with Blow means you take only 1 point of damage (extra knockback still applies).

Failure means you take normal damage *and* extra knockback. On a critical failure, you *also* fall down automatically and are physically stunned!

Roll with Blow is risky in places where knockback is likely to mean a collision. In a superhero game, the GM may let anyone learn this skill – people being knocked great distances into and through things is very much in-genre!

## *Snap Weapon**

**Hard**

*Defaults:* ST-4 or ST-based Jitte/Sai-4; cannot exceed ST+3 or ST-based Jitte/Sai+3.

Cinematic strongmen often use brute strength to snap weapons. You can only attempt this if you trapped the target weapon with a barehanded grab or Bind Weapon (Jitte/Sai) on an earlier turn – or on your turn after making a successful Hand Catch or Hand-Clap Parry. Roll a Quick Contest: Snap Weapon vs. the weapon's HT. Use HT 10 for missile weapons, HT 12 for melee weapons. *Cheap* weapons get -2; *fine* ones, +1; *very fine* ones, +2. This is an attack. If you win, you inflict thrust crushing damage on the weapon.

## *Springing Attack**

**Hard**

*Default:* prerequisite skill-2.
*Prerequisite:* Any unarmed combat or Melee Weapon skill; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

Springing Attack represents an attack made from the kind of deep stance that some cinematic fighters use to "store up" energy for a powerful strike. To make an attack like this, you must first crouch. This takes your entire turn – you may do nothing else.

On your *next* turn, make a roll against Springing Attack – not the prerequisite skill – to hit with your first attack. If you hit, that one attack is at +2 to damage or +1 per die, whichever is better. If you miss, you have -2 to DX and all active defenses until your next turn. On a critical miss, you fall down! If your foe defends, you suffer no special ill effects.

# Silly Techniques

Humorous movies often feature *silly* techniques that embarrass or distract the victim. These aren't "cinematic" in the usual sense – they aren't legendary, high-powered, or chi-based – but neither are they realistic. Most simply wouldn't work in a real fight. The GM may rule that such techniques are useless (see *Useless Techniques,* p. 95), but in a silly game it's more fun to let them work!

## *Double Eye-Poke*

**Hard**

*Defaults:* Brawling-5 or Karate-5.
*Prerequisite:* Brawling or Karate; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

This is a darting thrust to both eyes using one hand with two extended fingers – often accompanied by suitable sound effects ("Poink!"). The goal isn't to maim but to distract the victim so you can pull a fast one or run away! If hit, the target must roll vs. HT. Failure means he's blinded for seconds equal to his margin of failure.

## *Eye-Poke Defense*

**Hard**

*Default:* prerequisite skill Parry.
*Prerequisite:* Any unarmed combat skill; cannot exceed prerequisite Parry+5.

The best defense against Double Eye-Poke is to place a hand upright along the nose, which forces the attacker's fingertips to stop short of the eyes. This parry is an *ultimate defense,* and can go as high as Parry+5. Of course, it only works against Double Eye-Poke . . .

## *Flying Atomic Wedgie*

**Hard**

*Defaults:* Brawling-8 or Wrestling-8.
*Prerequisite:* Brawling or Wrestling; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

The Flying Atomic Wedgie is a Move and Attack: you leap past the target, grab hold of his underpants, and *pull* at full power – hopefully getting the shorts up over his head. If you hit, roll a Quick Contest of ST with the victim. You're at +1 per yard you ran toward him. If you win, he suffers agony (p. B428) for minutes equal to your margin of victory and embarrassment for considerably longer.

## *Halitosis Attack*

**Average**

*Default:* HT-5; cannot exceed HT+5.
*Prerequisite:* Odious Personal Habit (Foul Breath).

This dreaded attack is an attempt to overcome the enemy with bad breath in close combat. To use it, you must grapple your foe from the front or he must do the same to you. On later turns, roll a Quick Contest: your Halitosis Attack vs. your victim's HT. This counts as an attack.

If you win, you stun your victim for seconds equal to your margin of victory. If you critically succeed or he critically fails, he's *retching* for that time instead (p. B429). If he has No Sense of Smell/Taste, though, he's immune!

There are persistent rumors of a Flatulence Attack that works on foes who grapple you from behind. The GM should decide whether martial farts suit his campaign.

## *Noogie*

**Hard**

*Defaults:* Brawling-5 or Karate-5.
*Prerequisite:* Brawling or Karate; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

A Noogie is a knuckle rub to the top of the head. If hit, the victim suffers moderate pain on his next turn (only). Repeated hits on *successive* turns cause this to progress a step a turn to severe pain, terrible pain, and agony. Further attacks extend the agony's duration. For rules for pain and agony, see p. B428.

The best way to use Noogie is to pin the target and noogie away until he's in agony. This gives the usual +3 to Intimidation when you finally stop and make demands ("Say 'uncle'!").

Head DR beyond the standard DR 2 for the skull grants immunity.

## *Nose Slap*

**Hard**

*Defaults:* Brawling-5 or Wrestling-5.
*Prerequisite:* Brawling or Wrestling; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

Nose Slap is a close-combat attack that involves grabbing the victim's nose with one hand and using the other to slap him across the face – all in one smooth motion. If hit, the target is stunned and must roll vs. HT. Failure means he drops anything he's holding in either hand and clutches his nose. If he has something he can't drop, like a shield, he hits himself in the face with it. Nyuk!

## *Wet Willy*

**Hard**

*Defaults:* Brawling-6 or Karate-6.
*Prerequisite:* Brawling or Karate; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

To attempt a Wet Willy, you must first take a Ready maneuver and moisten a finger with saliva. The following turn, roll against Wet Willy to wiggle the slimy finger around in your adversary's ear. If he's hit, he must roll as if Squeamish (p. B156) with a self-control roll equal to his Will. If he's *already* Squeamish, he must attempt his normal self-control roll at -3. Failure has the usual effect.

You may combine Springing Attack with another striking technique. See *Using Techniques Together* (p. 64) to find effective skill level.

### *Timed Defense**

**Hard**

*Default:* active defense-2; cannot exceed active defense.

This technique helps you defend against opponents who use acrobatics or speed to move behind you and attack. It lets you buy off the -2 for a flank or "runaround" attack (p. B391) for one active defense. For Block or Parry, you must specialize by combat skill. You may use Timed Defense (Dodge) only once per turn.

### *Whirlwind Attack**

**Hard**

*Default:* prerequisite skill-5.
*Prerequisite:* Boxing, Karate, or any Melee Weapon skill; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

Whirlwind Attack is a special All-Out Attack that lets you attack *every* foe adjacent to you with lightning speed! If you make a Whirlwind Attack, it's *all* you can do that turn, no matter how fast or skilled you are. Since it's an All-Out Attack, it leaves you with no active defenses. Otherwise, the rules below replace the usual ones for that maneuver.

When you launch a Whirlwind Attack, you spin in place (you *cannot* step) and attack all foes within a yard. You must attack them in clockwise or counterclockwise order – your choice. All of your attacks must be kicks, punches, or strikes with a swung weapon, and you cannot combine Whirlwind Attack with another technique (such as Disarming, but see *Grand Disarm,* p. 84) or with cinematic skills such as Power Blow.

Determine a random hit location for each foe and then roll against Whirlwind Attack to hit, with the usual hit location penalties. Your opponents defend normally. Resolve each attack completely before moving to the next one. If using a weapon that can get stuck (see *Picks,* p. B405), your Whirlwind Attack ends on the first successful attack. If any of the attacks is a critical miss – or if any of your enemies critically succeeds on his defense – then that attack and *all remaining attacks* are critical misses. Roll on the *Critical Miss Table* (p. B556) once per attack!

You may end a Whirlwind Attack facing in any direction.

# Creating New Techniques

This chapter's techniques don't constitute an exhaustive list. Each martial-arts master has unique moves, a typical fencing manual describes hundreds of attacks and parries for *one* type of sword, and a global survey of unarmed fighting arts would reveal *thousands* of kicks. This doesn't even touch on feats from legend and cinema, which – freed of the fetters of physics – vastly outnumber realistic techniques! Thus, the GM is likely to learn of new techniques from fact and fiction . . . and face players who want signature moves for their characters.

*Tonfas*

Most "new" techniques are variations on existing ones, with differences so subtle that they don't merit game effects. For these, don't bother with the design system below. Just rename one of the techniques on pp. 65-89 to agree with your source and use its rules as written. The original technique and all renamed versions should default to one another at no penalty. For instance, you might refer to Lethal Strike (p. 85) as "Spear Hand" or "Crane's Bill," but all would use the Lethal Strike rules and default to each other at full skill.

Below is a greatly expanded version of *Creating Techniques* (p. B229) that's intended for *truly* new techniques. This system is meant for dedicated ***Martial Arts*** campaigns. Its degree of detail would be excessive in other kinds of games. It's also primarily for GMs. If the GM permits players to use it, he should carefully examine their creations before allowing them.

### *Name*

Give the technique an evocative name. You might take this from a real-world style or a fictional source, or simply make it up. The name might be prosaic, like "Uppercut"; designed to frighten enemies, like "Up From Hell"; or poetic, like "Brushing the Horse's Tail" or "Swallow Takes Wing."

### *Concept*

Decide what the technique does in game terms. Skip down to *Defaults* (pp. 90-92) to see what's possible, if you're unsure. The crucial thing to remember is that combat skills – studied as part of a style or on their own – represent the distillation of decades, centuries, or *millennia* of experience under circumstances where error could mean death. Thus, their core uses provide a tried-and-true balance between several measures of effectiveness, notably defense, mobility, power, precision, reach, and speed. A technique that stresses one or two of these things *will* compromise the rest.

Also bear in mind that a technique *cannot* improve the core use of the skill to which it defaults: punching for Boxing, Brawling, or Karate; grappling for Judo, Sumo Wrestling, or Wrestling; or swings and thrusts for Melee Weapon skills. Techniques can only boost secondary uses (e.g., kicking, for Brawling or Karate) or *penalized* versions of primary ones. The same logic applies to techniques that default to active defenses: these cannot improve ordinary active defense rolls, only penalized uses in special circumstances.

## Prerequisites

Unless the technique is based on Dodge or an attribute, it must specify at least one prerequisite skill. The technique automatically defaults to this skill – or, for defensive techniques, to the Block or Parry score calculated from this skill. If more than one skill qualifies as a prerequisite *and* gives a default, the buyer must specialize; see *Specialties* (p. 92-93). Skills that don't give defaults can still be logical prerequisites; e.g., Acrobatics for flamboyant jumping kicks, or Riding for mounted techniques.

It's reasonable to name another *technique* as a prerequisite, too. This may or may not give a default. A fighter must have at least a point in the prerequisite technique to improve the subsidiary technique, but he can always attempt it at default – or even at "double default," if he has points in the underlying skill but not in either technique.

Finally, advantages can be prerequisites. By far the most common of these is Style Familiarity (p. 49) with a style that teaches the technique. All cinematic techniques require Trained by a Master or Weapon Master – anyone can *attempt* them but only warriors with one of those advantages can *improve* them. Techniques for nonhumans might require Claws, Extra Arms, Strikers, etc., if they rely on such body parts.

### Basic Attacks

A *basic attack* is any fundamental use of a combat skill that can form the basis of an offensive technique, defining its initial effects and default penalties. A skill's "core" use is the most basic attack of all and defaults at +0. For an unarmed striking skill, this is a hand strike or punch that deals thrust-1 crushing damage (p. B271). For an unarmed grappling skill, this is a grapple (p. B370). For a weapon skill, this is any of the attacks listed in the table entry for that weapon – although not every weapon technique works with every attack. Trickier options include elbow strikes (p. B404, p. 71), grabs (p. B370), kicks (p. B271, pp. 75-76), knee strikes (p. B404, p. 76), shoves (p. B372), slams (p. B371), sweeps (p. B232, p. 81), and throws (p. B203, pp. 75,78-79).

## Defaults

A technique *must* default to a skill, another technique, an active defense, or (rarely) an attribute. The default penalty measures the technique's precision. Improvements in areas other than precision – mobility, power, reach, etc. – worsen the penalty, while shortcomings reduce it. The more all-round capability a technique offers, the worse its default penalty and the more points you must spend to get *good* at it!

Many techniques incorporate maneuvers, active defenses, or combat options (such as Telegraphic Attack and Wild Swing), but thanks to the design principles behind ***GURPS,*** they obey the same rule: if they favor one type of effectiveness, they sacrifice another.

Below are guidelines for assigning default penalties. You can save time and effort by starting with the closest existing technique and adjusting its default as you add and subtract effects. The most important rule is this:

The final default modifier can never give a *bonus.* If this happens, set it to 0.

### Offensive Techniques

When building an *offensive* technique, you must choose the attack it's based on. This determines its basic default penalty. Some important options by skill, with basic default penalties given in parentheses:

*Boxing:* Punch (+0).
*Brawling:* Elbow (-2), Kick (-2), Knee (-1), Punch (+0), or Slam (+0).
*Judo:* Grab (-4), Grapple (+0), Sweep (-3), or Throw (+0).
*Karate:* Elbow (-2), Kick (-2), Knee (-1), Punch (+0), or Sweep (-3).
*Melee Weapon:* Strike (+0). A hooked/tined weapon, whip, etc., can Grab (-4). A long weapon can Sweep (-3).
*Sumo Wrestling:* Grab (-4), Grapple (+0), Shove (+0), Slam (+0), or Sweep (-3).
*Wrestling:* Grab (-4) or Grapple (+0).

Unless you specify otherwise, the technique works with *all* of All-Out Attack, Attack, Committed Attack, Defensive Attack, and Move and Attack. It can work differently in each case, though. If so, be sure to describe the differences.

You can limit the technique to a subset of these maneuvers. If you do, you must *also* choose one specific option for any maneuver that offers multiple options. The technique inherits the effects of these maneuvers and options – including any built-in penalties to the attack roll, which adjust the default penalty. For instance, a kick (-2) that must use Move and Attack (-4) would default to skill-6 and use the Move and Attack rules. If you apply *any* of the modifications below, the technique effectively becomes a new option for the maneuver(s) in question.

Additional effects further modify the default. While some of these are open-ended, extreme levels are cinematic; see *Designing Cinematic Techniques* (pp. 94-95). Common options include:

*Damage:* +4 to default for -2 damage or -1 damage per die, whichever is *worse;* +2 to default for -1 damage; -2 to default for +1 damage; or -4 to default for +2 damage or +1 damage per die, whichever is *better.* Techniques based on Defensive Attack cannot take damage bonuses but can worsen their damage penalty for an improved default.

*Extra Movement:* Techniques based on Committed Attack can optionally allow a double step at -2 to hit. Those based on Move and Attack let the attacker travel his full Move at -4 to hit. In either case, add the appropriate penalty to the technique's default penalty. Alternatively, base the technique on All-Out Attack, which allows half Move at *no* penalty. For a slam-based technique, remember that a slam isn't at -4 to hit (and isn't "capped" at skill 9) as a Move and Attack, and allows *full* Move as an All-Out Attack.

*Hit Location:* Add any hit location penalty to the default. No technique can eliminate *every* hit location penalty, though! At most, a technique can eliminate the penalty for *one specific target.* For details, see *Targeted Attacks* (p. 68).

*Opponent's Defenses:* +2 to default per +1 to *all* of the opponent's defenses against the attack, or -2 to default per -1 to any *one* of the target's defenses against the attack. If the technique penalizes more than one defense, only the largest penalty uses this scheme; smaller penalties to other defenses give only -1 to default per -1 to defense. For instance, if the victim has -2 to parry, -1 to block, and -1 to dodge, the default is at -6.

*Own Defenses:* +2 to default per -1 to *all* of one's active defenses while attacking, or -2 to default per +1 to any *one* active defense. The latter modifier differs from Defensive Attack in that it trades skill rather than damage for a defensive bonus; it can "stack" on top of a regular Defensive Attack. Techniques based on Committed Attack include that maneuver's basic -2 to all defenses and cannot remove this by adding a defensive bonus – but they can get an easier default by taking a *worse* penalty! Techniques based on All-Out Attack cannot modify the attacker's defenses at all.

*Wild Swing:* If the attack specifically strikes a target to the side or back, apply the -5 Wild Swing penalty to its default (see *Wild Swings,* p. B388).

*Special Benefits:* Each built-in exemption from the usual rules gives -1 to the default penalty. Such benefits are similar to Style Perks (pp. 49-52) but apply only to one technique. Examples include:

- Being able to retreat after a particularly acrobatic Committed Attack.
- Bypassing the DX roll to avoid falling on a miss with a low-powered kick.
- Ignoring the effective skill limit of 9 on a Wild Swing when striking rearward.

A technique can also "trade" one of the usual effects of the attack on which it's based for a different but equally valuable effect. For example, Push Kick (p. 78) lets a Brawling or Karate kick act as a shove (p. B372), trading kicking damage for the ability to use *twice* that damage for knockback only. Conversely, a "Slap" technique might turn a Sumo Wrestling shove into a strike that inflicts punching damage instead of knockback. Such benefits often make an entirely new basic attack available to a skill. All such techniques get -1 to their default penalty to reflect the fact that they're unusual, rarely taught uses.

*Special Drawbacks:* Extra restrictions give +1 apiece to the default penalty. A few examples:

- An additional success roll required before attempting the technique (failure means the technique fails) or to recover afterward (with negative consequences on a failure!).
- Having to Do Nothing to recover on the turn after the technique. This is cumulative with the modifier for an extra success roll afterward.
- Having to parry an attack by the future target and/or use a "setup" move that takes a *full turn* (e.g., grapple him or take a Ready maneuver) to be able to employ the technique. This is cumulative with the modifier for an extra success roll beforehand. Throws *automatically* work like this and cannot claim this drawback.
- Increased odds of the attacker getting hurt on an ordinary miss. This might be self-inflicted injury when punching any DR instead of DR 3+, collision damage, etc.
- Limited target selection, most often "upper body only" (skull, eyes, face, neck, torso, vitals, arms, and hands), "lower body only" (groin, legs, and feet), or "only on a foe who isn't standing or who has lower SM."

Some drawbacks come in multiple levels:

- A penalty to the DX roll to avoid falling on a missed kick is worth +1 for DX-2, +2 for DX-4, or +3 for DX-6 or worse. A required or automatic fall, as for Drop Kick (p. 70) or Elbow Drop (p. 70-71), is worth +4. Having to drop to a kneeling or sitting posture is worth only +2.
- Reduced maximum reach is worth +1 per yard. Going from 1 to C counts as 1 yard (+1) and is common for low-powered kicks.

*Example 1:* Back Kick (p. 67) gets the basic -2 for a kick and an extra -5 for a Wild Swing, since it's an attack directly backward. Furthermore, it *ignores* the usual skill cap of 9 on a Wild Swing – a special benefit (-1). These penalties total -8. However, the attacker has -2 to his defenses, which adds +4. The final default penalty is thus -4.

*Example 2:* Flying Jump Kick (p. 83-84) gets the basic -2 for being a kick plus the -4 for Move and Attack. It gets +2 damage, for another -4, and gives the target -2 to parry, for a *further* -4. It has two special benefits, too: it ignores the skill cap of 9 on a Move and Attack (-1) and lets the attacker add his jumping distance to his Move (-1). These penalties total -16! However, the kick leaves the attacker at -2 to defend, for +4. And it has three special drawbacks: it requires a Jumping roll to execute (+1); the roll to avoid a fall is at DX-6 (+3), which becomes DX-*8* with Move and Attack's built-in -2 to avoid falls; and any fall results in collision damage (+1). These bonuses total +9, making the final default penalty -7.

### Locks and Holds

A *lock* or a *hold* with special effects on the turn after the attacker grapples his victim is an offensive technique that defaults to a grappling skill. The basic default penalty is the penalty to grapple the target hit location (see p. B400). On top of this, all such techniques have three mandatory modifications: having to grapple or parry in order to attempt the hold or lock gives +1 for requiring an additional success roll *and* +1 for taking an extra action to set up, while the ability to inflict ongoing suffocation or injury via a Quick Contest, when a grapple normally causes no damage, is a special benefit worth -1. These modifiers total +1. Apply other modifiers as necessary.

*Example:* Arm Lock (p. 65) targets the arm, which has a hit location penalty of -1 for grappling purposes, making the basic default penalty -1. It gets another -1 for being able to inflict ongoing injury. These penalties total -2. However, the initial grapple takes an extra turn (+1) and requires an attack roll (+1), adding +2. The net default penalty is +0.

### Defensive Techniques

A *defensive* technique defaults either to Dodge or to the Block or Parry score calculated from a particular combat skill. It might default to more than one of these defenses, in which case the buyer must specialize (see *Specialties,* pp. 92-93).

A use of a defensive technique is a use of the active defense to which it defaults for *all* purposes. It's only possible if the fighter could attempt the underlying defense – that is, never after an All-Out Attack or against a surprise attack, and only against an attack that the defense could affect. It takes the same modifiers as that defense; e.g., Combat Reflexes gives +1 and retreating provides +1 or +3. Where the rules limit the number of defenses possible or give penalties for multiple defenses, techniques that default to Block or Parry count as blocks or parries, respectively.

Most defensive techniques offer a way to "buy off" penalties to defenses. These have a default penalty equal to the situational penalty in question. Some examples:

-1 to defend against a Dual-Weapon Attack (p. B417).

-1 to parry using a knife.

-2 to block a flail.

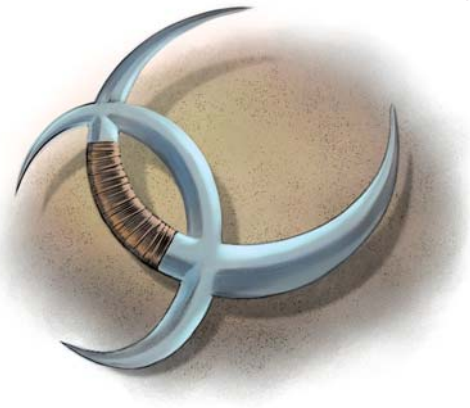
-2 to defend against an attack from the side (p. B390) or above (p. B402), or a "runaround" attack (p. B391).

-2 to parry a kick if using Boxing or Sumo Wrestling.

-2 to parry using a whip.

-3 to parry weapons using unarmed skills other than Judo and Karate.

-4 to parry a flail.



*Deer Antlers*

The GM may permit other effects – either instead of or in addition to the above – each of which modifies the default. Examples include:

*Opponent's Defenses:* The defender can use his defense to "set up" his next attack. For each -1 to the default, the attacker is at -1 to parry the defender's attack, on the next turn only, if that parry involves the weapon that the defender warded off using this technique.

*Own Attack Roll:* Another kind of "setup." For each -1 to the default, the defender gets +1 to his attack roll, on the next turn only, against the attacker he warded off using this technique.

*Own Defenses:* -1 to default per +1 to *one other* active defense after defending with this technique, or +1 to default per -1 to *all other* active defenses after using this defense. The latter modifier can only offset penalties; it cannot result in a net bonus.

*Special Benefits:* Each built-in exemption from the standard rules – e.g., being able to drop to the ground or sidestep as a retreat against a melee attack – gives -1 to the default penalty. A few potent benefits might give -2; e.g., being able to retreat *two* steps or step directly *toward* your enemy and count it as a "retreat," either of which is cinematic if you can improve it!

*Special Drawbacks:* Each additional restriction on the defense adds +1 to its default penalty. This cannot give a net *bonus*. Some examples:

- An additional success roll required before attempting the technique. Failure means the defense fails!
- Attacker may opt to hit a more vulnerable target than his intended one if the defense fails. A common example is a weapon parry that involves risky hand placement on the parrying weapon, giving the attacker the option to strike a *hand* should the parry fail.
- Falling down on an ordinary failure.
- Inability to defend against a broad category of attacks: armed attacks, close-combat attacks, swings, thrusts, etc.
- Increased injury from the incoming attack if the defense fails. This is worth +1 to the default for +1 to the attacker's damage – or +2 if the attacker gets the *better* of +2 damage or +1 damage per die.

*Example:* A fighter wishes to use his Brawling parry to ward off swung weapons by stepping inside his attacker's guard and parrying the weapon arm instead of the weapon. Brawling has -3 to parry weapons. The ability to step *forward* as a "retreat" is a special benefit that adds a further -2. The total penalty is -5. However, there's a major drawback: failure means stepping into the attack for +2 damage! This gives +2, making the final default penalty -3.

### Utility Techniques

The GM may allow a technique that "buys off" a *specific* situational skill penalty for all uses of a skill, if a fighter could logically study a body of moves that would be useful in that situation. However, no technique can eliminate a *general* category of penalties, such as "all posture penalties." For instance, Ground Fighting (p. 73) defaults to skill-4 and permits a fighter to buy off the -4 to attack when lying down, while Low Fighting (p. 77) defaults to skill-2 and does the same for the -2 when sitting or kneeling . . . but a single technique couldn't encompass both.

Utility techniques need not be based on combat skills to be useful in a fight. Warriors might be able to improve their odds with special uses of Acrobatics, Jumping, and other athletic skills in combat; see *Acrobatic Stand* (p. 98) and *Breakfall* (pp. 68-69) for examples.

## Specialties

If a custom-built technique defaults to multiple skills, list those skills. Individuals who learn the technique *must* specify which version they know and note the skill name as the technique's "specialty" on their character sheet; e.g., Elbow Strike (Brawling) or Elbow Strike (Karate). There's no default between such specialties – even if the parent skills *do* default to one another.

Techniques that default to other techniques automatically "inherit" the specialty of the parent technique. For instance, if a student learns Finger Lock from his default to Arm Lock (Judo), he automatically has Finger Lock (Judo).

All of this applies equally to defensive techniques. The fighter must specify both the defense (Block, Dodge, or Parry) and the skill that enables it (unnecessary for Dodge); e.g., Dual-Weapon Defense (Shield Block) or Dual-Weapon Defense (Staff Parry).

If a technique defaults *only* to ST, DX, Dodge, or a similar score that doesn't derive from a skill level, it doesn't require specialization.

## *Difficulty Level*

The lists below assign "Average" or "Hard" difficulty to broad classes of techniques on the bases of real-world difficulty and game balance. These are merely guidelines! The GM may rule that an otherwise Average technique with many special effects is Hard – or that one that would normally be Hard is only Average because it's such a basic use of the skill to which it defaults.

### Average

- Holds and locks that pit the *attacker's* arms or hands against the *target's* torso, arms, or legs.
- Unarmed strikes and shoves involving elbows, hands, knees, and other "intuitive" striking surfaces. This varies by race; e.g., teeth are a dog's first resort but not a man's.
- Weapon thrusts and swings.

### Hard

- Defensive techniques.
- Disarms.
- Feints.
- Holds and locks applied using the *attacker's* legs or feet, or that go after the *target's* feet, hands, head, or neck.
- Improved resistance to disarms, feints, grapples, etc.
- Multiple strikes, regardless of how many arms or weapons the attacker has.
- Techniques that buy off penalties for a *target* (e.g., hit location) or *situation* (e.g., posture, or combat from a moving platform).
- Unarmed attacks that involve "unintuitive" striking surfaces. This depends on race; e.g., a kick is unbalancing and thus unintuitive for a human but not for a horse.
- Weapon-based grabs and grapples.

## *Maximum Level*

A combat technique should *always* specify a level past which further improvement is only possible by raising the parent skill, technique, etc.

A technique that defaults to a skill, technique, or active defense at a *penalty* cannot be raised past the score to which it defaults. ***GURPS*** treats attacks and defenses as discrete actions . . . but in reality, each move "sets up" the next. Any technique tricky enough to give a penalty is only as good as the fighter's grasp of the basics he uses to set it up.

On the other hand, a technique that defaults to a skill (only) at *no* penalty represents a "sub-skill": a body of knowledge that one could theoretically isolate and study almost as if it were its own skill. Skill+4 is a reasonable maximum here – but the GM is free to use skill+3 to control easily abused techniques or skill+5 for self-limiting ones.

A technique that defaults to a *technique* or an *active defense* at no penalty can never exceed the parent score, however.

Techniques that default to *attributes* constitute a special case. Improving a technique like this represents training at a feat that anybody could try – which describes most skills! Since there's no upper limit on skills, the GM could fairly allow almost any maximum.

## *Description*

The description of a technique should provide about the same degree of detail as the worked examples in this chapter. Remember that techniques *include* all of the effects of the combat options, maneuvers, and techniques from which they're built, except for those deliberately removed using the design system. To keep page-flipping in play to a minimum, summarize the basic and added effects in one place.

# Designing Realistic Techniques

Every aspect of a realistic technique should make sense in real life. In particular, the *tradeoffs* should be logical. One could stack up any number of effects and work out the "fair" default . . . but that would be an abstract number shuffle and have little to do with reality. In general:

- *Damage:* For realistic punches, damage bonuses should come with drawbacks – most often high potential for self-inflicted injury. If a punch gets extra damage *without* such a limitation, base it on Committed Attack (Strong) or All-Out Attack (Strong).

Kicks can deliver extra damage with fewer drawbacks, or even with other bonuses. For instance, a high-powered kick that involves jumping at the foe might be parried at a penalty, as it's difficult to parry an entire person!

Weapon strikes that deliver extra damage involve exaggerated windups, awkward striking angles, or placing the weapon in contact with the target for a long time (e.g., a drawing or sawing cut). Any of these things should give the target a *bonus* to defend.

Extra-powerful kicks and weapon blows tend to open up the attacker's guard, giving him a penalty to his own defenses! Many are Committed or All-Out Attacks.

- *Extra Movement:* In realistic games, high-mobility attacks should be Committed or All-Out Attacks. Allowing fighters to buy off the -4 for Move and Attack is *unrealistic* – being able to run at top speed, attack at full skill, and still defend effectively is simply too much action for one second.
- *Opponent's Defenses:* Realistic bonuses to the target's defenses against an offensive technique shouldn't exceed +2. They make the most sense for haymaker punches, extra-damage weapon attacks, and other slow or clumsy strikes that are easy to see coming and avoid.

Penalties to an opponent's Parry – from offensive *or* defensive techniques – shouldn't be worse than -2. These mainly suit tricky "spinning" attacks, kicks that get their bonus damage from a jump (which can bash the defender's hand aside), and parries that involve moving inside the foe's guard . . . which tend to cause extra damage to the user if he fails! Few realistic techniques can justify a penalty to the defender's Block or Dodge. For that, use a feint or Deceptive Attack.

- *Own Attack Roll:* The bonus to hit with an attack that follows a defensive technique shouldn't exceed +2. Such techniques tend to be *dangerous* and should usually result in the defender taking extra damage if he fails.

● *Own Defenses:* A bonus to one's Block, Dodge, or Parry when using an offensive technique shouldn't exceed +2 for a realistic attack. This is typically a Parry bonus, and only benefits parries with the weapon used to attack. It represents a guarded blow calculated to "feel out" the foe in order to better respond to him – much like a Defensive Attack – and often comes with a reduction in damage. It wouldn't be unrealistic to tie +1 Parry to -1 damage and +2 Parry to -2 damage. Bonuses to other defenses when using a *defensive* technique should likewise not exceed +2.

Similarly, a penalty to all of one's own defenses when attacking likely represents an aggressive attack similar to Committed Attack. The GM might wish to make this penalty mandatory for techniques that get bonus damage. In any event, the defense penalty from a realistic offensive *or* defensive technique shouldn't be worse than -2.

● *Special Benefits:* Above all, these must make sense. For instance, a full-powered kick shouldn't be able to take "no DX roll to avoid falling on a miss" as a benefit. A kick *that* safe is likely low-powered, with a damage penalty . . . or has a balancing drawback, such as being a low kick that can only affect the feet and legs of a standing target. Removing the effective skill cap of 9 from a Wild Swing *is* realistic; many real-world martial arts teach precision strikes to the side and rear. Eliminating the same limit for a technique based on Move and Attack is *highly* unrealistic, however!

● *Special Drawbacks:* These, too, must be logical and fit in with the technique's other effects: a full turn of Ready to "wind up" before a high-damage attack, reduced reach for a cautious attack that gives the attacker a Parry bonus or a damage penalty, a Jumping roll to execute a dangerous kick (and a penalty to the DX roll if it misses), etc. The GM shouldn't permit "super-techniques" that give the attacker damage and defense bonuses, penalize the target's defenses, and offer many special benefits . . . and then "pay" for it all by piling on a dozen unrelated drawbacks.

Lastly, it's important to recognize that it isn't realistic to buy off *every* penalty. As noted above, no believable offensive technique should be able to eliminate the -4 for a Move and Attack – and of course any penalty that a cinematic technique can't handle (see below) is *definitely* beyond the reach of a realistic one!

# Designing Cinematic Techniques

A cinematic technique *doesn't* have to make sense. All that matters is that it's true to the spirit of the game and – if taken from a fictional source – its origins. Legend and cinema are full of "super-techniques" that give bonuses in every category, the only cost being a huge default penalty . . . which is of no concern to the master, whose prodigious skill can easily absorb a mere -15 or -20. A few guidelines for GMs who wish to temper their cinematic campaigns with game balance:

● *Damage:* No matter how deadly a technique is reputed to be, the GM should limit its damage bonus to +2 (or +1 per die, if better). Weapon Masters *already* get a damage bonus, while unarmed fighters can learn Pressure Secrets. These simulate the devastating "secret techniques" of cinematic masters far better than do massive technique-based damage bonuses.

● *Extra Movement:* In settings with a *chambara* or *wuxia* sensibility, there should be many techniques that let warriors buy off the -4 for Move and Attack. To truly simulate these genres, *most* techniques should have a Move and Attack variant! An attack that gets extra movement from jumping, tumbling, vaulting, etc., has an additional -1 – or -2 if it allows full-fledged acrobatics (see *Flying Attack,* p. 107, and *Acrobatic Attack,* p. 1007).

● *Hit Location:* Contrary to the rules for Targeted Attacks (p. 68), the GM may wish to allow warriors to eliminate hit location penalties completely by buying cinematic techniques. This is *deadly* – imagine a swordsman who can completely remove the -9 to hit the eyes or the -10 for chinks in armor on the skull – but it *is* in keeping with much of martial-arts fiction.

● *Opponent's Defenses:* Bonuses to the target's defenses against offensive techniques can go as high as +4 in cinematic games. Use this for exotic "finishing moves" that only work against opponents who are already defeated and unable to defend. On the other side of the coin are mythical techniques (either offensive or defensive) that can supposedly defeat the strongest defense. These might give an opponent up to -4 to his Block, Dodge, and/or Parry.

● *Own Attack Roll:* Elaborate defensive techniques might give +4 or more to hit one's foe after parrying his attack at a proportionally huge penalty. This is an excellent choice for the cinematic barbarian, whose parry is often little more than a powerful, cleaving blow designed to knock aside his opponent's weapon and lead directly into an attack.

● *Own Defenses:* A cinematic warrior might get up to +4 to one of his defenses for an elaborate offensive technique that involves attacking from some secret guard position . . . or up to -4 to all of his defenses when making a desperate lunge or mighty swing that's designed to avoid retaliation by killing the target. He might receive between +4 and -4 to *other* defenses when using a similarly extreme defensive technique.

● *Special Benefits:* Almost anything is possible! Offensive techniques that make it possible to buy off Move and Attack penalties are particularly common. These often toss in an extra -1 to get rid of the skill limit of 9 and a further -1 to eliminate the restriction against retreating afterward.

Defensive techniques can enjoy similarly extreme benefits. A classic example is defense against attacks from behind without having Peripheral Vision or 360° Vision. This benefit gives a basic default of -1, plus the usual -2 for the awkward angle. A technique like this might *require* Danger Sense or Precognition to use at all.

● *Special Drawbacks:* There are at least two schools of thought on this matter. Some techniques seem to pay for their effectiveness by being risky. They offer many benefits alongside frightening drawbacks that keep their default penalties relatively modest. Even a beginner can try these moves . . . but *any* failure is disastrous!

Other techniques have no special down side – except, of course, for a huge default penalty. This puts them out of the reach of beginners. Once perfected, though, they're very reliable and very deadly.

The GM decides which model to use. He might use the same one for every technique he designs, vary his approach from style to style, or let the chips fall where they may.

The GM should be more lenient about which combat penalties a cinematic technique can remove, too. The only hard-and-fast rule is that no technique should make it possible to buy off the penalties for Rapid Strike or multiple parries (reducing these penalties is the territory of Trained by a Master and Weapon Master, which are far more expensive than any technique); those for distraction, stunning, the momentary shock from injury, etc. (nobody spends enough time in any of these states to get *good* at fighting that way); and those for darkness or invisibility (but see *Blind Fighting,* p. B180).

## Useless Techniques

A few techniques are almost worthless in a real fight. They *seem* to make sense but simply don't work in reality – although this doesn't automatically make them cinematic or silly (see *Silly Techniques,* p. 88). This is often the case for secret techniques, many of which are so secret that they've never been tested in anger (see *Secret Techniques,* p. 86).

If the GM wishes, he can cook up plausible-sounding techniques with intriguing names and have unscrupulous – or naïve – masters offer to teach them to the PCs. Since these techniques don't really do anything special, he can assign default penalties, difficulties, and maximum levels more-or-less randomly.

A potential student gets an IQ-based roll against the technique's prerequisite skill when he first hears about or witnesses the technique. If the teacher is being *deliberately* deceptive, treat this as a Quick Contest, with the teacher using Fast-Talk if speaking, his combat skill if demonstrating. If the student succeeds (or wins the Contest), he realizes that the technique is a dud. Otherwise, he's unsure – the player must decide whether to spend time and points to learn the technique, and the GM has no obligation to tell the truth.

On a successful roll, offensive techniques work as attacks and defensive ones work as active defenses. But that's all they are: ordinary attacks and defenses encumbered with a default penalty. The GM should mumble, shuffle paper, and roll dice in secret whenever they're used to give the *impression* that something more is going on.

On a critical success, however, the sheer lack of logic involved throws the opponent off-guard! If the technique-user was attempting an attack, he rolls on the *Critical Hit Table* three times and picks whichever result he likes best. If he was trying a defense, he makes his opponent roll three times on the *Critical Miss Table* and chooses which result to apply. In effect, he gets the benefit of Luck on the roll on the table – because he got lucky!

## Designing Techniques for Nonhumans

Slight physiological differences between humans and nonhumans needn't imply new techniques. It's easiest to use human techniques and simply note the impact – if any – of minor physical peculiarities. Features (p. B452) should only alter special effects. Small differences that make techniques more effective don't change the *techniques* but qualify as racial perks (just like Fur, p. B101) in ***Martial Arts*** games; e.g., "Long Thumbs" is a perk because it converts Eye-Gouging (p. 71) from a nasty attack to a *deadly* one.

Major body parts – Extra Arms, Strikers, etc. – often *do* require new techniques. The fastest way to design such a technique is to start with a human technique and modify its default and damage to reflect the capabilities of nonhuman body parts relative to those that the technique assumes. For example, a tail is an Extra Arm that "punches" for thrust-1 damage while a leg has -2 DX and kicks for thrust damage, so when adapting kicks to tail strikes, the default becomes two points less severe but damage drops a point. Thus, a "Tail Smash" based on Stamp Kick (pp. 80-81) defaults at -1, not -3, and does thrust damage, not thrust+1.

Design techniques with *no* human equivalent using the detailed system. The standard attack modes of a body part are its basic attacks, with effective DX and damage as noted above. A technique that grants a whole new basic attack – e.g., a grapple with a Striker such as horns – has a special benefit and merits the standard -1 to its default.

Additional notes and examples appear under *Sweep* (p. 81), *Teeth* (p. 115), and *Close Combat and Body Morphology* (p. 114-117).

# Chapter Four
# Combat

*The Italian used his dagger to ward off Adrian's sword, and then counterattacked with a rapier thrust to her heart. "Impacciato, inglese!"*

*Adrian nimbly melted out of reach and shifted her left hand from ricasso to hilt, putting 10 feet of ground and three feet of steel between herself and her enemy. "Your language is the howling of dogs, fop. I know only that you wear enough gold to feed a family for a year."*

*"And I shall have more once I collect the price on your head," retorted the bounty hunter. He struck Adrian's extended blade with both of his own – but her strength and her sword's weight foiled his disarm.*

*"You plan to cut off my head using your inadequate little weapon?" Adrian taunted, keeping her distance.*

*It was enough. Her rival's face flushed red and he launched himself at her . . . but the infamous "flying lunge" simply screeched along Adrian's blade as it encountered her guard.*

*Spinning, Adrian spoiled her foe's landing with a slap of her blade, sending him sprawling face-first. Pricking his back with her point, she delivered an ultimatum, "Yield now and you shall lose only gold."*

The combat techniques in Chapter 3 and fighting styles in Chapter 5 add significant depth to the abilities of warriors. A martial artist doesn't simply roll against his Karate or Smallsword skill – he uses his Tae Kwon Do expertise to throw a Jump Kick or his Escrima training to try a Dual-Weapon Attack. Not all combat options map to techniques and styles, though. Many require extensions to the combat system itself.

This entire chapter is an addendum to Chapters 11-14 of the ***Basic Set.*** It expands on the rules given there for combat and injury. Some of these additions are highly realistic while others are extremely cinematic, but they're all *optional.* The GM decides which rules apply. It's possible to use *everything* . . . but it's more fun (and less confusing!) to use only the subset of material that suits the campaign's genre and realism level.

# Expanded Combat Maneuvers

In a ***Martial Arts*** game, the GM might permit the following additional possibilities for the combat maneuvers described on pp. B363-366. These options supplement those in the ***Basic Set*** but don't replace them. Unless noted otherwise, all of the usual benefits and drawbacks of the underlying maneuver still apply – notably those described under "Movement" and "Active Defense."

As explained in *Creating New Techniques* (pp. 89-95), some combat techniques are based on specific maneuvers; e.g., Jump Kick (p. 75) is a Committed Attack or All-Out Attack. Such techniques are new options for the maneuvers in question, on an equal footing with but distinct from those in the ***Basic Set.*** For instance, Jump Kick allows a unique All-Out Attack option, All-Out Attack (Jump Kick), which you can't combine with a basic option such as All-Out Attack (Strong) or another technique-specific option like All-Out Attack (Whirlwind).

## Aim

You can take an Aim maneuver to improve your odds with *Rapid Fire with Thrown Weapons* (p. 120) or *Rapid Strike with Thrown Weapons* (pp. 120-121). You must declare which opponent you're aiming at. Your aiming bonuses (for Accuracy, turns of Aim, etc.) only apply to attacks against that one foe, regardless of how many attacks or shots you have. For a Rapid Strike, apply the Accuracy of each weapon separately to its own attack roll.

*Repeating Crossbow*

A warrior with the Heroic Archer advantage generally gets his weapon's Accuracy bonus *without* an Aim maneuver – see p. 45 for details. If he chooses to Aim, he gets a further +1 for the first second of Aim, or +2 for two or more seconds of Aim.

## All-Out Attack

The GM should permit the four "basic" All-Out Attack options (Determined, Double, Feint, and Strong) and the new Long option below with any melee attack that doesn't specifically forbid them. In particular, a *grappler* can use All-Out Attack to travel up to half his Move into close combat and grab or grapple at +4, grapple two body parts, or feint and *then* grapple. He can even use All-Out Attack (Long) to grab his foe from a yard away – although it's unwise to give an armed enemy room to use his weapon!

The GM should be generous about substituting feints for attacks, too. All-Out Attack (Feint) is just an All-Out Attack (Double) that trades the first attack for a feint, so there's no reason why a fighter couldn't reverse the order: attack first and then feint to benefit a later attack. Other alternatives include using All-Out Attack (Determined) to feint at +4 and All-Out Attack (Long) to feint a distant foe.

All-Out Attack is perfect for simulating cinematic actions. All-Out Attack (Double) might be a chop followed by a spinning draw cut . . . or a single, deadly "throat-slitting" attack, the two attack rolls reflecting the difficulty of the feat, the chance that the victim could escape mid-cut, and the potential for twice the damage. All-Out Attack (Strong) could represent a stab followed by a twist of the blade, a big roundhouse punch, or grabbing someone and pulling him into a blow. All-Out Attack (Long) might involve throwing a weapon at the enemy and catching it as it bounces off!

Combat options take things a step further. A warrior could choose All-Out Attack (Double) and make a Rapid Strike or Dual-Weapon Attack with one of his two attacks, giving him *three* attacks (see *Multiple Attacks,* pp. 126-128). Or he could use All-Out Attack (Feint) to feint and then make a Deceptive Attack, striking an "unstoppable blow."

A little imagination lets players avoid long lists of techniques, provided the GM is flexible and the PCs are willing to take the risk of an All-Out Attack.

### *All-Out Attack (Long)*

This is a fifth All-Out Attack option for melee combat. It represents a full-extension jump or lunge. It gives the fighter an extra yard of reach; e.g., he could use a shortsword, which normally has a reach of 1 yard, to strike somebody *2* yards away.

All-Out Attack (Long) has no effect on the attack roll. For thrusting attacks, there's no effect on damage, either. Swinging attacks are more awkward, and at -2 damage or -1 damage per die, whichever is *worse.*

As usual for All-Out Attack, the attacker may move up to half his Move forward before attacking. This makes it possible to simulate balestras and similar gap-closing moves. Even without movement, this maneuver can be useful for leaning over or under a barrier, or over a fighter who's kneeling, sitting, or lying down. However, the extra reach *can't* be used to attack past a crouching or standing fighter – through his hex, in tactical combat – as his body would get in the way of the extended arm and foot.

The attacker may opt to end this maneuver in a crouch, which represents a sprawling lunge with a hand on the floor for support (often termed a "floor lunge"). He *cannot* support himself with a hand that's holding the weapon used to attack; thus, two-armed beings with two-handed weapons can't drop to a crouch. The supporting hand need not be empty – it can hold a shield, second weapon, etc. This crouch calls for a DX roll. Failure means the fighter ends up *kneeling* instead; critical failure means he *falls down.*

All-Out Attack (Long) is incompatible with Defensive Grip (pp. 109-111), which involves holding the weapon *closer* than usual, and mutually exclusive with other All-Out Attack options (Determined, Double, Feint, and Strong). It's compatible with most other attack options: Deceptive Attack (p. B369), Rapid Strike (p. B370), Telegraphic Attack (p. 113), Tip Slash (p. 113), etc.

### *Slams as All-Out Attacks*

A real-life slam is usually an All-Out Attack at a full run. To reflect this, slams (including flying tackles, pounces, and shield rushes) enjoy a special relationship with All-Out Attack: the attacker can travel up to *full* Move! He may choose the Determined, Feint, or Strong option, but not Long – for extra reach, do a flying tackle.

The Double option is a special case. The attacker can't slam twice but he *can* launch another melee attack before he slams. This first attack can be on the slam's target (the slam representing bodily follow-through on a charging attack) or on somebody passed along the way. Doing either allows only *half* Move, as usual for All-Out Attack.

## ATTACK

When attacking with a technique, be sure to read its description! Many techniques – especially cinematic ones – *don't* allow an ordinary Attack maneuver. They only work with All-Out Attack, Committed Attack, or Move and Attack.

Note also that while Attack allows "any" active defense, some attacks preclude a later parry. In particular:

- If using a weapon that can get *stuck* (see *Picks,* p. B405), you cannot parry until you free the weapon.
- If you *grab* or *grapple,* the hand(s) you use to grip your foe cannot parry.
- If you strike using a weapon that becomes *unready,* it cannot parry afterward.
- If you strike using an *unbalanced* weapon, you cannot parry with it that turn.

## CHANGE POSTURE

You don't need a Change Posture maneuver to assume a lower posture in order to *grab, grapple, pin, shove, slam,* or *strike* at reach C. If making one of these attacks as part of an All-Out Attack, Attack, Committed Attack, or Move and Attack maneuver, you may take one of the following posture changes as part of the movement portion of your maneuver:

- *Dive forward to go* ***from*** *standing* ***to*** *kneeling, crawling, or lying prone.* This counts as your entire step if making an Attack or Committed Attack. It costs you one movement point if making an All-Out Attack or Move and Attack, and must come at the end of your movement. For instance, if you had Move 6, you could run 3 yards to All-Out Attack, or run only 2 yards and dive prone. On a battle map, if you end up crawling or prone, your upper body ends up in the front hex of your choice.
- *Dive forward to go* ***from*** *kneeling* ***to*** *crawling or lying prone.* This takes your entire movement allowance in all cases. Your upper body ends up in the front hex of your choice.
- *Fall backward to go* ***from*** *standing* ***to*** *sitting or lying face-up.* This takes your entire movement allowance if you make an All-Out Attack, Attack, or Committed Attack. It costs you one movement point if making a Move and Attack, and must come at the end of your movement. If you change to lying face-up, your lower body ends up in the front hex of your choice.
- *Fall backward to go* ***from*** *kneeling or sitting* ***to*** *lying face-up.* This uses up all of your movement in all cases. Your upper body ends up in the side or back hex of your choice.

To drop to the ground defensively on an opponent's turn, use the rules under *Retreat Options* (pp. 123-124) or *Sprawling* (p. 119) instead.

### *Acrobatic Stand*

If *lying face-down* or *face-up,* you can attempt a flip, kip-up, or roll that takes you directly to a *standing* posture without assuming a crawling, kneeling, or sitting posture first. This requires a Change Posture maneuver; you can't do it as the "step" portion of another maneuver.

Make an Acrobatics-6 roll with an additional penalty equal to encumbrance level. Success means you end your turn standing; on a critical success, you *can* use this as the step portion of an Attack, Committed Attack, Defensive Attack, Feint, or Ready. Failure means you end your turn sitting (*not* kneeling or crawling); critical failure means you remain face-down or face-up.

If you're *sitting* or *crawling,* you can try to spring into a *standing* posture as a step – exactly as if you were going from kneeling to standing. Roll at Acrobatics-6 minus encumbrance level. Success lets you stand and execute any maneuver that allows a step. Failure means you stand, but it counts as a Change Posture maneuver and your turn ends. On a critical failure, you fall down!

In either case, you can opt to "stand" in a crouching posture – handy when regaining your feet under fire.

These rules assume you stand defensively. You may opt to go "all-out." This gives +4 to Acrobatics but deprives you of active defenses! If lying, any success – even critical success – means a rapid posture change *only.* If sitting or crawling, your sole option after a success is an All-Out Attack.

### *Postures, Hit Locations, and Techniques*

Realistically, a fighter's posture influences the attacks he can attempt, rendering some impossible while making others easier or harder. The modifiers for postures and hit locations in the ***Basic Set*** are *generic.* They're usually fine but they don't cover every possible situation. For instance, the -4 for lying down and -5 to hit the face suggest that a prone man can hit a standing foe in the face at -9. He probably can – with a sword. He shouldn't be allowed to try this with a knife or a fist unless he has Stretching, though!

The GM is free to assign a modifier to any attack he feels should be easier or harder from a given posture, and to forbid those that seem silly. Below are detailed rules for those who enjoy extreme realism. They assume two fighters with Size Modifiers that differ by no more than ±1. For more extreme SM differences, use *Combat at Different Levels* (p. B402).

All of these modifiers are cumulative with each other and with the standard modifiers for posture, hit location, and technique. For instance, if a sitting fighter leans back on his hands and kicks up at the face of a standing foe, he takes the usual -2 for sitting, -2 for kicking, and -5 for targeting the face . . . and an *extra* -1 to target the face and -1 to kick, because he's sitting.

### Standing

**+0 to attack/+0 to defend**

*Hit Location Effects:* Remove -1 from the hit location penalty to attack the neck, face, eye, or skull of a *kneeling* or *sitting* man, or to kick the leg or foot of a *standing* man.

*Prohibited Attacks:* None.

*Modified Attacks:* Punches and attacks with close-combat weapons (reach C) against enemies who are lying down require the attacker to stoop into a near-crouch, which gives -2 to hit. Elbow Strike and Knee Strike can't reach those who are lying down at all – use Elbow Drop and Knee Drop. Head Butt can't reach opponents who are lying down either, and has -2 to hit even against kneeling, sitting, or crawling foes. Using Scissors Hold or the grappling techniques in *Using Your Legs* (p. 79) forces the attacker to fall down.

### Kneeling

**-2 to attack/-2 to defend**

*Hit Location Effects:* Remove -1 from the hit location penalty to attack the feet, legs, or groin of a *standing* man, but add -1 to hit his neck, face, eye, or skull.

*Prohibited Attacks:* All kicks, Backbreaker, Knee Drop, Knee Strike, Piledriver, Scissors Hold, and any Sweep using a leg.

*Modified Attacks:* Elbow Drop is at -1 damage and can only target someone who is crawling or lying down. Head Butt is at -2 to hit an opponent who is crawling or lying down – and against a standing opponent, it can only target the legs or groin. Techniques from *Using Your Legs* (p. 79) can only target the legs of a standing man.

### Sitting

**-2 to attack/-2 to defend**

*Note:* If seated *on* something (e.g., a chair), the rules under *Fighting While Seated* (p. 83) apply instead.

*Hit Location Effects:* Remove -1 from the hit location penalty to attack the feet, legs, or groin of a *standing* man, but add -1 to hit his neck, face, eye, or skull.

*Prohibited Attacks:* Aerial kicks (Drop Kick, Flying Jump Kick, Jump Kick, Pole-Vault Kick, etc.), Back Kick, Backbreaker, Knee Drop, Piledriver, and any kind of slam.

*Modified Attacks:* The rules under *Kneeling* apply here, too. In addition, Elbow Strike cannot hit the neck, face, eye, or skull of a standing man. Knee Strike, any Sweep using a leg, and all permitted kicks are awkward, and have an extra -1 to attack and damage rolls. Downward kicks (Axe Kick, Stamp Kick, etc.) can only hit opponents who are crawling or lying down, or the feet of a standing foe, and do -1 damage.

### Crawling

**-4 to attack/-3 to defend**

*Hit Location Effects:* Remove -2 from the hit location penalty to attack the feet or legs of a *standing* man, but add -2 to hit his neck, face, eye, or skull.

*Prohibited Attacks:* Backbreaker, Elbow Drop, Knee Drop, Piledriver, Scissors Hold, Two-Handed Punch, any Sweep using a leg, all kicks except Back Kick, and weapon strikes at reach 1+.

*Modified Attacks:* Elbow Strike is awkward, has an extra -1 to hit, and cannot reach the neck, face, eye, or skull of a standing man. Against a standing foe, Head Butt can only attack the groin, legs, or feet. Knee Strike can only target an opponent who is lying down, the legs or feet of a sitting man, or the feet of a standing man. Techniques from *Using Your Legs* (p. 79) can only target the legs of a standing man.

### Lying Face-Up

**-4 to attack/-3 to defend**

*Hit Location Effects:* Remove -2 from the hit location penalty to attack the feet or legs of a *standing* man, but add -2 to hit his neck, face, eye, or skull.

*Prohibited Attacks:* Aerial kicks (as explained for *Sitting*), Back Kick, Backbreaker, Elbow Drop, Knee Drop, and Piledriver.

*Modified Attacks:* Elbow Strike and Head Butt cannot reach any part of a standing man but his feet or legs, and cannot attack the neck, face, eye, or skull of anyone who isn't crawling or lying down. Stability removes -2 from the penalty for permitted kicks and Sweeps with legs, but lack of leverage gives -1 damage. Knee Strike, punches, and close-combat weapon attacks (reach C) cannot reach above the groin of a standing man.

### Lying Face-Down (Prone)

**-4 to attack/-3 to defend**

*Hit Location Effects:* Remove -2 from the hit location penalty to attack the feet or legs of a *standing* man, but add -2 to hit his neck, face, eye, or skull.

*Prohibited Attacks:* Backbreaker, Elbow Drop, Knee Drop, Piledriver, and all kicks except Back Kick.

*Modified Attacks:* Elbow Strike, Head Butt, and Knee Strike cannot reach any part of a standing man but his feet, and cannot attack the neck, face, eye, or skull of anyone who isn't crawling or lying down. Punches and close-combat weapons cannot target anything above the groin on a standing man. Techniques from *Using Your Legs* (p. 79) can only target the legs of a standing man.

## Committed Attack

Most martial arts teach a continuum of options between the dedicated offense of All-Out Attack and pure defense of All-Out Defense. The Attack maneuver is a good middle ground, but the GM may allow two new maneuvers that let fighters emphasize either offense or defense without forsaking the other completely. *Committed Attack* falls between Attack and All-Out Attack, while *Defensive Attack* (below) lies between Attack and All-Out Defense. In campaigns that use these rules, some combat techniques *require* the user to choose one of these maneuvers instead of Attack.

Committed Attack represents an aggressive attack such as a "haymaker," lunge (for a full-extension lunge, see *All-Out Attack (Long)*, pp. 97-98), pass, or roundhouse. The fighter must use a ready melee attack and choose one of these options before he attacks:

- *Determined:* Make a single attack at +2 to hit.
- *Strong:* Make a single attack at normal skill and +1 to damage. This only applies to melee attacks doing ST-based thrust or swing damage – not to force swords, etc. At the GM's option, the damage bonus can scale up for high-ST characters: add +1 to damage per two *full* dice of basic damage, before other modifiers.

*Movement:* Step or *two* steps. A second step gives -2 to hit, making the total modifier +0 for Committed Attack (Determined) or -2 for Committed Attack (Strong). Movement can come before or after the attack. An attacker who takes two steps *can* step, attack, and step again – a tactic known as "attack and fly out."

*Active Defense:* The attacker cannot parry with the hand(s) he used to attack, block if he attacked with his shield or cloak, or dodge if he kicked. He can use any other defense, but at -2. He cannot retreat.

# Defensive Attack

This represents a cautious "probing" attack made from a full guard position, such as a jab with a thrusting weapon (including a fist or foot) or a quick, light tap with a swung one. The fighter must use a ready melee attack. He gets -2 damage or -1 damage per die, whichever is *worse,* but enjoys improved active defenses – see below. If he attempts to grab or grapple, his target gets +1 to defend.

*Movement:* Step. Movement can come before or after the attack.

*Active Defense:* Any. Before the attacker rolls, he must select a defensive benefit. If he attacks with a balanced weapon (including a hand or a shield), he may choose either +1 to Parry with one of his weapons or +1 to Block. He *can* assign the bonus to the weapon he's striking with. If he attacks with an *unbalanced* weapon (one with "U" in its Parry statistic), he may claim +1 to Parry or Block with a different weapon, or opt to parry with the same weapon, at no bonus, *despite* using it to attack. If he kicks, he gets no Block or Parry bonus but +2 on rolls to avoid a Leg Grapple (p. 76) and on DX rolls to avoid falling.

# Evaluate

Evaluate provides *exactly* the same benefits for Committed Attack and Defensive Attack that it does for the maneuvers listed on pp. B364-365. In combat-heavy campaigns – like most ***Martial Arts*** games – the GM may want to use the following optional rules.

## *Countering Feints and Deceptive Attacks*

If you're watching your opponent's rhythm and movements in order to get a clear shot at him, you're more likely to notice *everything* he's doing – including his actions toward you! At the GM's option, you may use your current Evaluate bonus against a foe to cancel out defense penalties from any feint or Deceptive Attack he attempts against you. This can never give a net bonus. For instance, if you've taken two turns of Evaluate (for +2 to skill) when your foe launches a Deceptive Attack that gives you -4 to defend, you would defend at only -2.

This applies only to Deceptive Attacks and feints that occur *while* you're taking the Evaluate maneuver, and only negates penalties to defend against that one foe. Once you make an attack on him and claim your Evaluate bonus, you lose this side benefit until you Evaluate again.

## *Evaluate and Non-Combat Skills*

If you're paying close attention to one person on the battlefield, you're more likely to notice anything unusual or dangerous about him. Apply your current Evaluate bonus to IQ rolls to notice him playing tricks on you (see *Dirty Tricks,* p. B405); Body Language rolls to determine whether he's nervous, on drugs, Berserk, etc.; Expert Skill (Hoplology) rolls to identify his martial-arts style; and Observation rolls to spot Supernatural Features, concealed weapons, and other "interesting" items. This applies only *while* you Evaluate.

# Feint

A fighter's ability to notice and react to trickery in combat is realistically a question of experience. It has little to do with the weapon he happens to have in hand! If the GM doesn't mind a little added complexity, he should consider allowing all combatants to *resist* (but not initiate) feints using their *best* Melee Weapon or unarmed combat skill.

*Example:* Baajikiil the spear-master, having snapped off his spear in a foe's sternum, hastily snatches up his enemy's mace. He knows Spear at 18 but must wield the mace at default Axe/Mace skill . . . a paltry 8. He still has his trusty shield, which he uses at his Shield skill of 16. If he tries to feint, he rolls at 8 with the mace or 16 with the shield – his Spear skill doesn't help. However, if he *resists* a feint, he does so at skill 18. He might not know much about hitting people with a mace, but he's a veteran fighter and won't be easy to fool!

By the same token, those who know any specialty of the Feint technique (p. 73) may use it to *resist* feints as well as to execute them. Their knowledge of combat deceptions makes them much less likely to fall for such tricks.

## *Beats*

A strong fighter can try to batter down his enemy's guard in preparation for an attack. This is a *Beat*. An option for a ready melee attack, it requires a Feint maneuver. Unlike a feint, a Beat must target one particular defense:

- If the fighter successfully blocked or parried an attack *immediately prior* to this turn, he can use the limb, shield, or weapon he defended with to Beat. He must target the weapon or shield he defended against – or his enemy's unarmed guard, if the foe attacked barehanded.
- If the fighter attacked his enemy *this* turn or on the *immediately previous* turn, and his opponent successfully blocked or parried, he can attempt a Beat with the attack he just used. He must target the weapon or shield his adversary defended with – or his rival's unarmed guard, if the foe defended barehanded.

● If the fighter has his victim grappled barehanded or with a weapon (via Entangle, Hook, etc.), he can target his opponent's Dodge *or* unarmed guard by pulling him off-balance or holding him in place.

Resolve the Beat as a Quick Contest of melee combat skills. This works like a feint, but the initiator makes a *ST*-based skill roll. His victim may try either a DX-based skill roll to break contact or a ST-based roll to meet force with force.

If the aggressor wins, his margin of victory lowers the targeted defense like a feint would. A Beat against a weapon or a shield affects its Parry or Block, one on an unarmed guard penalizes *all* barehanded parries, and of course Beats against Dodge affect Dodge. That defense is reduced against attacks from *anyone!* There's *no effect* on other defenses. The penalty lasts until the end of the next turn of the fighter who made the Beat.

## *Ruses*

A cunning warrior can sometimes get his foe to lower his guard through clever tactics rather than deftness (a feint) or sheer power (a Beat). Such a ploy is called a *Ruse,* and calls for a Feint maneuver.

A Ruse involves a Quick Contest of combat skills, like a feint. However, it's a dirty trick (p. B405) – and like most such tricks, it's based on IQ. The trickster makes an IQ-based skill roll rather than the usual DX-based one. His opponent can choose to resist with a Per-based skill roll (which represents being wary), a standard DX-based roll (to get his weapon back in position), or his Tactics skill. Handle this as a feint for all other purposes.

## *Defensive Feints*

You can use a feint (including a Beat or a Ruse) to make it harder for your enemy to attack you instead of weakening his defenses. This is useful when your opponent is less skilled than you but has a weapon you would rather not defend against – for instance, a force sword when you're armed with a conventional blade. Roll the attempt as usual. If you win, you inflict a penalty on your foe's next attack roll against you *instead* of on his next defense roll against you.

## *Spotting Feints*

The GM *shouldn't* tell the players when an NPC makes a successful feint or Ruse against a PC. He should do everything he can to convince them that the NPC just missed. By the same token, the GM shouldn't abuse his omniscience and have NPCs flee from successful feints by PCs. By definition, the subject of a feint doesn't know he's been had! An observer who takes a Concentrate maneuver and makes a successful roll against Tactics or Body Language (to "read" one of the fighters involved) might realize what's going on . . . but this shouldn't be automatic.

One way to remove the temptation to act on gaming-table knowledge in the game is to have all combatants *declare* feints and Ruses when they execute them . . . but to *roll* the Quick Contest the instant before the attack it would affect. Treat the Quick Contest and the attack roll as a single action. Nobody can trigger a Wait in between! Nervous fighters are free to flee from every opponent who gets tricky, but they can't selectively react to *successful* feints.

On the other hand, a *failed* feint or Ruse is obvious. The same goes for *any* Beat, successful or not – this isn't a subtle maneuver!

It's possible to be ready for a feint, though. If your opponent has studied one or more styles and you have Style Familiarity (p. 49) with them *all,* you have a good idea of the kinds of tricks he's likely to try. This reduces the defense penalty by -1. As discussed under *Evaluate* (p. 100), if you're taking an Evaluate maneuver against someone who successfully feints you, your current Evaluate bonus offsets the defense penalty. These effects are cumulative, and defray offensive and defensive feints, Beats, and Ruses alike, but can never give a net *bonus*.

### *Feints Using Non-Combat Skills*

A few styles include a Style Perk that lets a skill other than a combat skill make a feint. The GM decides which skills are capable of feints, Beats, and Ruses, and what scores are used to resist these gambits. Acrobatics, Dancing, and similar skills require an ordinary DX-based roll by the one attempting the feint. His opponent resists with a standard DX-based combat skill roll. Exotic skills, on the other hand, might even involve Will or HT; e.g., a Ruse with Sex Appeal would pit the initiator's HT-based Sex Appeal skill against a *Will*-based combat skill roll by his adversary!

# Ready

The special rules for melee weapons in this chapter apply only when you have a *ready* weapon. Once you take a Ready maneuver to draw a weapon – or make a Fast-Draw roll to do the same – it stays ready until:

● *You lose it.* This happens if you deliberately drop it, throw it, or give it away; a foe uses a grab or grapple to make you drop it (see *Unarmed Combat,* p. B370); you parry a weapon heavy enough to break or knock aside your own (see *Parrying Heavy Weapons,* p. B376); an opponent successfully breaks or knocks away your weapon (see *Striking at Weapons,* p. B400); you suffer knockdown (see *Knockdown and Stunning,* p. B420); or a critical hit or critical miss disarms you (see *Critical Success and Failure,* p. B556).

● *You lose control of it.* This *may* occur if an enemy tries but fails to disarm you (p. B401), or due to a critical miss (p. B556). It *always* happens if your weapon has a "‡" in its ST statistic and you use it to attack, unless you're extremely strong (see *ST,* p. B270), or if your weapon gets stuck (see *Picks,* p. B405).

● *You put it away.* This normally takes two Ready maneuvers for a melee weapon; see p. B383.

Thus, a weapon that's ready *stays* ready until one of the above events occurs, while a weapon that's unready *stays* unready until you take a Ready maneuver to remedy the situation. Most other events in combat – being slammed, changing posture, suffering shock, etc. – have no effect on weapon readiness.

There are situations in which you might take a Ready maneuver for a *ready* weapon, though:

- *To adjust reach.* As noted under *Reach* (p. B269), if your weapon has more than one reach marked with an asterisk (*) in its Reach statistic, like a halberd, you need a Ready maneuver to select a different reach from the one you're currently using.
- *To change grips.* The "regular" grip uses the combat rules as written, and is best for most situations. The Defensive Grip (pp. 109-111) is useful when you have a dangerous enemy in front of you and no foes behind you. The Reversed Grip (pp. 111-112) is handy for close combat. Altering grip takes a Ready maneuver.
- *To change hands.* You can use some weapons (bastard swords, spears, etc.) in one hand *or* two. Most armed grappling techniques require two hands on the weapon, even if it's normally one-handed. To switch between one- and two-handed grips – or to pass a one-handed weapon from one hand to another – requires a Ready maneuver.

*Bagh-Nakh*

You can combine these three options with each other and with drawing, picking up, or regaining control of an unready weapon, except where explicitly forbidden. The entire procedure counts as a single Ready maneuver.

Generally, all of a weapon's functions are available when it's ready. There are two special cases where this isn't true but you *don't* need a Ready maneuver to restore full functionality – you just need to wait until your next turn:

*1. You can use your weapon with two different skills.* Some weapons work with more than one Melee Weapon skill. You can only enjoy the benefits of one skill per turn. You can switch skills from turn to turn, and only need a Ready to go between one- and two-handed skills; e.g., Broadsword and Two-Handed Sword. See *Switching Weapon Skills* (p. 104).

*2. Your weapon is unbalanced.* A weapon with a "U" in its Parry statistic cannot parry immediately after an attack. If you attack, you must wait until your next turn before you can parry again. See *Unbalanced Parries* (p. 125).

The rest of this discussion applies primarily to melee weapons. See *Quick-Shooting Bows* (pp. 119-120) for a special Ready-and-Attack option for archers.

## Defensive Grip

Shifting into or out of a Defensive Grip (pp. 109-111) with a melee weapon requires a Ready maneuver. This is *never* a free action – even for those with the Fast-Draw skill – but the required Ready can be simultaneous with one or more of drawing the weapon, changing its reach (if it has a "*" in its Reach statistic), regaining control after an attack (if it has a "‡" in its ST statistic), or shifting between one- and two-handed grips.

*Examples:* A fighter who swung his glaive at reach 3 could use one Ready maneuver to assume a Defensive Grip *and* reduce his reach to 2 *and* regain control of his weapon. A warrior with a broadsword could use a single Ready to unsheathe his sword directly into a Defensive Grip – but if he used Fast-Draw to get his weapon, he would still have to take a Ready to get into a Defensive Grip.

## Reversed Grip

To go from a regular grip or Defensive Grip to a Reversed Grip (pp. 111-112), or vice versa, usually takes a Ready maneuver. This maneuver can also adjust reach (in fact, assuming a Reversed Grip *automatically* reduces the reach of most weapons) and switch between one- and two-handed grips. You can't use the same Ready to recover after an attack; that requires its own Ready maneuver. You *can* draw a sheathed weapon directly into a Reversed Grip, though.

There are techniques for shifting back and forth between a normal grip (but *not* a Defensive Grip) and a Reversed Grip *without* a Ready, but these are risky. To attempt a rapid grip change, make a weapon skill roll at -4 for a two-handed weapon, -6 for a one-handed one. *Exception:* A tonfa (p. 225) has a side handle specifically designed to allow this grip change, permitting a roll at unpenalized Tonfa skill.

Success means an immediate grip change, allowing you to take your turn normally. Your weapon must remain in the chosen grip for the remainder of your turn; you cannot change grips again.

Failure means you drop your weapon. Critical failure means you inflict Tip Slash (p. 113) damage on your torso and *then* drop your weapon! Any failure counts as an unsuccessful Ready maneuver and ends your turn.

### Quick Sheathing

Being in a Reversed Grip makes a special Ready option available: you can scabbard your weapon in *one* turn instead of the usual two (p. B383). This is because one of the more common ways to sheathe a weapon involves assuming a Reversed Grip – and you've already done that! (The other way is to hold the weapon normally and take one turn to align it with its scabbard, another to sheathe it. This keeps your weapon in the more versatile normal grip should you need it during that first turn.)

If you have a Style Perk that enables you to use Fast-Draw to sheathe your weapon quickly, you *can* use it from a Reversed Grip. This lets you Ready to a Reversed Grip and attempt a Fast-Draw roll afterward to scabbard your weapon in one turn. If you make the skill roll for a rapid grip change followed by a Fast-Draw roll, you can sheathe your weapon *instantly.* See *Iaijutsu* (p. 174) for a style that offers this perk.

## *Multiple Fast-Draw*

A successful Fast-Draw roll lets you ready a stowed weapon instantly, without taking a Ready maneuver; see *Fast-Draw* (p. B194). Realistically, this takes *some* time. Skill imposes a limit on how many weapons you can draw and still act.

Every turn, you may Fast-Draw *one* weapon per hand at no penalty – although draws with the "off" hand have the usual -4. If you give away or willingly discard a weapon, or hurl a throwing weapon – but *not* if you fail a Fast-Draw roll or lose a weapon on a critical miss – you may make further Fast-Draw attempts later on your turn. Repeated attempts with a given hand are at a cumulative -2 per Fast-Draw roll after the first. For instance, a fencer could Fast-Draw a rapier with his master hand at no penalty and a dagger with his off hand at -4; however, he would have -2 if he cast aside his rapier and attempted to Fast-Draw a pistol and -6 if he pitched his dagger and tried to Fast-Draw another.

Two-handed Fast-Draw attempts count against the total for *both* hands. For instance, if a swordsman uses Fast-Draw to ready a greatsword with two hands and then discards it, he's at -2 to try another Fast-Draw with either hand.

Similarly, two-handed Fast-Draw attempts use the *worst* penalty accrued for either hand involved. If our swordsman Fast-Draws and hurls a knife using his right hand, he's at -2 to Fast-Draw his greatsword, even though he hasn't tried Fast-Draw with his left hand.

It's possible to Fast-Draw multiple, identical weapons *at once* for the purpose of *Rapid Strike with Thrown Weapons* (pp. 120-121) or Dual-Weapon Attack (Bow). The weapons must weigh less than 1 lb. and be worn in a way that lets you reach them all with one hand. Make a single roll at -2 per weapon. For the sake of future Fast-Draw rolls, this counts as one previous attempt *per weapon*. For instance, Fast-Draw (Knife) would be at -8 for four daggers at once, and an ensuing Fast-Draw (Sword) roll to draw a rapier with that hand would have -8 for four previous Fast-Draws.

Success and failure have their usual effects in all cases. Any failure ends your turn; no further Fast-Draw attempts are possible. Critical failure means you also drop the weapon – or *all* the weapons, if drawing multiple weapons simultaneously!

Heroic Archers and Weapon Masters may halve all multiple Fast-Draw penalties for weapons covered by their advantage. If *both* advantages apply, divide by 4 (round in the warrior's favor).

## *Fast-Draw from Odd Positions*

The Fast-Draw skill assumes that you're standing still with nobody holding onto you, able to use your master hand to reach your weapon. In close combat and other cramped quarters, you must make a DX roll to *reach* a weapon before you can Fast-Draw it (see *Readying in Close Combat*, p. B391). For added realism, apply the following modifiers to Fast-Draw rolls and DX rolls to reach weapons:

Crawling or lying down: -4
Crouching, kneeling, or sitting: -2
Grappled: -4
Hanging upside down: -2
Move or Move and Attack: -2 during or after the maneuver
Off-hand: -4

The weapon's *location* is another important modifier, the effects of which depend on the weapon and Fast-Draw specialty:

## Who Draws First?

A staple of martial-arts drama is the standoff between two warriors who suddenly draw weapons and attack each other. Who draws first – and consequently gets the first strike – is crucial here!

If combat is in progress, resolve the situation using the turn sequence (p. B363). The faster fighter takes his turn first. If his weapon is ready, or if he can Fast-Draw it, he gets the first attack. If he must take a Ready maneuver, his turn ends. Then the slower fighter takes his turn. If he has a weapon ready – or can Fast-Draw one – *he* gets the first attack. If he, too, must take a Ready maneuver, it's the faster fighter's turn again . . .

If combat *isn't* in progress, use the following rules:

● *Neither fighter has a ready weapon; one knows Fast-Draw, the other does not.* The fighter with Fast-Draw may roll against his skill. If he succeeds, he strikes first. If he fails, resolve this as a standoff between two fighters, neither of whom knows Fast-Draw (below). If he *critically* fails, he throws away his weapon and his foe strikes first!

● *Neither fighter has a ready weapon;* ***both*** *or* ***neither*** *know Fast-Draw.* Roll a Quick Contest. Use *Fast-Draw* skill if both fighters have it, *weapon* skill if neither does (or if one does but failed his attempt). The winner strikes first. In a tie, they attack simultaneously; they may dodge or block, but not parry! Regardless of the skill used, apply the modifiers under *Fast-Draw from Odd Positions*, plus these special modifiers:

*Grease:* A greased scabbard gives +1 here, but the greasy weapon gives -1 to weapon skill on *later* rolls.

*Hand on Weapon:* A fighter with a hand already on his weapon adds +4. Both fighters can claim this bonus!

*Length:* The fighter with the *longer* weapon has -1 (his weapon takes longer to clear its scabbard).

*Weight:* The fighter with the *heavier* weapon has -1 unless he has at least 1.5 times the required ST for the weapon.

● *One fighter has a ready weapon; his opponent knows Fast-Draw.* Roll a Quick Contest. The ready fighter uses weapon skill; his only modifier is +1 if he has Combat Reflexes. The unready fighter uses Fast-Draw skill modified as for a Quick Contest of Fast-Draw (above), with an additional *-10!* The winner strikes first. In a tie, the fighter with the ready weapon strikes first.

● *One fighter has a ready weapon; his opponent lacks Fast-Draw.* The fighter with the ready weapon strikes first.

*Arrow:* +1 if stuck in the ground at your feet, +0 if in a quiver, or -2 if thrust through a belt. If you have multiple types of arrows, roll randomly for the type drawn. Attempts to draw a specific type of arrow suffer an *extra* -2.

*Flexible:* +0 if properly coiled and hanging at your belt, but -2 if worn *as* a belt or otherwise wrapped around your body.

*Force Sword:* +0 if hanging at your hip, -1 if hanging anywhere else, -2 if protruding from a boot*, or -3 if in a pocket or otherwise concealed.

*Knife:* +0 if sheathed at your hip or (darts only) in a quiver, -1 if sheathed elsewhere (bandolier, wrist, handle-down on chest†, etc.), -2 if carried in a boot* or thrust through a belt without a sheath, -3 if in a pocket or concealed, or -5 if carried in your teeth (and critical failure means you inflict normal cutting damage to your face!).

*Shuriken:* +0 if carried on pegs on armor or in a pouch, but -3 if carried any other way (in a pocket, up a sleeve, concealed in a belt buckle, etc.).

*Sword:* +0 if sheathed at your hip on the side *opposite* your weapon hand, or over either shoulder; -1 if sheathed at your hip on the *same* side as your sword hand, but +0 if you draw into a Reversed Grip (pp. 111-112). Add -2 if you lack a proper scabbard (e.g., a sword thrust through a belt). A sword cane or sheathed sword carried in hand gives +0.

*Tonfa:* +0 if carried in a loop at your hip on the *same* side as your weapon hand, -1 if in a loop on the *opposite* side, or -2 if carried in any other way.

*Two-Handed Sword:* +0 if worn over either shoulder in a proper back sling, or carried in hand but sheathed and resting on a shoulder; -2 if slung any other way.

* A weapon in a boot is *easier* to reach from low postures: when crouching, kneeling, or sitting, ignore the -2 for a weapon in a boot *and* the -2 for posture, and roll at +0.

† A knife carried handle-down on the chest gets -1 to Fast-Draw, but gives *+1* to DX rolls to reach the weapon in close combat and lets you ignore the -2 for hanging upside down.

All of these modifiers are cumulative with each other and those under *Multiple Fast-Draw* (above). Shock, distraction, and afflictions have the same effect on Fast-Draw rolls and DX rolls to reach weapons as they do on attack rolls.

## *Quick-Readying Nearby Weapons*

Readying a weapon from the ground normally takes *two* Ready maneuvers: one to kneel or crouch and grab it, one to prepare it for combat. Assuming a low posture at the start of your first turn counts as a "step"; so does standing up at the end of your second turn. However, you can try a showy Ready maneuver that lets you grab and ready a weapon in *one* second. This requires a DX or Fast-Draw roll, at -3 if you crouch first or -5 if you use a foot to flip the weapon into your hand while standing.

Likewise, it takes two Ready maneuvers to fetch a weapon from a table or a weapon rack: one to grab it (and possibly release it from the rack), one to prepare it for fighting. You can remain standing, though; you needn't crouch. In this case, readying the weapon with a single Ready maneuver requires a DX or Fast-Draw roll at -3. Use this rule for a sword stuck point-down in the ground, too – but the modifier is -3 from horseback and only -1 on foot.

In all cases, success means you ready the weapon in one second (never instantly, even with Fast-Draw). Failure means you don't grasp the weapon and waste your entire turn clutching at air. Critical failure means you knock the weapon 1d yards away in a random direction. On an 18, you instead grab a blade or spike, or smash your hand into the floor, wall, or table. Roll thrust damage to your hand – or to your *face,* if flipping a weapon with your foot! This is cutting for a blade, crushing otherwise. If grabbing a sword stuck in the ground, it's the *sword* that's damaged – the tip snaps off, turning its impaling attack into a crushing one.

## *Switching Weapon Skills*

Many weapons work with more than one combat skill. If you must change the number of hands involved in order to change skills, switching skills requires a Ready maneuver. This includes preparing a two-handed missile weapon, like a bow, for use as an improvised one-handed club.

If you can change skills *without* changing the number of hands involved, though, you can simply specify which skill you're using as a free action at the *start* of your turn. This doesn't require a Ready maneuver. However, it compels you to use your level with that skill and the statistics listed under that skill on the weapon table, and limits you to techniques and options valid for that skill. At the start of your next turn, you can specify a different skill.

*Example:* A warrior with a spear can wield it one-handed using Thrown Weapon (Spear), one- *or* two-handed with Spear, or two-handed with Staff. If he has it ready for throwing in one hand and a foe steps into melee range, he can simply declare he's using Spear instead of Thrown Weapon at the start of his next turn. If he wants to switch to a two-handed Spear grip for better thrusting damage, he'll need a Ready maneuver. Once his spear is in that grip, he can choose to use it with either Spear or Staff at the *start* of each turn. Spear allows him to stab with the tip but he must parry using Spear. Staff gives him +2 to Parry but limits him to Staff techniques, crushing damage, etc.

# Move

Outside of pure ground-fighting styles, martial-arts masters laud the virtues of mobility. An extra point of Basic Move or one less level of encumbrance can mean the difference between life and death. This is why fighters in training often run as much for speed as for endurance, and why even warriors who face dangerous weapons might enter battle in light armor or *no* armor.

To give high-Move martial artists a realistic advantage, the GM should consider using *Movement in Tactical Combat* (p. B386) for the Move maneuver even when not playing out combat on a battle map. Tell the players how far apart the combatants are and strictly enforce movement point costs for facing, posture, footing, etc. This makes "closing the gap" with a foe wielding a ranged weapon – or fleeing from a losing battle – as dramatic as landing and avoiding blows.

Of course, Move is mainly for going from A to B. It's nearly always more effective to close the gap by selecting All-Out Defense (Increased Dodge) to travel at half Move and receive a Dodge bonus, or by taking Move and Attack to run at full speed and launch an attack. The GM should make the players aware of these tactical options and keep track of movement point costs for them as well.

Finally, in a cinematic ***Martial Arts*** game, heroes are as likely to move by jumping as by running. A Move maneuver lets a fighter jump from a standing start or run any distance up to his current Move and *then* jump. See *Jumping* (p. B352) for rules. To save time in play, calculate high- and broad-jump distances – for both standing and running jumps – and record the full values and halved values for combat on the character sheet. Some additional flashy movement options appear below.

## *Acrobatic Movement*

***Martial Arts*** campaigns often feature *capoeiristas,* ninja, and dashing swordsmen who move acrobatically in combat to avoid obstacles and surprise enemies. Below are some classic stunts for use during a Move maneuver. After attempting any of these, your *next* dodge (only) is automatically an Acrobatic Dodge (p. B375), whether or not you used the Acrobatics skill: you dodge at +2 if your feat succeeded but at -2 if it failed.

These options are flamboyant but risky, and obey the laws of physics – which makes them plausible in a realistic campaign. For over-the-top cinematic action, see *Chambara Fighting* (pp. 128-130). For acrobatic versions of the Change Posture and Feint maneuvers, see *Acrobatic Stand* (p. 98) and *Feints Using Non-Combat Skills* (p. 101), respectively.

### Banister Sliding

Roll against the better of DX-2 or Acrobatics-2 to slide down a banister at Move 5, regardless of your Move score. This assumes a sitting posture. Roll against Acrobatics-8 if you're standing up! In either case, you can slide until you run out of banister, but you must make this roll once per turn.

Failure means you slip off and land standing on the stairs at a random point along your path; the GM can roll dice or simply choose a spot. Critical failure means you *fall* off at a random point, pitch headfirst down the stairs, and suffer a collision with the ground at Move 5 – or at Move 7, if you were standing. If the banister had open air on one side, roll 1d on a critical failure. On 1-3, you fall down the stairs as usual; on 4-6, you go *over* the railing and suffer falling damage!

### Evading

You may substitute Acrobatics for DX when evading during a Move maneuver (see *Evading,* p. B368). Specify what you're doing: tumbling between your foe's legs, rolling over his shoulder, etc.

If your high-jump distance – with any bonus for running but *halved* for use in combat – exceeds your opponent's height, you can try to evade by leaping over him. In this case, use Jumping in place of DX.

In either case, if you win the Quick Contest, you evade and can continue moving. If you tie, your foe stops you. But if you *lose,* you fail to evade and take +1 damage if your foe manages to hit you before your next turn – you leapt right into his attack!

### Skidding

To skid across slippery ground, you must have moved toward it last turn. Make a DX or DX-based Skating roll at the surface's combat penalty for bad footing – usually -2 (p. B547) – each turn. You may kneel or go prone as a free action without affecting speed. On the first turn of skidding, success lets you slide the distance you moved toward the slick area last turn; on later turns, you travel half as far as on the previous turn (round down). This is *instead* of running as described in *Bad Footing* (p. B387). Failure means you fall if standing, stop otherwise. Critical failure means you wipe out and collide with the ground (see *Immovable Objects,* p. B431).

### Spinning

If you use more than half your movement points, you may normally change facing by only one hex-side (see *Facing Changes,* p. B387). To spin to face *any* direction at the end of your turn, make an Acrobatics or DX-based Running roll with the speed penalty for the distance you moved that turn. Consult the table on p. B550; e.g., Move 5 gives -2. Failure means you end up facing a random direction; roll 1d. Critical failure means you fall down.

You can also spin at the end of a skid. To do so, roll as explained under *Skidding* (above) *instead,* but apply the speed penalty for spinning to the die roll. Failure and critical failure are as for skidding.

### Swinging

You can swing from any rope, chandelier, etc., strong enough to support your weight (GM's decision). If it's within reach or you can reach it with a step, simply grab it and swing. If it's more than a yard above you, roll vs. Jumping to reach it. Failure means you waste your turn jumping and missing; critical failure means you fall down.

The object's length determines how far you can swing. Regardless of its true length, its *effective* length can't exceed the distance from its suspension point to the ground. You can swing a distance of up to 3/4 of length in any direction from an object hanging vertically. If it's roughly 45° off-vertical, like a tied curtain, you can swing twice as far but your path must follow the imaginary line through your starting position and the place where the object *would* hang vertically. You can veer up to 10% of swinging distance (minimum a yard) to either side to avoid obstacles.

## *Dealing with Charging Foes*

The surest counter to a charge is a stop thrust (see *Wait,* p. B366): Wait, and then make a thrusting attack against an enemy who tries to close with you. You'll get a damage bonus for his movement. He can defend, but he can't *retreat* if he moved more than a step toward you.

Below are other options. These make life hard for *chambara* and *wuxia* fighters, and don't especially suit *cinematic* games.

### Parry

You can use a ready melee weapon to parry a grab, grapple, slam (including a pounce or flying tackle), or any other unarmed attack at no special penalty *as* your attacker enters close combat. Effective "weapon weight" is ST/10 lbs. if he grabs or grapples, ST lbs. otherwise.

If you succeed, roll against weapon skill to injure your foe (at -4 if he used Judo or Karate). If your weapon can only thrust, success inflicts thrusting damage; otherwise, use swinging damage. This counts as a parry, not an attack.

See also *Parrying Heavy Weapons* and *Parrying Unarmed Attacks* (p. B376).

### Obstruction

If someone tries to evade you from the front (see *Evading,* p. B368) and you have a melee weapon that can parry, you may roll against weapon skill instead of DX in the Contest. You keep him from evading if you win or tie – but if you *win,* you use your weapon to stop him! This counts as a parry with that weapon. Find damage as for *Parry,* above, and then halve it (round down).

### Holding a Foe at Bay

If a stop thrust, parry, or obstruction attempt results in knockdown (p. B420), your foe falls, stunned. His turn ends. If it causes knockback (p. B378), he must use additional movement to close the gap. He might not be able to reach you; he could even fall down!

Even if neither knockback nor knockdown occurs, your weapon is in the way. If you inflicted injury with anything but a thrusting, impaling weapon – or if you rolled damage but didn't penetrate DR – your foe must *win* a Quick Contest of ST with you to get closer. Otherwise, you hold him off. To keep coming, he must use two movement points to sidestep and take a different path.

If you wounded your foe with a thrusting, impaling weapon, it's *inside* him. He can still spend two movement points to back off and change paths. Alternatively, he can try a Will-3 roll – at +3 for High Pain Threshold or -4 for Low Pain Threshold – to run himself through! Success increases his wound to the maximum possible injury from your original blow. Then find maximum damage for *your* weapon using *his* thrust score. If this exceeds the DR on his back, he can keep moving toward you and your weapon is considered stuck (see *Picks,* p. B405).

*Example:* Tiberius runs 4 yards toward Rufus, who stop thrusts with his spear. Rufus' damage is 1d+3, +2 for the charge, for 1d+5. He rolls 8 points of damage, which pierces Tiberius' DR 5 armor and inflicts 6 points of injury. Tiberius makes a Will-3 roll and pushes forward. Rufus' maximum damage was 11, which would inflict *12* points of injury. Tiberius loses 6 more HP. Tiberius has ST 13. A spear in his hands would do 1d+3. Maximum damage is 9. This exceeds DR 5, so the spear comes out his back as he moves in!

To execute the swing, make an Acrobatics roll at the speed penalty for the distance traveled (see p. B550). Apply a further -2 if swinging by the legs. Success lets you swing and hop off at any point along your path. Failure means you miscalculate and swing to a random point on the path – roll dice or the GM chooses. On a critical failure, you *fall* at a random location and suffer a collision with the ground; velocity equals the maximum distance you could have swung.

### Tic-Tacs

A "tic-tac" is a running leap at a vertical surface, followed by a foot plant and shove to propel you up and away. This requires a roll against the better of Acrobatics-4 or Jumping-4. Success gives you height equal to 1/4 your running *broad* jump distance (p. B352) and lets you rebound the same distance horizontally. Halve distances in combat. Failure means a fall from the same height; critical failure inflicts maximum falling damage.

If this moves you into contact with another surface (e.g., a parallel wall), you can push off again. Use the same rules but roll at an extra -2. The "run" for calculating distance is the horizontal distance from your last tic-tac (in yards, rounded down). You can keep bouncing – at -2 per tic-tac – until you stop short of a wall *or* gain height equal to Basic Move/2 yards.

Once you stop, you can try anything allowed after acrobatic movement, including an Acrobatic Attack (p. 107). You may try to clear an obstacle, if you're high enough; see *Vaulting and Diving* (p. 107). In either case, apply the cumulative penalty for tic-tacs if that would be worse than the usual modifier for movement.

*Example:* David has Basic Move 6. He runs 4 yards and pushes off the wall of an alleyway with an Acrobatics-4 roll. Broad jump distance is (2 × Basic Move) - 3 feet, but he adds 4 to Basic Move for his run, giving 17'. He flies 17'/4 = 4.25' (1.4 yards) horizontally and gains 4.25' of height. He hits the far wall, 3' away, and jumps again. His running start is only 1 yard from his previous tic-tac. The roll is Acrobatics-6. He succeeds. This gives 11', which launches him 11'/4 = 2.75' (0.9 yard) across the alley – not far enough for a third tic-tac – and gives him 2.75' more height, or 7' total. He can now dive for a vent that's 6' off the ground. He makes an Acrobatics-6 roll and slips through.

### Tumbling

You may attempt to cartwheel, roll, or otherwise tumble across level ground at full Move. Make an unmodified Acrobatics roll. On a success, anyone who makes a ranged attack on you must add your Move to range, contrary to *Ranged Attacks on Human Targets* (p. B373). Failure means you only get half your Move and no special benefits. Critical failure means you *fall down* and go nowhere!

### Vaulting and Diving

Anybody can crawl under a table, clamber over the hood of a car, etc., in two turns, as explained under *Jumping During Combat* (p. B352). To bypass such an obstacle without stopping, you must run at least two yards toward it to build momentum, have one or more movement point left, and attempt an Acrobatics roll. This roll is at -4 to dive through a window, or to tuck and roll between a high obstacle and a low one, such as two pipes or laser beams.

Success means you tumble under, vault over, or dive past the obstacle. This costs one movement point – but if you have any movement left, you can keep moving. You *can* try this stunt again on the same turn, but at a cumulative -2 per attempt after the first.

Failure means you fall down under or atop the obstacle but manage to avoid collision damage. Of course, falling "onto" flame or deadly lasers still hurts! Critical failure means you collide with the barrier, suffer collision damage (see *Collisions and Falls,* p. B430) if it's solid, and end your turn lying down in front of it.

## Move and Attack

You can use this maneuver with *any* melee attack – bite, grapple, kick, shield bash, etc. – not just a strike with an empty hand or a melee weapon. If your attack delivers *thrusting* damage, you may substitute slam damage (HP × velocity/100), if that would be better. For instance, a centaur with ST 18, HP 18, and Move 12 thrusts for 1d+2 but slams for 2d, so her Move and Attack with a spear (thr+3 imp) would inflict 2d+3 imp.

For extra realism, modify the defense limitations on Move and Attack as follows:

*Active Defense:* If you attacked using an arm, you cannot use *that arm* to parry (if the attack involved a fist, elbow, or weapon) or block (if you used a shield or cloak). If you used any other body part (foot, head, knee, mouth, shin, etc.) to attack, you cannot dodge. You can use any other defense, but you cannot retreat. These restrictions take effect *after* you make your attack roll. If someone uses a Wait to interrupt your maneuver before then, you may defend normally and then finish your maneuver.

The GM should consider extending the -2 for "trying to do two things at once" to *all* success rolls except defense and resistance rolls against enemy attacks. For instance, it would modify DX rolls to evade or to keep someone from evading *you* (see *Evading,* p. B368), Fast-Draw rolls, rolls to stay standing after suffering knockback (see *Knockback,* p. B378), and Sense rolls to notice something in combat.

Most melee attack options (e.g., hit location) are compatible with Move and Attack. Assess penalties for these *before* applying the effective skill limit of 9. Rapid Strike and Combinations *aren't* allowed, however. Neither is Deceptive Attack, unless you're making an attack that removes the skill cap (such as a slam or a cinematic technique like Flying Jump Kick), as it requires a final effective skill of at least 10. Certain uses of extra effort in combat are also forbidden, including Flurry of Blows, Mighty Blows, and Giant Step.

This maneuver is unfavorable in *realistic* melee combat due to its penalties and limits. In *cinematic* games, special techniques exist that make it more attractive.

### *Acrobatic Attack*

You can use any of the special tricks described under *Acrobatic Movement* (pp. 105-106) as the movement portion of a Move and Attack. The benefits and drawbacks of Move and Attack "stack" with those of your acrobatic feat. You have an additional -2 on both your attack roll *and* any roll required to pull off the stunt – the price of doing two things at once!

*Example:* Manfred wishes to swing 10 yards on a rope and cut down one of the Black Duke's bodyguards with his saber as he passes. Consulting *Swinging* (pp. 105-106), he sees that a 10-yard swing requires an Acrobatics roll at -4, which becomes -6 with the extra -2 for an Acrobatic Attack. His attack has the usual -4 for Move and Attack, plus another -2 for his stunt; it, too, is at -6. Since this is a Move and Attack, Manfred's adjusted attack roll cannot exceed 9, and he cannot parry or retreat afterward . . . and thanks to his swing, his next dodge counts as an Acrobatic Dodge, but he could end up in the wrong spot or even fall down.

When creating a technique based on Acrobatic Attack, you must specify the particular acrobatic movement option it uses. Its basic default is -6: -4 for Move and Attack plus an extra -2 for Acrobatic Attack. Add an extra -1 to ignore the skill cap of 9. Remember that all rolls for the movement portion of the technique are at -2.

### *Flying Attack*

Somewhat less risky than an Acrobatic Attack is a Flying Attack: a Move and Attack with a jump for extra distance (*not* to avoid an obstacle, evade a foe, etc.) just before the attack. You must run, then jump, and *then* attack. You cannot change the order; you need an uninterrupted run to build momentum for the jump, and a successful jump to attack.

First, run as far as you plan to. This can be any distance up to your full Move. In fact, this option gives little benefit *unless* you run your full Move!

Next, make a running broad jump. This requires a DX or Jumping roll. Success gives extra movement equal to your jumping distance at the end of your run. Add the bonus for running, but *halve* the final distance for jumping in combat. Your jump carries you in the direction you were running. Failure means you fall down and you turn ends; you cannot attack. See *Jumping* (p. B352) for details.

Finally, launch your attack. You can attack anyone you can reach from your landing point. This is at -5 instead of the usual -4 for Move and Attack. The usual restrictions on Move and Attack still apply, such as the maximum adjusted skill of 9.

Many cinematic techniques are Flying Attacks. These often time the jump to improve damage, and focus so sharply on offense that they lack the usual skill cap on Move and Attack. See *Creating New Techniques* (pp. 89-95) to learn how to design techniques like this. Such moves have dire consequences if they fail, though – the attacker is so committed to attacking that he needs a successful hit to brake! For an example, see *Flying Jump Kick or Flying Lunge* (pp. 83-84).

# Wait

Wait requires you to name a particular event and declare your response in advance. The *event* can be as general or as specific as you wish. You could specify, "I'll Attack Otto with my rapier if he steps into reach on my right and utters so much as one word." However, it would be equally legitimate to declare, "I'll Attack Otto with my rapier if he steps into reach," or, "I'll use my rapier to Attack the first enemy who steps into reach."

Your *response* must be more specific. You must name the maneuver and weapon you plan to use; e.g., "I'll Attack with my main-gauche" or "I'll All-Out Attack (Strong) with my rapier." You don't have to name particular combat options or techniques, though; you can decide these when you act. For instance, when you Attack with your rapier, you could choose to disarm, stab to the vitals, make a Rapid Strike, etc.

The new maneuvers Committed Attack (pp. 99-100) and Defensive Attack (p. 100) are both valid responses. If you choose Committed Attack, you must specify in advance whether it will be Determined or Strong.

## *Stop Hits*

It has often been in vogue among swordsmen to attack an opponent *as* he attacks or prepares to attack, the idea being to stop his blow and hit him while he's committed to attacking. There are many variations on this tactic, known as "attack on preparation," "stop cut," "stop thrust," and "time thrust." Such gambits aren't limited to swordplay; Bruce Lee (pp. 24-25) was an advocate of the "intercepting fist." For game purposes, the collective term for these moves is Stop Hit – if only to distinguish them from the "stop thrust" on p. B366.

To try a Stop Hit, take a Wait and declare that you intend to attack your foe. Instead of simply attacking *first,* which allows him to parry and continue with his attack, you attack into his attack in an effort to hit him while he's on the offensive and less able to defend. Since *you're* on the offensive, too, this is a gamble: your skill against his.

You and your opponent both roll to hit normally. If you both miss, nothing happens. If one of you hits and the other doesn't, the struck fighter defends at -1 . . . or at -3 if he tries to parry with the weapon he used to attack. If you *both* hit, the one with the largest margin of success defends normally while the other has the penalty above – but in a tie, you *both* suffer this penalty!

You can do this with an unbalanced weapon (one with a "U" in its Parry statistic) or even one that becomes unready after an attack – and if you do, you *can* try to parry your foe's weapon. This is because your Stop Hit and parry are a single move, not two distinct actions. You cannot parry after your Stop Hit, however.

See *Counterattack* (p. 70) and *Riposte* (pp. 124-125) for two related ways to take advantage of an attacker.

## *Cascading Waits*

When multiple fighters trigger Wait maneuvers simultaneously – or nearly so – it's crucial to know *who goes first.* This can arise in many situations, the most common of which are:

- One combatant's actions trigger another's Wait, his response triggers *somebody else's* Wait . . . and so on.
- Two or more fighters with Waits wish to attack one another.
- More than one person with a Wait wishes to affect the same target (grab an object, count coup, etc.).

The GM *could* rule, "He who shouts first, acts first," but that would be unfair to timid players who play aggressive fighters. This is a roleplaying game, after all! Below is a fairer method.

> *A good martial artist does not become tense – but ready. Not thinking, yet not dreaming. Ready for whatever may come.*
>
> *– Bruce Lee*

First, determine which of the waiting parties wishes to commit to action immediately. The *only* choices here – for PC and NPC alike – are "I proceed" or "I continue to wait." No qualifiers are allowed!

Then roll a Quick Contest. Each fighter rolls against the score he intends to use: DX to grab an object or activate a simple control (e.g., press a button), a combat skill to attack, a DX-based roll against a technical skill to operate complex controls quickly, etc. Not everyone needs to use the same kind of skill. For instance, if one convict is trying to stab another, his would-be target is so close that he can grab the knife, and a guard is standing by a button that will close a door between the prisoners – and all three have a Wait – the first would make a Knife roll, the second, a Wrestling roll, and the third, a DX roll.

*Modifiers:* +1 for Combat Reflexes; a bonus equal to Basic Speed (drop all fractions); +2 for fighters who needn't move at all, +0 for those who need only take a single step, or -1 per yard of distance for those who must move further (to All-Out Attack).

Those who succeed act in order of decreasing margin of success, then those who fail act in order of increasing margin of failure. Tied fighters act truly simultaneously; if they attack one another, they cannot parry with the weapons they're using to attack! If a faster fighter's action renders that of a slower fighter impossible, the slower one loses his action (and his Wait).

If, at any time during the sequence of actions determined by this Quick Contest, the conditions become right to trigger the Wait of a previously uninvolved fighter, he can try to interrupt – but this isn't automatic! He rolls exactly as above, but with an extra -2 for jumping in late. He enters the sequence where his margin of success or failure indicates. If this is before the person he's trying to interrupt, he successfully interrupts him. If not, he just has to wait and risk losing his action if it becomes impossible.

*Enhanced Time Sense:* If one or more of those involved has the Enhanced Time Sense advantage (p. B52), resolve their actions first using the method above. Then settle things for those without this trait. Individuals with ETS and a Wait can interrupt those who lack ETS at *any* time.

# Additional Combat Options

A "combat option" is a tactic that a fighter can use in conjunction with more than one maneuver (e.g., *Deceptive Attack,* p. B369) or active defense (e.g., *Retreat,* p. B377). It doesn't *necessarily* have any connection to specific techniques; then again, it might form the basis of a technique or be available only when performing certain techniques. The GM chooses the options allowed in his campaign. They can spice up combat by giving warriors more choices . . . but the modifiers and conditions they add can also slow down combat, which is a steep price to pay in a cinematic game.

## Melee Attack Options

These options apply only in melee combat. Most specifically affect unarmed or melee weapon *attacks* made as part of an All-Out Attack, Attack, Committed Attack, Defensive Attack, or Move and Attack maneuver, or feints made during these maneuvers or a Feint maneuver. A few options – notably *Defensive Grip* (see below) and *Reversed Grip* (p. 111-112) – also have effects on other maneuvers or on active defenses.

### *Combinations*

Martial artists can learn a class of multiple-attack techniques called "Combinations" (p. 80). These constitute a special case of Rapid Strike (p. B370), which makes them compatible with All-Out Attack, Attack, Committed Attack, and Defensive Attack, but *not* with Move and Attack. The chosen maneuver modifies all applicable elements of the Combination: All-Out Attack (Strong) gives +2 damage with all strikes, Committed Attack (Determined) gives +2 to hit with all attacks, and so on.

Regardless of skill or speed, a fighter can use only *one* Combination per maneuver. If he does, he can't execute a Rapid Strike or Dual-Weapon Attack (p. B417) as part of the same maneuver. For more on the interaction between rules that let a warrior use a single maneuver to attack more than once, see *Multiple Attacks* (pp. 126-128).

A feint at the end of the maneuver immediately previous to the one that delivers the Combination lowers the target's defenses against the whole thing. The same is true for the feint portion of All-Out Attack (Feint) when the ensuing attack is a Combination. If using *Riposte* (pp. 124-125), a Combination counts as a single attack. The target's defense reduction applies against all parts of it, but note that only *one* active defense suffers the full penalty and it generally takes more than one defense to stop a Combination.

Any or all parts of a Combination can be Deceptive Attacks (p. B369) or Telegraphic Attacks (p. 113). These options modify the attack and defense rolls to resolve the affected portion(s) of the technique only. A fighter *can* mix and match; for instance, he could start a three-attack Combination with a Deceptive Attack, follow with an unmodified attack, and then finish with a Telegraphic Attack.

The viability of each attack after the first in a Combination depends on how well the preceding attacks do. If the attacker misses with one of these – or if his foe makes a successful active defense against it – his target gets +3 on rolls to avoid the remainder of the Combination. This bonus applies equally to active defenses and to rolls against ST, DX, or skill for attacks that use Quick Contests.

If a later attack requires a successful earlier attack to proceed, the "setup" *must* work for the fighter to attempt the "follow-up"! If it doesn't – for whatever reason – the rest of the Combination is forfeit. Common situations include:

- *Attacks with limited reach.* If a Combination involves an attack with fixed reach, that attack can only work if the preceding ones leave the target in range. In particular, if a close-combat strike like a punch or a Knee Strike follows an attack that hurls the victim one or more yards away – most often a shove, throw, or strike that inflicts knockback – the Combination ends if the attacker can't step to deliver the short-ranged attack.
- *Holds, locks, throws, and disarms using grappling skills.* Combinations that include such attacks *require* a successful grab or grapple, and cannot proceed without it.
- *Strikes that require a prone target.* A Combination that directs a Knee Drop, Stamp Kick, or similar attack against the target's upper body can only proceed if an earlier attack puts the victim on the ground. It might specifically set up such a move using a throw, takedown, or Sweep . . . but many realistic Combinations end with a strike like this on the off chance that an earlier blow knocks down the target by pushing him off-balance (see *Knockback,* p. B378) or injuring him (see *Knockdown and Stunning,* p. B420).

A Combination doesn't preclude movement by the attacker. He may make full use of any movement his maneuver permits. He can intersperse this between the elements of his Combination however he sees fit, although some maneuvers limit his options (e.g., All-Out Attack allows only *forward* movement). He needn't specify this when he learns his technique, as realistic Combinations take into account that some movement is inevitable in combat. This freedom doesn't extend to the order of *attacks,* which is always fixed.

The target may retreat after any element of the Combination, gaining a bonus to his active defenses against that attack and all that follow. This is gradual movement – not a sudden lurch, like knockback – and *doesn't* take him out of reach of the remaining attacks. Treat the distance between attacker and defender as constant unless the attacker steps or the defender suffers knockback, a throw, etc. If using tactical combat, move a retreating defender back a hex only after resolving the effects of the entire Combination.

### *Defensive Grip*

A fighter with at least two hands and a one- or two-handed melee weapon can use a "strong" two-handed grip that sacrifices side-to-side movement for frontal defense. To assume or relinquish a Defensive Grip requires a Ready maneuver (see *Ready,* p. 101-104).

# A Matter of Inches

These rules address minute differences between melee weapons. They're *highly* optional. Use them only if you want subtle distinctions influencing your battles!

## *Swing vs. Thrust*

Swung weapons enjoy superior damage because they take extra time to apply ST through a long arc, increasing momentum. This makes swings slower than thrusts. When using *Who Draws First?* (p. 103) and *Cascading Waits* (p. 108), combatants must declare in advance whether they plan to thrust or swing. Those who intend to swing get -1 in these Quick Contests. When using *Stop Hits* (p. 108), fighters making swings subtract 1 from their margin of success to see who gets the defense penalty.

## *Weapon Weight*

A weapon's weight and balance affect reaction time in two ways.

*Relative Weapon Weight:* How heavy the weapon feels. When using *Who Draws First?, Cascading Waits,* or *Stop Hits,* each fighter has a modifier for his weapon:

User's ST under weapon's ST statistic: -1 per point of difference
Bare hands: +2 (or +0; see below)
User's ST at least 1.5 times weapon's ST statistic: +1
User's ST at least twice weapon's ST statistic: +2
User's ST three or more times weapon's ST statistic: +3
Unbalanced weapon ("U" in its Parry statistic): -1

Apply this to the Quick Contest or margin of success just like the swing penalty in *Swing vs. Thrust.* It *replaces* the -1 for having the heavier weapon in *Who Draws First?*

This modifier affects two other situations. Bare hands get +0, not +2, in these cases.

- Add it to skill when making or resisting a feint. It's easier to flip a relatively light weapon to a new attack or defense position.
- Adjust the -4 penalty per parry after the first in a turn (p. B376) by this amount – a bonus offsets it, a penalty worsens it. Trained by a Master or Weapon Master halves the *total* penalty (round against the defender). Use this rule *instead* of halving the penalty for fencing weapons.

*Absolute Weapon Weight:* How heavy the weapon actually is. A heavy weapon or an unbalanced one with its weight concentrated in the head is *beneficial* here. Use these modifiers:

Bare hands: +0
Balanced weapon weighing 1.5 lbs. or less: -2
Balanced weapon weighing more than 1.5 lbs., less than 3 lbs.: -1
Balanced weapon weighing 3 lbs. or more: +0
Unbalanced weapon: +1

This adjustment plays two roles:

- Add it to skill when making or resisting a Beat.
- Add *twice* this modifier to parries against flails, cumulative with the basic -4. Use this rule *instead* of forbidding fencing weapons to parry flails outright.

## *Weapon Length*

A weapon's Reach statistic is an approximation. "C" describes anything under 1 yard long, "1" covers lengths between 1 yard and just under 2 yards, and so on. Two weapons with identical Reach could differ in length by 1 or 2 feet! It's possible to categorize weapons relative to other weapons with the *same* Reach:

*Extremely Long:* Bill, dueling polearms (all), eku, glaive, halberd, heavy spear, horse-cutter (any), long spear, long staff, naginata, pollaxe, quarterstaff, rope dart, spear, trident.

*Very Long:* Chain whip, flail, great axe, greatsword, javelin, kusari, kusarigama, kusarijutte, lajatang, maul, monk's spade, scythe, short spear, sodegarami, tetsubo, three-part staff, urumi, warhammer, whip.

*Long:* Bastard sword, estoc, gada, katana, longsword, rapier (any).

*Medium:* Axe, backsword, bokken, broadsword, cavalry saber, dao, jian, jo, large falchion, late katana, light club, mace, mensurschläger, morningstar, pick.

*Short:* Baton, bola perdida, bolas, cutlass, dusack, falchion, hatchet, hook sword, jutte, kick, knobbed club, kukri, life-preserver, long knife, nunchaku, qian kun ri yue dao, saber, sai, shortsword, sickle, small axe, small falchion, small mace, smallsword (any), tonfa, weighted scarf.

*Very Short:* Balisong, bite, dagger (any), deer antlers, elbow, katar (any), knee, knife, knife-wheel, main-gauche, punch, shield bash, short baton, slashing wheel, stiletto, straight razor.

For instance, a greatsword and a rapier both have Reach 2, but a greatsword is longer.

When using *Who Draws First?* in a standoff between fighters with weapons of identical Reach, the -1 for the longer weapon goes to the individual who has the longer weapon on this progression. It takes longer to draw a greatsword than a rapier!

When weapons are *already* out, length is an advantage. In a *Cascading Waits* or *Stop Hits* situation, ties go to whoever has the longest Reach. If Reach is tied, they go to the longest weapon on the scale above. A rapier is at a disadvantage to beat a greatsword to a hit.

If length doesn't break the tie, thrusts come before swings. If *that* doesn't break the tie, the lightest weapon goes first. If that, too, is a tie, the fighters really *do* act simultaneously.

A warrior using a Defensive Grip has his weapon firmly in front of him in two hands. He holds a two-handed weapon, like a staff, across his body. For *any* weapon, this grip gives +1 to parry attacks from the *front* but an extra -1 to parry attacks from the *side* (for a net -3; see *Defending Against Attacks from the Side,* p. B390).

If using a one-handed weapon, Defensive Grip involves placing a second hand on the weapon. This hand must be *empty.* The extra hand makes it awkward to use normal one-handed strikes but adds power: -2 to attack rolls, +1 to damage. Treat the weapon as two-handed for all purposes. When using this grip with a fencing weapon (a weapon with "F" in its Parry statistic), it becomes possible to parry flails at the usual penalties.

If using a two-handed weapon, Defensive Grip involves moving one hand forward to "choke" the weapon or grip it by the ricasso. This effectively reinforces the weapon, giving -1 to odds of breakage. It also greatly narrows the possible arc of a swing, giving -2 to hit with a Wild Swing (for a net -7; see *Wild Swings,* p. B388) and less power with *swinging* attacks: -2 damage or -1 damage per die, whichever is *worse.*

Treat a weapon that can be used one- *or* two-handed – such as a bastard sword or a spear – as two-handed for this purpose.

A warrior with a *sword* of any kind can instead opt to place a hand just behind the tip, as part of his Ready to a Defensive Grip or using a later Ready. The rules above apply for everything *except* reach and damage: regardless of the sword, reach drops to C ("close combat only") and damage becomes thrust impaling – or thrust crushing, if blunt. Swung attacks are impossible. This allows superior point control, removing -2 from the penalty to target chinks in armor, cumulative with any similar benefit the weapon grants.

A fighter using a Defensive Grip can select *any* maneuver – even All-Out Attack (but not the Long option) or Committed Attack. Deceptive Attack (p. B369), Rapid Strike (p. B370), Telegraphic Attack (p. 113), and Tip Slash (p. 113) likewise remain viable.

## Pummeling

You can strike with the pommel or hilt of any fencing weapon or sword, or with the butt of a reach C or 1 melee weapon. Roll against DX-1, Brawling-1, or Karate-1 to hit. You may substitute Hammer Fist with a one-handed weapon or Two-Handed Punch with a two-handed one, if better. Use *full* DX, Boxing, Brawling, or Karate skill to punch with a tonfa or with a sword that sports a knuckle guard (backsword, cutlass, etc.). Reach is always C. In all cases, damage is thrust crushing (like brass knuckles) plus skill bonuses, +1 if using two hands.

## Reversed Grip

A fighter with a reach C, 1, or 2 thrusting weapon (typically a knife, spear, or sword) can invert his weapon and use an "ice-pick grip," the weapon extending along his arm rather than as an extension from it. Switching into or out of this Reversed Grip normally calls for a Ready maneuver; see *Ready* (pp. 101-104). This has several combat effects.

Most weapons have less reach when reversed. A reach C weapon remains reach C. A reach 1 weapon is still reach 1 when striking to the rear, but can only attack at reach C to the front or sides (although this allows it to function as a close-combat weapon). A reach 2 weapon functions as reach 1 for *all* purposes – half its length is in front of the wielder, the other half is behind him. Longer weapons are too awkward to reverse.

This grip favors stabbing, but its reduced reach and overall awkwardness make swung attacks and parries less effective. *Thrusting* attacks get +1 damage. *Swinging* attacks are at -2 damage or -1 damage per die, whichever is worse. Parries with the weapon are at -2.

Brawling and Karate parries are possible when wielding a reach C or 1 weapon this way. The defender parries with the weapon resting along his forearm. A failed parry lets the attacker choose to hit his original target *or* the weapon (the arm would be struck if it weren't for the weapon; see p. B377). This special parry is at only -1 – or at *no* penalty if using a tonfa (p. 225), which is designed for it.

### *What Is . . . a Deceptive Attack?*

As stated on p. B369, a Deceptive Attack can represent "any number of advanced fighting techniques." This doesn't mean "techniques" in the sense of Chapter 3, although some of those techniques penalize the target's defenses. In fact, one can deliver almost *any* attack using *any* technique in a deceptive way. Common deceptions include:

- *Change-up.* The attacker waits for his target to commit to a defense and then abruptly alters his attack vector (or his attack!) to avoid it; e.g., starting a rapier thrust to the throat so that the defender will move to protect his upper body, and then dropping the sword point to the gut at the last moment. Unlike using Rapid Strike to feint and attack, this is one fluid motion – which is why it uses one die roll. The logic behind the penalty is similar, though: the attacker is performing a lot of action in relatively little time.
- *Radical angle of attack.* The attacker angles his blow so that it passes over, under, or around the defender's guard; e.g., stabbing upward with a dagger held low, swinging an axe wide so that it comes in behind a shield, or moving in close and looping a punch outside the victim's field of vision. The awkwardness of the angle explains the *attacker's* penalty.
- *Sheer speed.* The attacker strikes so swiftly that the defender has little time to respond. The penalty on the attack roll reflects the difficulty of aiming a fast-moving attack. The "secret techniques" of many masters are simply ordinary techniques combined with this kind of Deceptive Attack. Bruce Lee (pp. 24-25) was famous for this!

*Which* option you use is a "special effect" – it has no effect on game play. In a combat-heavy game, though, describing your Deceptive Attacks is an important part of roleplaying. The GM may award character points accordingly.

When striking to the *front* or *sides,* a reversed weapon can make its usual thrusting or swinging attacks, subject to the damage modifiers above. Since the attacker's body partly conceals the weapon, Deceptive Attacks and feints are more effective: if either succeeds, add an extra -1 to the target's defense penalty.

The user can also strike with the butt of his weapon. If its effective reach is C, treat this as *Pummeling* (p. 111). If effective reach is 1, this is an attack using weapon skill. The butt of a crushing weapon (e.g., a staff) inflicts its full thrusting damage. Other weapons do their usual thrusting damage at -1, converted to crushing. Butt strikes don't enjoy the bonus thrusting damage or improved Deceptive Attacks and feints noted above.

When striking to the *rear,* a reversed weapon can only make *thrusting* attacks with its tip, but still at +1 to damage for Reversed Grip. These attacks otherwise obey the usual rules for a Wild Swing (p. B388) or a Back Strike (p. 67).

This grip is most useful for knives, which are neither long-ranged nor ideal for cutting and parrying in the first place. Many knife fighters *prefer* this grip. It's also effective with a tonfa. Swordsmen rarely use this grip except to strike enemies in close combat.

## Shin Kicks

Kicking with a *shin* instead of with a foot is an option for Jam, Kicking, and Spinning Kick – but not for other kicks, or against someone who's behind you or lying down. Skill and damage don't change. You get +1 damage for rigid leg armor, not for boots. *Hurting Yourself* (p. B379) applies if you strike *any* DR. If your opponent parries such a kick and inflicts damage, it affects your leg, not your foot.

This move is most effective if you have the advantage Striker (Crushing; Limb, Shin, -20%). Damage is then at +1 per die *and* you only hurt yourself if you kick DR 3+. See *Striker* (p. 47).

## Shoves with Weapons

You can use a shield or any rigid weapon with reach 1+ (not a kusari, whip, etc.) to shove a foe. Resolve this as explained for *Shove* (p. B372), but roll against weapon skill to hit. "Damage" is thrust crushing, at -1 per die if using a one-handed weapon or shield, plus the weapon's highest Reach or shield's Defense Bonus. As usual, double this to find knockback.

With a long weapon, you can simultaneously shove *two* nearby foes; see *Slams with Long Weapons* (p. 112) for allowed weapons and targets. Both attacks are at -4 to hit. Roll knockback-only damage as above but apply the *basic* roll to each target instead of twice that amount to just one of them.

## Slams with Long Weapons

A pole held across the body is useful for knocking people over in a slam. This move – called "cross-checking" in ice hockey – is a variation on the shield rush (p. B372) for long weapons. Only reach 2+ weapons can do this, and only when ready in a two-handed grip. This usually limits it to Polearm, Spear, Staff, Two-Handed Axe/Mace, and Two-Handed Flail weapons, but Two-Handed Sword weapons can also slam when held in a Defensive Grip. To charge and strike with the *end* of a weapon, see *Move and Attack* (p. 107).

Resolve this attack as explained under *Slam* (p. B371), but roll against weapon skill to hit. (This represents keeping the weapon on target as you rush – a historically accurate part of training with long weapons!) If you hit, add your weapon's highest Reach to your regular slam damage. Your *weapon* takes damage instead of you, but you still fall down if your opponent rolls twice your damage or more.

Using a long pole makes two options available that aren't possible with ordinary slams and shield rushes. First, you can target the *neck,* at the standard -5 to hit. This has no special effect on the slam but gives you the favorable modifiers for crushing damage to the neck.

Second, you can run between two opponents who are no further apart than the reach of your weapon (adjacent if reach 2, with up to a yard of empty space between them if reach 3) and slam them *both.* Roll separately at -4 to hit each foe; this is a variation on Dual-Weapon Attack (p. B417). Determine damage normally, adding Reach as above, but make a single damage roll and divide it by two. This is the damage to each foe – even if you hit just one. Work out who knocks down whom separately for each attack. *You* have two chances to fall. Only a big, fast fighter with a heavy weapon is likely to knock down two men!

## Striking at Shields

You can attack a shield, cloak, or buckler much as you would a weapon. Use *Striking at Weapons* (pp. B400-401) with the following modifications.

If the shield is strapped to your adversary's arm, you can only strike to damage it; you can't knock it from his grasp. The penalty to hit is the usual -4 to attack a reach 1 melee weapon, but add a bonus equal to the shield or cloak's Defense Bonus (DB). This gives -3 to hit a light or small shield, or a light cloak; -2 to hit a medium shield or a heavy cloak; or -1 to hit a large shield.

If your opponent is using a cloak or hand-held buckler – that is, anything that uses the Cloak or Shield (Buckler) skill – you *can* strike to disarm, if you prefer. Use the penalty above, but all weapons (even fencing weapons) suffer an extra -2 to hit.

Your victim may *dodge* or *block* (but not parry) your attack. Retreating gives its usual bonus. His DB doesn't add to his defense roll, however. A shield or cloak's DB rates its tendency to get in the way, and he's trying to get it *out* of the way or turn it so that the blow slides off.

Resolve damage to shields and cloaks according to *Damage to Shields* (p. B484); see *Shields* (p. B287) for DR and HP. In a disarm attempt against a cloak or buckler, roll the usual Quick Contest. *Neither* fighter receives any modifier for weapon type.

### Grabbing Shields

You can also attempt to *grab* a shield or cloak. This requires at least one empty hand. Roll against DX or a grappling skill to hit – but instead of the usual -4 to grab a weapon hand (see *Grabbing,* p. B370), roll at -4 plus the shield or cloak's DB. Your opponent can use any active defense; he *can* parry your hand with a weapon.

A successful attack means you've grabbed the shield or cloak. Until your victim breaks free or you let him go, he cannot block or add his DB to his defenses. He may attempt to break free on his turn; see *Break Free* (p. B371). If so, you're at the usual +5 if you used both hands. He gets +4 if his shield is strapped to his arm.

## *Telegraphic Attack*

You can carefully line up an attack in combat much as you would during a stress-free practice session, gaining the +4 for routine skill use discussed on p. B171. Such an attack is often termed "telegraphic" because it transmits your intentions to your foe. This makes it easy to avoid: all active defenses against a Telegraphic Attack are at +2!

A Telegraphic Attack is the opposite of a Deceptive Attack (p. B369) and you cannot combine the two. Likewise, you cannot use a Telegraphic Attack as a Riposte (pp. 124-125) and it gains no benefit from an earlier feint. The +4 to hit doesn't "stack" with the bonus for Evaluate, either. You can combine it with all other combat options.

There's also a restriction on the *results* of a Telegraphic Attack: the +4 to hit doesn't affect your chance of a critical hit. Use your skill before the bonus to determine this. For instance, if you had skill 11 and the +4 made it 15, you would roll a critical hit on 3-4, not on 3-5; if you had skill 15 and the +4 gave you 19, you would score a critical hit on a roll of 3-5, not 3-6.

Use this option when you *must* attack at a penalty but All-Out Attack (Determined) or Committed Attack (Determined) would be too risky. Fighters most often use Telegraphic Attack to offset the -3 for Combat Art or Sport skills in combat (athletes often have good *accuracy* but little subtlety), shock penalties, and penalties for attacks that are at the edge of their skill level (e.g., for specific hit locations) . . . and to strike from behind!

## *Tip Slash*

If your weapon can thrust for impaling damage, you can instead swing it so that the tip pierces and rips across your target laterally. This is called a Tip Slash. Treat it as a *cutting* attack for all purposes: wounding modifiers, Injury Tolerance, etc. It can be useful when impaling damage doesn't affect your target much!

A Tip Slash is an attack at full skill, distinct from other attacks listed on the weapon table. For the purpose of Targeted Attacks (p. 68) and Combinations (p. 80), it's a different basic attack from "Thrust" or "Swing." Cutting damage equals the weapon's impaling damage, at -2. Weapon quality affects this normally. Where the rules distinguish between thrusts and swings (e.g., parrying unarmed), a Tip Slash is a *swing*, despite using thrust damage.

A Tip Slash uses the weapon's current maximum reach. If holding the weapon in a grip that permits two or more different attacks, use the *longest* reach. Parry and ST are unaffected.

*Examples:* A Tip Slash using a dagger (thrust-1 impaling) inflicts thrust-3 cutting at reach C. A Tip Slash with a fine-quality rapier (thrust+2 impaling) does thrust cutting at reach 2. A Tip Slash with a long spear held in two hands (thrust+3 impaling) delivers thrust+1 cutting at reach 2 *or* 3, depending on how you hold it.

# Untrained Fighters

Untrained fighters are a danger to themselves . . . and often to their allies, too! These optional rules simultaneously make such combatants less predictable and limit their choices. They're realistic but add extra complexity.

## *Fear*

Combat is frightening to the unprepared. At the start of hostilities – when "slow" time starts and combatants start acting turn-by-turn (see *Time During Adventures,* p. B497) – those with neither combat skills nor Combat Reflexes must make a Fright Check (p. B360). Apply the usual +5 for the "heat of battle" and any bonus for a successful Leadership roll by the group's leader (see p. B204). The GM may rule that those who fail simply drop their weapons and flee instead of rolling on the *Fright Check Table.*

## *"Coin Toss" Option*

If someone with neither combat skills nor Combat Reflexes passes his Fright Check, he may elect to back off (a series of Move maneuvers) instead of turning his back to the foe and fleeing. If he chooses to fight, though, roll 1d at the start of his turn:

**1-3 –** He attacks the nearest foe that poses a danger – to him, a Dependent, an Ally, an adventuring companion, or a bystander, in that order. To offset his lack of skill, he makes an All-Out Attack (Determined) without realizing it!

**4-6 –** He decides to protect himself. He uses All-Out Defense (Increased Dodge) to move away from the nearest foe. If he has a ready weapon or shield, he may select Increased Parry or Increased Block instead.

Roll again each turn!

## *Limited Maneuver Selection*

Untrained fighters have a narrower tactical palette than skilled martial artists. Only combatants with at least DX level in a melee combat skill (1 point if Easy, 2 points if Average, or 4 points if Hard) can choose a Committed Attack, Defensive Attack, or Feint maneuver, or exercise combat options such as Deceptive Attack, Defensive Grip, and Rapid Strike. *Exception: Anyone* can attempt a Telegraphic Attack. Unskilled fighters are *more* likely to choose this option!

## *Combat Art or Sport Fighters*

Those who know only Combat Art or Sport skills *might* count as "untrained." Actual combat skills default to their Art/Sport analogs at -3, so a fighter who has only an Art/Sport skill needs *DX+3* level (8 points if Easy, 12 points if Average, or 16 points if Hard) to choose the maneuvers and options above.

# Close-Combat Options

These expanded rules apply mainly in close combat – that is, for melee combat at ranges under a yard (reach C). For more information, see *Close Combat* (p. B391).

*Makhila*

## *All-Out and Committed Attacks When Grappling*

All-Out and Committed Attacks compromise your defenses against grapples as well as against strikes. They also make it easier for an opponent to follow up his grapple with a takedown, pin, or other close-combat move.

If you make an All-Out Attack, you're *truly* defenseless. You automatically lose any Contest to avoid a close-combat attack following a grapple. This includes all takedowns, pins, throws from locks, and grappling techniques that "attack" using a Quick Contest (e.g., Handcuffing). You still get a ST or HT roll to resist injury from strangling, Arm Lock, Neck Snap, Wrench Limb, etc.

If you make a Committed Attack, the -2 to active defenses also applies to your rolls to avoid takedowns, pins, etc. Otherwise, you function normally against actions that follow a grapple.

Neither All-Out Attack nor Committed Attack prevents you from rolling to keep someone *you've* grappled from breaking free, though, or gives a penalty to such a roll. That isn't a *defense* roll!

Your actions after grappling or being grappled – including your own attempts to break free – require you to choose an Attack, All-Out Attack, or Committed Attack maneuver. They aren't compatible with Defensive Attack and aren't free actions. If you make an All-Out Attack (AOA) or Committed Attack (CA), you're subject to the effects above and use the following special rules:

*Determined:* You may use this option to get +2 (CA) or +4 (AOA) to a *DX*-based roll (DX or a DX-based skill or technique) for the purpose of a takedown, lock, or hold. You cannot apply this bonus to a *ST*-based roll – but see the Strong option, below.

*Double:* You may use AOA (Double) to try two grappling moves, subject to the restrictions under *Grappling and Multiple Attacks* (p. 128).

*Feint:* You may use AOA (Feint) to make a feint or a Beat against a grappled foe before trying Arm Lock, Judo Throw, or another grappling attack that allows an active defense. You can also use AOA (Feint) on the turn after you parry to make a feint or a Beat and *then* attempt such an attack, if it's one that can follow a parry. AOA (Feint) is pointless if no active defense is involved; e.g., with break free, strangle, or pin.

*Long:* AOA (Long) isn't an option in close combat.

*Strong:* You may use this option to get +1 (CA) or +2 (AOA) to a *ST*-based roll (ST or a ST-based technique) for a takedown or pin, to strangle or otherwise injure a foe, or to break free. For techniques that base injury on thrust or swing damage as opposed to on a margin of victory, apply the bonus directly to damage.

See *Actions After a Grapple* (p. B370) and *Actions After Being Grappled* (p. B371) for further details.

## *Close Combat and Body Morphology*

The combat rules in the ***Basic Set,*** while generic, occasionally assume an upright humanoid with two arms, hands, legs, and feet (or equivalent body parts). Traits that alter your body away from this norm change how certain rules work – *especially* for grapples, pins, and close-combat techniques!

Below are notes on the combat effects of selected physiological traits. Anything not mentioned here either has no appreciable effect or uses the rules for the traits it includes (e.g., Quadriplegic combines Lame and No Fine Manipulators). In general, if a body part is *missing,* you can't use techniques that require it and are immune to enemy techniques that target it.

### Extra Arms

**see p. B53**

If you can bring more than two arms to bear on a foe, each arm after the second gives +2 to hit with a grapple (but *not* with follow-up techniques), to prevent your victim from breaking free (of grapples, pins, locks, etc.), and to break free yourself. Each hand after the first two gives +2 ST to choke or strangle, too. If you have *more* arms than your opponent – the exact number is irrelevant – you get +3 to pin him or resist his pin attempts. You only receive these bonuses for arms of regular length or better.

Special modifiers can give additional effects:

*Extra-Flexible:* Such arms are immune to injury from Arm Lock (which only counts as an ordinary grapple) but *not* Wrench Arm. They also get +2 on the DX roll required to ready a weapon in close combat (p. B391).

*Foot Manipulators:* You can use these limbs to meet the requirements of any rule that calls for arms *or* legs – but you can never use a limb as both an arm *and* a leg at the same time. Decide how you're using it at the start of your turn.

*No Physical Attack:* In addition to being unable to strike, these arms cannot grapple, pin, choke, etc., and don't give the close-combat bonuses above. They're still valid targets for *enemy* techniques that target arms!

*Short:* These arms never give the close-combat bonuses above. If you use *only* Short arms for a close-combat task, all rolls are at -2 regardless of how many arms you have.

*Weapon Mount:* As No Physical Attack, except that Arm Lock is ineffective against the limb – it only counts as an ordinary grapple. Wrench Arm works normally.

### Extra Legs

**see p. B54**

The number of legs a foe must grapple to keep you from walking, kicking, etc., equals the number of crippled legs needed to make you fall. If he restrains fewer legs *and* you have more than twice his ST, you can walk – just lower Move by the usual amount for a small number of crippled legs.

*Example:* If you had six legs, a weak enemy grappling one leg would merely reduce your Move by 20% – he'd have to grapple *four* legs to immobilize you!

In addition, each leg past two gives +1 to resist enemy attempts to knock you over (e.g., takedown or Sweep) and to the roll to avoid falling after a missed kick. When you grapple using legs (see *Using Your Legs,* p. 79), each *pair* of legs after the first gives the bonuses specified under *Extra Arms,* above, per arm past the first two. If you have more legs than your foe has free hands, you get +3 to pin him by sitting on him (see *Shifting Grapples and Freeing Hands,* pp. 117-118). Finally, having four or more legs lets you attempt a pounce (p. B372).

### Extra Mouth

**see p. B55**

A mouth on your torso can bite someone who's pinning you! A mouth elsewhere is immobilized only if a foe grapples the body part it's attached to. For more on biting, see *Teeth* (see below).

### Horizontal

**see p. B139**

Your posture gives you +1 to strike or grapple the feet, legs, or groin of an upright foe whose Size Modifier is no more than one different from your own, but -1 to hit his neck, face, eye, or skull. For greater differences in SM, see *Combat at Different Levels* (p. B402).

Your joints bend the wrong way for Backbreaker, Elbow Drop, Elbow Strike, Knee Drop, Knee Strike, Piledriver, Two-Handed Punch, and Uppercut. You can't learn these techniques or attempt them at default. You can't make a flying tackle, either – but you *can* pounce if you have Extra Legs.

Your kicking damage is at -1 per die unless you have Claws or make a Back Kick or Stamp Kick. However, you can really put your back into a Head Butt. Add +1 per die to your damage with this technique!

### Injury Tolerance

**see p. B60**

Diffuse fighters are *immune* to grapples, pins, locks, and so forth. Homogenous ones are susceptible to such things, but techniques that injure by tearing muscle and breaking bone – e.g., Arm Lock, Leg Lock, Neck Snap, Wrench Limb, and all throws from locks – cannot inflict damage.

No Eyes prevents Eye-Gouging, Eye-Poke, Eye-Rake, etc., from causing blindness or special injury. No Neck renders Choke Hold ineffective and means that neither Neck Snap nor a throw from a Head Lock can injure you. No Head protects completely against all of these attacks . . . but if you lack a head, you can't make a Head Butt!

## Teeth

A toothy mouth lets you bite in close combat. Roll against DX or Brawling to hit. You can either nip and let go or *hold on* and grapple your victim in addition to injuring him. Either is an attack that takes *full* hit location penalties – not halved for grappling – and inflicts thrust-1 crushing damage. Brawling improves damage. The Teeth advantage (p. B91) can change damage type.

Allowed hit locations for a bite and the effects of grappling with teeth depend on relative Size Modifier. These rules draw heavily on concepts explained in *New Hit Locations* (p. 137). Read that first!

*Your SM is no greater than your victim's.* You can't bite his skull, spine, veins/arteries, or vitals. You can bite his face, neck, torso, or limbs, but you'll merely nab a fold of flesh. This can only cripple a limb on critical hit results 7, 8, 13, or 14. You can target a tendon within a limb at an extra -3. Handle this like an attack on a joint – it *can* cripple. You can also target and cripple an ear, nose, or extremity (or, at another -3, the tendons inside an extremity). In all cases, a bite counts as a *one-handed* grapple for the purpose of strangling, breaking free, techniques, etc.

On subsequent turns, you can *worry.* This counts as an attack but it always hits – simply roll biting damage each turn. Injury can't exceed HP/4 to a nose, an ear, or the tendons in an extremity, or HP/3 to an extremity or the tendons in a limb. Keep rolling damage, though! Further attacks inflict full *shock.* Should total injury reach twice that needed to cripple a nose or an ear, you bite it off. Twice the amount to cripple a hand removes a finger (see *Missing Digit,* p. B144). You can't remove an entire extremity or limb.

*Your SM exceeds your victim's by +1 or +2.* You can target *any* hit location susceptible to your bite's damage type, and can cripple or sever limbs. Treat grapples using your teeth as *two-handed* for the purpose of strangling, breaking free, Neck Snap, and Wrench Limb, but as one-handed for all other purposes. Otherwise, use the rules above.

*Your SM exceeds your victim's by +3 or more.* Your maw can engulf his entire head or torso. This allows you to attack, worry at, and cripple *any* body part. If you bite and grapple the torso, you can attempt a pin on a standing foe. Success means he's trapped helplessly in your jaws!

*Born Biters:* Some creatures have elongated jaws built for biting – a zero-cost racial feature. They get +1 to +3 to effective SM only to determine how they bite. Apply the same bonus to rolls to hit their jaw or nose. A SM 0 reptile man with +3 SM for biting would bite as if he had SM +3, but enemies would target his jaw at only -3, his nose at -4. Those with *any* level of this feature suffer a nose hit on a roll of 1-2 on 1d when struck in the face.

*Biting Techniques:* Targeted Attacks with teeth take the form "TA (Brawling Bite/Hit Location)." Neck Snap (Teeth) and Wrench Limb (Teeth) are distinct from the standard versions, and must be learned separately.

### Lame

see p. B141

If you're *standing,* the penalties for Crippled Legs (-3) and Missing Legs (-6) affect all of your DX-based rolls in close combat, and opponents get +3 in the Contest for any takedown, Sweep, or similar move intended to knock you down. None of this applies if you're sitting, kneeling, or lying down – just use the usual penalties for your posture. You can *attempt* any technique at the above penalty, unless it requires more legs than you have (e.g., you can't use Scissors Hold with one leg).

If you're Legless, you must fight from the ground at the usual penalties (-4 to attack, -3 to defend) and can't do anything that requires legs, such as Knee Strike or any kick or leg-based grapple. Techniques that require you to drop to a sitting, kneeling, or prone posture (Backbreaker, Elbow Drop, Piledriver, etc.) are also impossible. An opponent with legs has an effective +1 SM advantage over you, giving him +3 to pin you or resist your pins. You must use your arms for a pin, which denies certain options under *Shifting Grapples and Freeing Hands* (pp. 117-118). However, you're *immune* to Leg Grapple, Leg Lock, Sweep, and similar attacks.

### No Fine Manipulators

see p. B145

*No Fine Manipulators:* You must "hug" to grapple, which is clumsy. Grapples, pins, and takedowns receive no penalty, but grappling techniques (notably Arm Lock, Backbreaker, Choke Hold, Head Lock, Leg Grapple, Leg Lock, and Piledriver) are at -4 unless they use only the legs, like Scissors Hold and everything under *Using Your Legs* (p. 79), or the teeth, like the Neck Snap (Teeth) and Wrench Limb (Teeth) options under *Teeth* (p. 115). You're at -4 to make a Judo Throw. Shoves and most unarmed strikes take no penalty, but attacks that require fingers are *impossible,* which rules out strangling and choking with hands, grabbing weapons, Eye-Poke, Finger Lock, Lethal Strike, and Pole-Vault Kick (you can't grip the pole).

*No Manipulators:* Your *only* close-combat attack options are a bite, slam (but not a flying tackle), Head Butt, or blow with a Striker. You can't pin a foe, and an enemy who has any hands at all gets +3 to pin *you.* You can only break free by wriggling, at -4.

*Exception:* Constriction Attack (p. B43) and Double-Jointed (p. B56) together enable grapples, takedowns, pins, chokes, locks, and breaking free at *no* penalty, using the torso – just like a python. Such attempts are equivalent to two-handed. You must learn body-only techniques separately, like those for teeth.

### No Legs

see p. B145

Follow the rules for being Legless (see *Lame,* see above), except in these special cases:

*Aerial or Aquatic:* You can fight from your native medium (air or water) at full skill; you don't suffer the penalties for lying down. You can even plunge downward to bash a foe into the ground using Elbow Drop or Piledriver, if you have the necessary hands or elbows. Your SM must exceed your victim's to pin him "hands free" by landing on him; treat this as sitting on him. You can't make or be affected by any attack that requires legs or feet.

*Sessile:* You can't do *anything* that requires legs, a posture change, or so much as one step of moment. All you can do is strike and grapple with any arms or Strikers you have. However, you're completely immune to takedowns, Sweep, Trip, etc.

*Slithers:* As Legless, unless you have both Constriction Attack (p. B43) and Double-Jointed (p. B56). Then the exception under *No Fine Manipulators* (above) applies.

### One Arm and One Hand

see p. B147

Either disadvantage means that you can't use two hands to grapple or to pin, making it easier for your victim to break free (p. B371). You're also at half ST when you choke or strangle, and you have -1 damage per die if you shove. An opponent with two or more hands gets +3 to pin you or resist your pins. Techniques that normally require two hands are either much less effective for you or totally impossible; see *The Sound of One Hand Grappling* (see above).

Note that while a handless arm can't punch or grab, it *can* deliver an Elbow Drop or Elbow Strike.

### Spines

see p. B88

Those who use any kind of grapple, hold, lock, or pin on you take damage *each* turn until they let go. The same applies to anyone you *pin,* but not to enemies you grapple or restrain with a hold or lock that uses your arms or legs.

### *The Sound of One Hand Grappling*

Most grappling techniques in Chapter 3 "require" two hands. In reality, there are one-handed variants of Arm Lock, Choke Hold, Head Lock, Leg Lock, Neck Snap, and Wrench Limb (but *not* Backbreaker, Piledriver, or Wrench Spine).

DX-based rolls to *initiate* such moves are at -2, or at -4 if using the crook of one arm because the hand isn't free. This is cumulative with any penalties in the technique description (e.g., the -1 to use Choke Hold from in front). DX-based rolls to *inflict damage,* including throws from locks (pp. 118-119), are at -4.

ST-based effects use *half* ST, rounded down. This affects defaults (e.g., for Neck Snap), Quick Contests, and thrust and swing damage. When strangling, halve ST instead of applying the -5 on p. B370. Should a technique give a ST bonus – intrinsic or for using a weapon – add it *after* halving.

If a technique offers a choice of rolls, always use the most favorable.

If your victim tries to break free, you obviously can't claim the +5 for using two hands when you're using just one; see p. B371. Moreover, you don't benefit from the technique's innate bonuses to keep him from breaking free (e.g., +4 for Arm Lock) and he doesn't suffer its special penalties (e.g., -1 per repeated attempt for Arm Lock).

### Striker

**see p. B88**

A Striker cannot grapple, pin, or make holds, locks, or throws – it can only strike. It *can* parry (unless it has Cannot Parry) and even Sweep (p. 81). A *crushing* Striker can shove (p. B372) as effectively as an arm.

To immobilize a Striker, an attacker must grapple it. The penalty for this is -1, just as for an arm or a leg. Arm Lock, Leg Grapple, Leg Lock, Wrench Arm, and Wrench Leg *don't* work on Strikers, but martial artists on worlds with nonhuman species might know equivalent techniques for attacking Strikers. Each variant is a separate technique.

## *Long Weapons in Close Combat*

You can *try* to strike with a non-close combat weapon (anything without a "C" in its Reach statistic) in close combat, but this is awkward. You must hold it out to one side, make "wrap" shots at your opponent's back, swing at sharp angles, or thrust almost straight up or down. Still, sometimes it's better than the alternative!

A reach 1+ weapon in close combat gives a skill penalty equal to -4 times its *longest* reach in yards, regardless of the reach you were using it at. This is -4 for 1-yard weapons (most one-handed swords, flails, and impact weapons), -8 for 2-yard weapons (spears, staffs, short polearms, most two-handed flails and impact weapons, and longer swords – greatsword, katana, rapier, etc.), and -12 for 3-yard weapons (long spears and polearms). This lowers skill for *all* purposes – including making and resisting disarms and feints, and all armed striking techniques – except those specifically excepted below.

You can parry in close combat, but this is also at a penalty. Calculate Parry from your *reduced* skill. Thus, a weapon parries at -2 in close combat if reach 1, -4 if reach 2, or -6 if reach 3. This doesn't affect parries made *as* your foe enters close combat. Likewise, if you're able to retreat out of close combat, you get your *full* Parry plus the usual retreat bonus.

Thrusting damage is unchanged in close combat, but it's hard to get in a good swing. Reduce swung damage by -1 per yard of your weapon's *maximum* reach. For instance, a broadsword has -1 swinging damage; a two-handed sword, -2; and a halberd, -3. In addition, a reach 2 or 3 Polearm, Spear, or Two-Handed Axe/Mace weapon can only do quarterstaff damage with the haft (swing+2 crushing, less the reach penalty) unless you take a Ready maneuver to choke it around the head. It takes another Ready to prepare it for normal use after leaving close combat.

These effects apply to all weapon use, offensive or defensive, while in close combat. It doesn't matter whether your current target or attacker is in close combat with you! Just having someone in the way is enough to make things awkward.

*Exception:* Pummeling (p. 111), grappling techniques (Armed Grapple, Bind Weapon, Choke Hold, etc.), and similar close combat-specific moves *don't* suffer skill or damage penalties in close combat. See *Defensive Grip* (pp. 109-111) and *Reversed Grip* (pp. 111-112) for other ways to use long weapons in close without these penalties.

## *More Actions After a Grapple*

These rules expand on *Actions After a Grapple* (p. B370).

### Bear Hugs

If you've used two arms or two legs to grapple an opponent's torso, you can *squeeze.* For this to be effective, your Size Modifier must exceed your victim's! Resolve this as an attempt to strangle; see *Choke or Strangle* (p. B370). If you lack Constriction Attack (p. B43), you're at -5 in the Quick Contest. Using your legs gives the usual -2 DX and +2 ST (see *Using Your Legs,* p. 79). Victory inflicts crushing damage – but the torso lacks the neck's ×1.5 wounding modifier.

You can try to crush the breath out of your victim without cracking his bones. Roll as above. Victory causes fatigue instead of crushing damage. The GM may permit you to inflict fatigue (*not* injury) on someone of your SM if he weighs no more than your BL×4.

### Shifting Grapples and Freeing Hands

These options let you change *how* you're grappling or pinning a foe:

*Add a Hand:* If you've *grappled* or *pinned* a foe, you can dedicate one or more *additional* hands to restraining him. This makes it easier to choke him and harder for him to break free, and lets you use techniques that require more hands. Adding hands is a free action at the *start* of your turn. The hands used must be empty. Once you commit a hand, you can't use it for barehanded attacks until your *next* turn, when you can let go as a free action (see *Release a Hand,* see below).

*Release a Hand:* If you've *grappled* or *pinned* a foe, releasing your grip with one or more hands – usually so that you can strike – is a free action *on your turn.* To maintain your grapple or pin, you must hold on with at least one hand (but see below). If you let go with all of your hands, your victim breaks free! One-handed locks and holds are less effective; see *The Sound of One Hand Grappling* (p. 116).

*Shift Grip:* If you've *grappled* a foe, you may relocate your grip from its current hit location to a new one – typically to prepare for a technique that requires you to grapple a specific body part. This *isn't* a free action; it counts as an attack. Roll a Quick Contest, with each fighter using the *highest* of DX or his best grappling skill. The fighter with the most free hands gets +3. The hit locations involved are irrelevant. If you win, your grip shifts to the desired location. On a tie, you're still grappling the original body part. If you lose, your foe breaks free. If you don't mind the extra turn and the chance of losing your grip, you *can* grapple the torso and shift grip to avoid hit location penalties.

*Sit on Him:* If you've *pinned* a foe, you can restrain him by sitting on him. This shift counts as an attack. Roll a Quick Contest. Each contestant uses the *highest* of ST, DX, or his best grappling skill. The *larger* fighter gets +3 for every point by which his SM exceeds his enemy's. Your victim gets +2 per arm after the first two. If you win, you free all of your hands and change posture to sitting. You may choose to sit on his upper body, in which case he can attack using legs, or on his lower body, in which case he can attack with one arm. All of his attacks suffer the usual -4 for lying down *and* -4 for being grappled. You have +5, not +10, against his break free attempts, as if using one hand. He's otherwise pinned, and can't move, change posture, etc., until he breaks free. On a tie, you keep the original pin. If you lose, your foe breaks free and rolls out from under you.

# Grab and Smash!

Grapples can set up vicious strikes. These tactics are realistic but complex. It's the GM's call whether to allow them.

## All-Out Grapple and Strike

Martial artists and brawlers often grab opponents and pull them into thrusting attacks. Such strikes are powerful and hard to avoid. Examples include yanking a head into a Knee Strike (famous in Bando and Muay Thai), throwing an Uppercut in a clinch (illegal but common in Boxing), and pulling someone onto a knife. The perks Clinch (p. 51) and Neck Control (p. 50) are handy here!

This is an All-Out Attack (Double). Use the first attack to grapple your rival. If it works, he'll suffer the standard defense penalties against the ensuing strike; see *Defense While Grappling* (pp. 121-122).

Your second attack can be a strike with anything except the arm(s) used to grapple. This is a close-combat attack. If you use a weapon longer than reach C, see *Long Weapons in Close Combat* (p. 117).

If the grapple works *and* you hit the grappled location with a thrusting attack, your strike gets the damage bonus for All-Out Attack (Strong). This also applies to blows to the groin, spine, or vitals if grappling the torso; the eye, jaw, or nose if grappling the head; or an artery or joint if grappling a location containing such a target. You may retain your grapple after striking or relinquish it immediately.

Use these rules only on the turn when you initiate your grapple. You *must* All-Out Attack to grapple *and* receive bonus damage. To brutalize an adversary you grappled on an earlier turn, use All-Out Attack (Strong).

## Kiss the Wall (Carpet, Car Door, . . .)

If you've used two hands to grapple a foe *and* you're standing or kneeling, you can ram him into a wall or other massive object within a yard – or the ground, if he's lying down. This *isn't* a Judo Throw (p. 75), but an attempt to hold onto your victim and propel him using your own momentum.

This is an attack rolled against DX, Brawling, Sumo Wrestling, or Wrestling. You can target any hit location but the feet, at full penalties. If your victim is lying down, you can only target his face or skull. Your opponent may either dodge or parry with a free hand, subject to *Defense While Grappling* (pp. 121-122).

A successful attack inflicts thrust crushing damage, +1 for a hard surface, plus your skill bonus. Treat the ST bonus for Sumo Wrestling or Wrestling as a damage bonus. A critical miss means you slip, take this damage to your face, and lose your grapple!

## Twofers

You *can* knock two foes together! Use the rules above, with these changes:

*All-Out Grapple and Strike:* As your initial grapple, make a Dual-Weapon Attack (-4) against *adjacent* foes in close combat. Both defend normally. If you grapple only one, your grapple counts but you can't strike. If you grapple both, make a DX, Brawling, Sumo Wrestling, or Wrestling roll to ram them together. They may defend as usual. If *both* fail, you inflict thrust-1 crushing damage to the grappled location on each. The only damage bonus is +1 if you grapple two skulls and knock them together.

*Kiss the Wall:* You may ram your grappled adversary into any hit location on an *enemy* within a yard. Use the *worst* hit location penalty; e.g., bashing a face (-5) into a leg (-2) gives -5. Your second opponent defends normally, although the incoming body counts as a weapon with weight equal to the first victim's ST (p. B376). If either foe defends, nobody is hurt. If both fail, each takes thrust crushing damage, plus skill bonuses. The +1 for a hard surface applies only when ramming skulls together.

*Switch Arms for Legs:* If you've used your arms to *grapple* a foe, you can attack to grapple him with your legs (see *Using Your Legs,* p. 79) and then let go with your arms as a free action – or vice versa. *Defense While Grappling* (pp. 121-122) affects enemy defenses against such follow-up grapples.

## Shoving People Around

If you've *grappled* a foe and you're both standing, you can try to use him as cover, make him walk, etc. This counts as an attack. Roll a Quick Contest, with each contestant using the *highest* of ST, DX, or his best grappling skill. If you have your rival in a lock or a hold, you may use your level with your grappling technique, get +3 no matter what you roll against, and gain your technique's bonus for using a weapon (if any) – but since you're using pain to force compliance, *he* has +3 for High Pain Threshold or -4 for Low Pain Threshold.

If you win, you may move behind him (your facing changes), spin him to put his back to you (his facing changes), *or* force him to take a step in any direction with you – all without letting go. If *he* wins, he gets his margin of victory as a bonus if he tries to break free on his next turn. A tie means nothing happens.

## Throws from Locks

If you have a *standing* enemy in an Arm Lock, Finger Lock, Head Lock, or Leg Lock – including a lower-body version (see *Using Your Legs,* p. 79) – you can throw him using the trapped body part as the axis of the throw. You can try this on any turn *after* the one during which you applied the lock. This counts as an attack but is resolved with a Quick Contest: your Judo or lock technique vs. your victim's ST, DX, Breakfall, or best grappling skill. You may each take your pick; Breakfall isn't always ideal (see below).

If you win, you throw your opponent to the ground and twist the affected body part. This inflicts swing crushing damage. Wrestling adds its ST bonus as a damage bonus. Apply damage to the arm if an Arm Lock, hand if a Finger Lock, neck if a Head Lock, or leg if a Leg Lock.

If the defender wins or ties, he isn't thrown. (*Exception:* If he used Breakfall to resist, he *falls* if he wins or ties but isn't *thrown* for damage.) He's still in the lock unless you rolled a critical failure. If he's standing, you may try to throw him again on a later turn.

See *Neck Snap* (p. 77) and *Wrench (Limb)* (p. 82) for alternative ways to torque body parts, and *Judo Throw* (p. 75) and *Sacrifice Throw* (pp. 78-79) for other throws.

## *Pain in Close Combat*

Much of what occurs in close combat is about pain as much as injury. These optional rules let you simulate excruciating, joint-grinding action.

### Inflicting Pain with Locks

When applying a grappling technique that lets you cause ongoing harm – Arm Lock, Choke Hold, Finger Lock, etc. – you may opt to cause pain. Roll normally, at the usual modifiers, and note the FP or HP you would have inflicted. Instead of fatigue or injury, though, your victim suffers an affliction (p. B428): moderate pain at 2-3 points, severe pain at 4-5 points, terrible pain at 6-9 points, or agony at 10+ points. Reroll each turn; the effects aren't cumulative.

To use a painful lock to force someone to move, see *Shoving People Around* (p. 118).

### Pain and Breaking Free

Experienced fighters extol the virtues of *injuring* a rival grappler in order to distract him and break free (see *Break Free,* p. B371). This is realistic and effective . . . if you hit! Attacks are at -4 while grappled and can't involve any body part or weapon that your foe is restraining.

If your assailant is *behind* you – using a garrote, applying a Choke Hold, etc. – your options are limited. You can make a Wild Swing (p. B388) or a Back Strike (p. 67) with a weapon in a free hand; use Back Kick (p. 67) or Elbow Strike (p. 71); try a Stamp Kick (pp. 80-81) to his foot; or bite his arm or hand (see *Teeth,* p. 115). The penalties for these attacks and hit locations are cumulative with the -4 for being grappled.

If you're pinned, you *can't* attack without an exotic advantage: Extra Mouth on your torso, Innate Attack from the eyes, etc.

If your attack roll succeeds, your opponent can try any close-combat parry with a free hand; a Jam, if you kicked; a grappling skill parry with the arms he's using to hold you; or a dodge. The last two options represent shoving *you* aside. If he fails, you inflict your usual damage.

Killing him, knocking him out, or crippling the only limb he's holding on with means you're free! Crippling one of several limbs lowers his ST bonus to restrain you. Stunning him gives him -4 to prevent you from breaking free until he recovers.

If you wound him, his shock penalty (-1 to -4) lowers his ST as well as his DX if you try to break free. However, the penalty vanishes before your next turn, so the only way to capitalize on it is to try to break free *immediately.* To do so, you must make two attacks – whether via All-Out Attack (Double), Extra Attack, or Rapid Strike. Your first attack is your attempt to wound your attacker; your second is your attempt to break free.

These rules also apply if an ally wounds your attacker.

All of this cuts both ways. If you're injured, your shock penalty applies to your attack rolls *and* your ST rolls to break free! The same goes for pain penalties caused by an assailant who uses *Inflicting Pain with Locks,* above.

## *Sprawling*

When an attacker tries a takedown (p. B370) or a technique based on a takedown, you may opt to fall willingly in an attempt to achieve superior ground position. This is known as "sprawling." It's risky, but it's useful against someone you *know* is less adept than you are at Ground Fighting (p. 73).

If you sprawl, you fall down – that is, your enemy's takedown works automatically – but the Quick Contest still occurs and you roll at +3. If your rival wins, you simply fall. If he loses or ties, though, *he* falls, too – in tactical combat, you end up lying atop him in the same two hexes – and he loses any grapple he had on you.

# Ranged Attack Options

These rules significantly enhance the "firepower" of muscle-powered ranged weapons. They describe feats that *might* be possible for extremely skilled realistic warriors, but the GM is free to reserve them for Weapon Masters.

## *Quick-Shooting Bows*

Bows have RoF 1 and Shots 1(2). This means that an archer can normally loose an arrow every three seconds. Heroic bowmen – elves, legendary samurai, Merry Men, and so on – are traditionally capable of raining down arrows *much* more quickly than that! The GM of a cinematic campaign can use this next rule to enable such rates of fire.

An archer who has already drawn an arrow can try to ready and shoot his bow in one smooth motion. This requires an Attack or All-Out Attack (Determined) maneuver – a Heroic Archer (p. 45) may instead choose Move and Attack – and calls for *two* Bow rolls at -6. If the bowman has the Heroic Archer advantage or a form of Weapon Master (pp. 48-49) that encompasses bows, halve the penalty to -3. If he has *both,* he's at only -1! For anyone, All-Out Attack (Determined) adds +1 to both rolls.

The first roll is to draw the bow. Success lets the archer ready his bow instantly and shoot at once. Failure means he readies his bow too slowly to attack this turn but can shoot at no special penalty on a later turn. Critical failure means he *drops* his bow! Whatever his roll, he's defenseless if he chose All-Out Attack – and since a failure doesn't permit a shot, it amounts to a Ready that leaves him without active defenses.

The second roll is to shoot. This is only possible if the first roll succeeds. Treat this as an ordinary ranged attack, but with the extra penalty above.

Successfully executed, this shaves a second off the usual two-second ready time for a bow. The archer takes a Ready maneuver to draw an arrow, and uses the Quick-Shooting option on the following turn to ready and shoot his bow. If he rolls well, he can shoot *every other turn* – as if his bow had RoF 1 and Shots 1(1).

The archer *can* precede this feat with a Fast-Draw (Arrow) roll to ready an arrow instantly. Any failure means he drops the arrow (or the quiver; see p. B195) and spends his entire turn taking an unproductive Ready maneuver. Success readies an arrow and allows an immediate Quick-Shooting attempt. If the bowman makes all his rolls, he can shoot *every* turn. In effect, he has RoF 1 and Shots equal to his quiver's capacity . . . and can rival many firearms!

The GM may permit Quick-Shooting with other low-tech missile weapons that have RoF 1 and Shots 1(2). Simply change the skills required: Blowpipe-6 and Fast-Draw (Arrow) for blowpipes, Sling-6 and Fast-Draw (Stone) for slings, and so on.

At the GM's option, realistic archers can quick-shoot bows *out of combat*. There are real-life speed-shooting competitions, after all. Use the rules as written. Doing this under fire is cinematic, though – apply an extra -4 to Bow and Fast-Draw rolls for this feat in combat in a realistic game.

## *Rapid Strike with Thrown Weapons*

Cinematic kung fu masters and ninja often hurl multiple throwing weapons with uncanny precision. To simulate this, the GM may wish to let Rapid Strike (p. B370) – *including* the cinematic version on p. 127 – work with thrown-weapon attacks. For instance, a warrior could toss two weapons at -6, three at -12, four at -18, and so on. Halve these penalties for Weapon Masters. Such a Rapid Strike *can* target multiple opponents, just like one made in melee combat.

If the weapons weigh less than 1 lb. apiece (e.g., daggers or shuriken), the fighter can carry up to four in one hand, ready for *throwing* – but if he's holding more than one, treat them as unready for *melee* combat. Each weapon rests between two fingers, not clutched in the fist, so the GM may let six-fingered races ready five weapons, limit four-fingered races to three, and so on. If the weapons weigh 1 lb. or more (e.g., large knives), it's only possible to hold one at the ready, but it's ready for all purposes.

A warrior can carefully ready multiple small weapons – or a single large weapon – by taking one Ready maneuver per weapon. Alternatively, he may Fast-Draw his weapons, as described under *Multiple Fast-Draw* (p. 103). Any failed Fast-Draw roll ends his turn. If he has a ready weapon in each hand and knows the Quick-Swap perk (p. 51) for the one in his "off" hand, he can even throw the weapon in his master hand, snatch the other weapon with Quick-Swap, and throw it with his master hand as part of the same Rapid Strike.

A fighter can mix and match weapons and means of readying. For instance, a ninja who wishes to hurl four shuriken could Fast-Draw all four or carefully ready some and Fast-Draw the rest. He could even throw the shuriken and then Fast-Draw or Quick-Swap a large knife and throw it. The thrower must declare how many attacks he intends to attempt before he starts. Use the Rapid Strike penalty for the number of attacks *planned* – even if a failed Fast-Draw roll or critical miss cuts things short.

This is *not* the same as throwing a weapon with each hand, which is a Dual-Weapon Attack (p. B417), but a fighter holding multiple small weapons ready in each hand can throw them all! All attacks with one hand are a single Rapid Strike, with an extra -4 for Dual-Weapon Attack and a further -4 for attacks with the "off" hand.

## Rapid Fire with Thrown Weapons

A classic tactic of ninja and gadgeteers is to toss many tiny throwing weapons (caltrops, ball bearings, shuriken, etc.) at once, with the goal of hitting *somebody* with *something*. This is far less precise than *Rapid Strike with Thrown Weapons* (see above). Use the following special rules instead.

The weapons used must be ready for throwing. It takes a turn to ready a fistful of tiny weapons from a handy container, or to ready the container itself. You can toss up to BL/50 lbs. of small, sharp items or BL/20 lbs. of small, blunt ones with one hand (use BL/20 lbs. for *all* weapons in a cinematic campaign!), or launch up to BL/2 lbs. of projectiles from a container – box, pouch, hollow staff, etc. This is a limit on the number of items you can *throw* for useful effect, not a measure of how many you can *lift*.

Treat the entire collection of thrown weapons as a *missile* weapon with Acc 0, RoF and Shots equal to the number of items hurled, and Rcl 2. For four shots or less, Damage is at -1 *per die* relative to a single weapon of that kind, and Range is 2/3 usual. For more than four shots, Damage is at -2 *per die* and range is 1/3 usual. Bulk is -2 for a fistful of weapons, -6 for any kind of container.

Handle the throw as a rapid-fire missile attack; see *Rapid Fire* (p. B373). Roll against Throwing to hit, regardless of what you're throwing. You can throw all the weapons at one target for a bonus to hit or use *Spraying Fire* (p. B409) to attack multiple foes. All-Out Attack (Suppression Fire) isn't an option – that assumes a steady stream of fire, not a single burst of projectiles.

If you know Throwing Art, you *can* roll against that skill to hit, and receive its usual bonuses to range and damage!

*Example:* A comic-book ninja with ST 13 and Throwing-14 hurls a handful of shuriken at a foe 2 yards away. His BL is 34, so he could normally toss 34/50 = 0.68 lb. of sharp objects with one hand . . . but this is a cinematic game, so he can toss a full 34/20 = 1.7 lbs. of shuriken. Since a shuriken weighs 0.1 lb., his "fistful" consists of 17 stars! For a ST 13 man, a shuriken normally has Damage 1d-1 cut, Range 6/13. Since there are more than four, this becomes Damage 1d-3 cut, Range 2/4. The attack has Acc 0, RoF 17, and Rcl 2. The bonus for RoF 17 is +4 and the range modifier for 2 yards is 0, so the ninja needs 14 + 4 = 18 to hit. He rolls a 10, succeeding by 8. That's four multiples of Rcl 2, so he hits with one star plus four extras, for a total of five.

For instance, if our ninja had four shuriken in his right hand and two in his left, he could make two Rapid Strikes. His right-hand attacks would be at -18 for Rapid Strike and -4 for Dual-Weapon Attack: -22. His left-hand throws would have -6 for Rapid Strike, -4 for Dual-Weapon Attack, and -4 for using the off hand: -14. Needless to say, he'll want Weapon Master and Ambidexterity if he plans to do this often!

These rules represents multiple, carefully targeted attacks directed at specific foes and hit locations. To toss fistfuls of tiny items haphazardly as one big attack, see *Rapid Fire with Thrown Weapons* (p. 120).

## *Tricky Shooting*

Feints and Deceptive Attacks needn't be limited to melee combat. The optional rules below let warriors who specialize in Bow, Throwing Art, and so forth compete on an equal footing with hand-to-hand experts, if the GM wishes. This *might* be realistic – but the GM may reserve these options for cinematic games, restrict them to Heroic Archers and/or Weapon Masters, or simply forbid them. They can be used together or separately.

*Prediction Shots:* Ranged combat involves "leading the target" – that is, tracking his motion and calculating where to shoot so that the projectile will intercept his path. Many archers and marksmen even claim to be able to read a target's body language, deduce his reaction to seeing a weapon pointed at him (or to the shot itself), and shoot where he'll jump, duck, step, etc. To simulate such strategies, the GM may let fighters use Deceptive Attack (p. B369) with ranged weapons. Since this represents an attempt to put the shot where the target is most likely to dodge, and not the ploys used in melee combat (see *What is . . . a Deceptive Attack?*, p. 111), the defense penalty reduces Dodge but *not* Block or Parry. As usual for a Deceptive Attack, the attacker's effective skill after all modifiers must be at least 10, which makes this option most useful at short range.

*Ranged Feints:* The target of a ranged attack only gets an active defense if he's aware of the shooter, because then he can read his adversary's body language and guess when the shot will come. As just discussed, though, a shooter can read his *target's* body language, too. This is identical to the situation in melee combat but at longer range, and the GM may rule that a ranged attacker can feint (p. B365) – most often by faking a shot to draw the defender's guard or by "aiming" at one target and then suddenly spinning to shoot at another. A feint at distance is only possible if the attacker could hit the target with his weapon *and* his victim is aware of him (an unaware mark simply gets no defense!). All modifiers that would apply to an actual attack also apply to the feint. When using this rule, those with ranged weapons *can* use All-Out Attack (Feint).

# Active Defense Options

Except as noted, these expanded rules apply during any maneuver that permits an active defense. Parry options require a *ready* melee weapon – or, for an unarmed parry, a hand that isn't holding onto someone or something. Anything involving a retreat is only possible if you're standing or lying down, and aren't stunned.

## *Cross Parry*

If you have two ready melee weapons, you can commit *both* to a single parry. This is useful when your opponent has a two-handed weapon or one that's so powerful or heavy that a one-handed parry would be risky. It often involves crossing weapons in an effort to catch the attacker's weapon between them, which is why it's called a *Cross* Parry.

To attempt a Cross Parry, both hands must be able to parry. Work out what your Parry would be with either hand, applying all the usual modifiers – for weapon type (e.g., -1 if using a knife), number of previous parries with that weapon, and so on. Your Parry is the *better* of the two modified scores, +2 for the extra support.

For the purpose of *Parrying Heavy Weapons* (p. B376), treat this exactly as if it were a parry with a two-handed weapon that weighs as much as the two weapons combined. Effective quality is that of the *lowest*-quality weapon. If the rules indicate that a weapon breaks, it's the lighter of the two; if they weigh the same, roll randomly. Remember that two-handed weapons can parry things that weigh up to *twice* BL without being swept aside.

*Example:* A 2-lb. shortsword is normally susceptible to breakage against weapons that weigh 6 lbs. or more. Being one-handed, a weapon that weighs more than the user's BL will sweep it aside. Crossed with a 1-lb. large knife, total weight would be 3 lbs. It would take a 9-lb. or heavier weapon to cause breakage – and if something *did* break, it would be the knife, not the expensive sword. Furthermore, this would let the defender parry weapons weighing up to 2×BL.

A Cross Parry is always legal against a flail weapon or a kusari, even if it involves two fencing weapons. Apply the usual penalty for parrying such a weapon to the *final* Parry score. If you parry a kusari, the wielder may attempt a free Entangle as usual (p. B406), with success binding *both* of your weapons.

The down side to a Cross Parry is that it ties up both weapons in a way that prevents you from using either for any further parries this turn. In addition, if you critically miss, the *Critical Miss Table* results affect *both* weapons!

*Supported Parry:* If you have a ready melee weapon and an empty hand, and both can parry, you can put your hand on your weapon to support it as you parry. This simply adds +1 to your Parry with the weapon and lets you parry as if you had a two-handed weapon. No other benefits apply. You cannot use either hand to parry again this turn.

## *Defense While Grappling*

A grappled fighter has -4 to DX (p. B370). This affects combat skills, giving -2 to Block and Parry – and a grappled limb *can't* block or parry. Dodge is at -1, equivalent to the effect of -4 DX on Basic Speed (which isn't reduced). If a technique gives a worse defense penalty (e.g., -4 for Arm Lock), use that *instead*. Finally, the victim can't step or change posture while defending, so he can't retreat or use Acrobatic Dodge.

The grappler has no penalties. However, he can't parry with a limb without releasing its hold on his victim. To retreat or use Acrobatic Dodge, he must let go with *all* of his limbs.

## Fencing Parries

As explained under *Parry* (p. B269), a weapon with "F" in its Parry statistic uses the *Fencing Weapons* rules on p. B404. This doesn't mean that it's a European fencing blade – only that it's light and responsive enough to benefit from stances similar to those used with such swords. The special rules for fencing parries are a function of these stances, and apply when wielding *any* weapon sufficiently well-balanced to use with the Main-Gauche, Rapier, Saber, or Smallsword skill.

### What Is . . . a Parry?

Martial artists usually use the term "parry" to describe a defense that redirects or deflects an attack without absorbing much of its energy. Intercepting an attack and safely dissipating its energy is called a "block." In ***GURPS,*** these terms have different meanings. "Parry" refers to *either* kind of defense made with a weapon or a limb. "Block" describes either type of defense executed with a shield.

Not every parry involves contact. A parry against an attack on your *weapon* or your *hand* represents yanking the target out of harm's way, and *Parrying Heavy Weapons* (p. B376) doesn't apply to the attempt.

Not all parries involve limbs, either. If you parry a *grappling* technique (e.g., Judo Throw or Piledriver) using Boxing, Brawling, Judo, Karate, Sumo Wrestling, or Wrestling, you can opt to "counter" – twist or sprawl so that your adversary's technique fails – rather than slap away your enemy's hands. This doesn't require a free hand. It resembles a dodge, but it's a parry in game terms.

Neither of the above parries can set up an Arm Lock, Judo Throw, or other grappling technique on your turn. You must use a hand and make contact to do that. When using a combat skill at its DX default or parrying unarmed at DX/2 + 3, your parry is a frantic, brute-force attempt to slap aside the attack, and always involves *some* contact.

Most "fencing stances" present a reduced profile to an adversary in front of you, and place your weapon(s) between your body and your attacker. They generally include some combination of turning sideways, lining up your front and back legs perpendicular to the foe, and making a quarter turn to confront the enemy with *two* fencing weapons. These particulars have implications that the GM may wish to explore in a ***Martial Arts*** game, *if* he deems the added realism worth the extra bookkeeping:

*Multiple Parries:* One benefit of such stances is that they permit short parries that redirect blows just enough for you to lean out of their path. These efficient movements don't carry your weapon out of line, which means you suffer *half* the usual penalty for multiple parries; see *Number of Parries* (p. B376). This is realistic for frontal attacks, but attacks from the side require you to sweep your weapon out of line. If the GM is willing to keep track, then when counting multiple parries, parries against attacks that don't come from in front give the *full* penalty to future parries.

*Retreating:* Fencing stances use leg placement that allows swift retreats, giving +3 instead of +1 when you retreat on a parry. Realistically, this benefit won't apply when you Dive or when you retreat by rolling while lying down. In both cases, reduce the retreat bonus to the usual +1. The basic bonus is still +3 when you Sideslip or Slip, though – such moves *are* easier from these stances. For details, see *Retreat Options* (pp. 123-124).

*Encumbrance:* Since a fencing parry is actually a rapid parry-and-dodge, factors that limit Dodge ought to affect Parry. Encumbrance penalizes Parry just as it does Dodge . . . and logically, Dodge penalties from maneuvers, techniques, and other combat options should also affect fencing parries (but not vice versa). For instance, if a foe successfully parries your kick and sets up a Riposte (pp. 124-125) that reduces your Dodge, the penalty affects your attempts to parry with fencing weapons, too.

*Parrying Flails:* Fencing weapons' inability to parry flails (see *Flails,* p. B405) isn't a weakness of the fighting stances used but a peculiarity of specific weapons. Most rapiers, sabers, and smallswords are so tip-light that they can only parry massive swung weapons near the hilt. This lets a flail loop close enough to hit! To avoid this, reinforce the weapon with a Cross Parry (p. 121) or a Defensive Grip (pp. 109-111).

Other weapons capable of a fencing parry lack this weakness. Any weapon that *also* works with a non-fencing skill – meaning any skill other than Main-Gauche, Rapier, Saber, or Smallsword – has a mass distribution that lets it parry flails at the standard -4. Examples include the short staff, which can use the Smallsword skill or the Shortsword skill (treat it as a baton), and any rapier heavy enough to use with the Broadsword skill.

## Limiting Dodges

There's no limit to the number of times you may dodge *different* attacks during your turn (see *Dodging,* p. B374). You can even try a dodge when attacked with a firearm, provided you're aware of your attacker. This doesn't mean that you're ducking multiple melee attacks and dodging bullets. It simply means that you're moving unpredictably in combat, leading your adversaries to misjudge your position and miss some of the time. You're only actively ducking blows if you try an Acrobatic Dodge, retreat, or dodge and drop. In situations where you're moving but can't dodge – against surprise attacks, after an All-Out Attack, after kicking with a Move and Attack, and so on – your movement is predictable and attackers can easily compensate for it.

The two *optional* rules below make dodging less effective. They may or may not be realistic . . . but they make combat more deadly, which can contribute to a gritty feel that suits some realistic games. It's strongly recommended that the GM exempt fighters with Trained by a Master or Weapon Master from these rules.

*Limiting Multiple Dodges:* The GM may prefer to regard each dodge as a deliberate attempt to avoid a particular attack. If so, it ought to be difficult to dodge many attacks in a short time – just as it's harder to attempt more than one parry (p. B376) or block (see *Multiple Blocks,* see below). To simulate this, the GM may assess a cumulative -1 per dodge after the first in a turn. The first dodge has no penalty, but subsequent dodges are at -1, -2, -3, and so on.

*Restricted Dodge Against Firearms:* The GM may feel that because beams and bullets reach their mark at high speed, before the target could move appreciably, dodging should be less effective against them. Optionally, if a fighter is aware of someone with a firearm (make a Vision roll if unsure) *and* selects All-Out Defense, Attack, Change Posture, Defensive Attack, Feint, Move, or Move and Attack on his turn, he may take "evasive movement" with respect to *that one foe* as a free action. If the specified gunman shoots at him before the start of his next turn, he may dodge. All of the usual modifiers apply. To claim the bonus for *Acrobatic Dodge* (p. B375), he must make his Acrobatics roll during his turn. To claim the bonus for *Dodge and Drop* (p. B377), he must dive prone at the end of his turn (this can be part of his free action). He can't dodge firearms attacks from any enemy but the one he specified, evade more than one shooter, or declare his evasive movement after being attacked.

## Multiple Blocks

The GM may want to allow fighters to block more than once per turn, by analogy with multiple parries with the same hand or weapon (see *Number of Parries,* p. B376). Since a shield is bulky and must be held in place for long enough to absorb the blow, this is more difficult than repeated parries – apply a cumulative -5 per block after the first. Thus, the first block is unpenalized but subsequent blocks are at -5, -10, -15, and so on. Those with the Weapon Master advantage *halve* these penalties and round in the negative direction (-3, -5, -8 . . .).

## Parries with Legs or Feet

If you have two or more functional legs, you can try to ward off a blow to your lower body (feet, legs, or groin) by parrying with a foot or a leg instead of a hand or a weapon. Use your full Brawling or Karate Parry score. There's no special penalty – although Brawling parries have the usual -3 against swung weapons – but there *are* several drawbacks:

- As noted above, this parry is only effective against low-line attacks. It's worthless against attacks above the waist.
- You cannot retreat on the same turn you make a leg or foot parry. If you've already retreated, you cannot attempt such a parry. If you've already tried a parry like this, you cannot retreat – you must stay where you are.
- On a failed parry against a *weapon,* your attacker may choose to hit his original target or the leg you parried with. If your leg suffers more than half your HP in injury, it's automatically crippled (see *Crippling Injury,* p. B420) and you immediately fall down.

You may attempt only *one* foot or leg parry per turn, regardless of skill. However, this is in addition to hand parries. You could theoretically parry once per hand and once with a foot before suffering penalties for multiple parries.

While this parry looks like a kick, it doesn't damage your foe. For a version that does, see *Jam* (pp. 74-75).

## Parrying with Two-Handed Weapons

Many great Masters of Defence wrote of the virtues of long, two-handed weapons – notably bills, greatswords, bastard swords, and quarterstaffs – for fending off multiple adversaries. The heft and surface area of such weapons *do* make it feasible for a skilled warrior to angle his weapon to stop several attacks in rapid succession. Usually, he wards off distant blows in a manner that obstructs close-range ones, or trades reach for time by dealing with progressively more distant attackers one at a time as they approach.

If the GM decides that such claims are true in his campaign, he might allow any *ready* Polearm, Spear, Staff, or Two-Handed Sword weapon that's at least two yards long and wielded in two hands to use the following rules:

*Dual-Weapon Parry:* A weapon like this can make a *single* parry at -1 to deflect *both* halves of a Dual-Weapon Attack (p. B417). Success wards off the two attacks. Critical success means the attacker must roll on the *Critical Miss Table* (p. B556) once for each weapon. On any failure, though, both blows hit!

*Multiple Parries:* These weapons have *half* the usual penalties for parrying more than once in a turn (p. B376). Thus, successive parries in a turn are at a cumulative -2 per parry after the first – halved to -1 per parry for a Weapon Master! A Dual-Weapon Parry counts as a single parry for this purpose.

## Retreat Options

As explained under *Retreat* (p. B377), once per turn, you can step away from any one attacker to get a bonus to all active defenses against his melee attacks. In tactical combat, this lets you step into any adjacent hex that's *further* from your enemy than your starting hex.

Moving away from your adversary is the safest and most effective option in reality, but not the only one. Generalizing the movement component of a defense to work more like a step (see *Step,* p. B368) opens up additional possibilities. You can combine any of these with an Acrobatic Dodge (p. B375).

*Dive:* If you're *standing* or *kneeling,* you may try to dive under a melee attack. This is similar to the "dodge and drop" used to avoid ranged attacks, but less effective: all your defenses against that attacker are at -1 plus your retreat bonus (+1 for most defenses; +3 for a dodge or a parry with Boxing, Judo, Karate, or a fencing skill). This leaves you prone – in tactical combat, you're lying in your starting hex and the adjacent hex of your choice. Since you're lying down, you have -3 to defend against future attackers! This is risky . . . but if you're cornered and have allies nearby, a net +2 to Dodge *now* might be worth the gamble. You can also dive as a "spoiling measure" against an enemy who tries a takedown; see *Sprawling* (p. 119).

*Sideslip:* If you're *standing,* you can step aside without retreating in an effort to let the attack pass through your former position. In tactical combat, you may move into any adjacent hex that's the *same* distance from your attacker as your starting hex. All your defenses against that opponent are at -1 plus your retreat bonus (+1 or +3). This gives a net +0 to blocks and most parries. However, dodges and mobile parries end up at +2, making this option useful when you have a defense like that and don't want to give ground to a foe with a longer weapon.

*Slip:* If you're *standing,* you can try to close the gap between you and your foe as you evade or deflect his attack. In tactical combat, you may step into any adjacent hex that's *closer* to your assailant than your starting hex. You *can* step into close combat with him! Your defenses against that attacker are at -2 plus your retreat bonus (+1 or +3); thus, you have a net +1 at best, -1 at worst. Against a stop thrust (p. B366), add another -1. This tactic is for times when it's actually *more* dangerous to keep your distance than to close with the enemy – such as when he has a pistol or a long weapon, especially if you're unarmed.

It may be possible to buy off the penalties for these options by improving special techniques. Such techniques should always come with risks. You have to trade off *something* to defend at a bonus without giving ground! The most common drawback is increased injury from the incoming attack if the defense fails. See *Defensive Techniques* (pp. 91-92).

## Riposte

A gambit popular with martial artists is a parry that carries the attacker's weapon out of line or otherwise compromises his defenses, "setting up" a counterattack – or *riposte* – that exploits the opening. Executed correctly, the riposte is difficult to avoid. However, it often requires the defender to begin his attacking motion early and give up some of his *own* ability to defend. Thus, it can backfire spectacularly!

# Harsh Realism for Unarmed Fighters

The ***Basic Set*** treats unarmed combat favorably: there's no "off" hand, Judo and Karate don't have a penalty to parry weapons, and you can't hurt yourself unless you strike DR 3+ or your opponent uses a weapon to parry your attack. See *Parrying* (p. B376) and *Hurting Yourself* (p. B379) for details. This makes it unrealistically tempting to fight barehanded against armed and armored foes.

*Kusarigama*

Below are optional rules that add risk to unarmed combat. They're *unsuitable* for most games – even "realistic" martial-arts fiction tends to err on the side of a good story – and opposite in spirit from cinematic rules (see *Cinematic Combat,* pp. 125-133). Still, the GM can use both kinds of rules in the same campaign, enforcing harsh realism for most fighters but ignoring it in favor of cinematic options for those with Trained by a Master or Weapon Master!

*Bruised Knuckles:* Shock may vanish in a second (see *Shock,* p. B419), but injuries make it painful to strike with the hurt body part. Striking at full power with an injured body part inflicts the shock penalty for its accumulated wounds (maximum -4) as if wounded anew. You can avoid this by hitting with less force: take a damage penalty equal to the shock penalty. High Pain Threshold lets you ignore this; Low Pain Threshold means you must make a Will roll at this penalty or flinch and pull your punch anyway!

*Defense Limitations:* Boxing, Judo, and Karate are at +3 to Parry on a retreat for reasons of mobility. As discussed under *Fencing Parries* (p. 122), this reliance on footwork has its drawbacks. Reduce the +3 to +1 when retreating by *diving* or *rolling* instead of by stepping. As well, apply Dodge penalties due to maneuvers, techniques, combat options, and enemy action to Parry for these skills.

*Low-Line Parries:* A standing man has -2 to parry an attack on his legs or feet if using a hand or a reach C weapon. Leg and foot parries aren't penalized (see *Parries with Legs or Feet,* p. 123).

*Parrying Weapons:* Unarmed combat skills – *including* Judo and Karate – parry weapons, swung or otherwise, at -3. Failure by 3 or less means the parry still "succeeds" in the sense that you got your limb in the way. The attacker hits the parrying limb *instead* of his intended target, and rolls his usual damage. In close combat (only), ignore this drawback for Judo and Karate parries vs. rigid crushing weapons – clubs, sticks, etc.

*Striking Bone:* The shins and skull give their owner DR 0 and DR 2, respectively, but are tougher than this suggests. When you strike the skull with any unarmed attack, *Hurting Yourself* applies. If you strike the leg using a shin kick (p. 112), roll 1d. On a 1 – or on 1-3, if your foe tried and failed a leg parry – you knock shins. Apply *Hurting Yourself* unless you have the advantage Striker (Crushing; Limb, Shin, -20%).

*Strong and Weak Hands:* Most unarmed fighters are markedly more capable with one hand than the other. When using the "off" hand, you have the usual -4 to skill (and therefore -2 to Parry) *and* -2 to ST (giving -1 to punching damage). In campaigns that use this rule, Off-Hand Weapon Training becomes a Style Perk for all barehanded striking arts, and it and Ambidexterity (p. B39) eliminate *both* penalties.

To set up a Riposte, declare that you wish to do so *before* you parry. Choose a penalty to your Parry score – the larger the penalty, the greater your focus on the counterattack. This cannot reduce your Parry, before all other modifiers except Enhanced Parry, below 8.

Then add the remaining modifiers and try to parry the attack. You *can* retreat – but if your foe steps back after attacking, you might end up too far away for a Riposte.

Success means you parry and set up a Riposte. If your *first* attack next turn uses your parrying weapon against the foe you parried, one of *his* active defenses against it suffers the penalty you accepted on your parry. If you parried his hand or weapon, reduce his Parry with that hand (with either hand, if his attack used two hands). If you parried his shield, lower his Block. If you parried an unarmed attack other than a hand strike (bite, kick, slam, etc.), reduce his Dodge. Apply *half* this penalty (drop fractions) to any other defense he attempts against your attack – including rolls to resist grappling moves that use Quick Contests instead of active defenses (e.g., takedowns).

Failure means you're hit, as for any failed parry. Your attempt gives you no special benefits – although you can still attack your foe on your next turn, if his attack leaves you in any shape to do so.

*Example:* Harry the Good and Black Odo are dueling with broadswords and medium shields. Harry has Broadsword-16 and Enhanced Parry 1, for a Parry of 12. Odo attacks Harry with his sword and Harry decides to attempt a Riposte. Odo being his mortal enemy, Harry goes for broke and takes the maximum penalty: -4, which drops his Parry to 8. With +1 for Combat Reflexes and +2 for his shield's DB, his final Parry is 11. He succeeds, warding off Odo's attack. This allows him to Riposte with his sword (*not* a shield bash, kick, etc.) on his turn. He does so and succeeds! If Odo tries to parry with his sword, he has the same penalty Harry did, or -4. If he attempts a dodge or block, he has *half* this penalty, or -2.

A Riposte is most effective when you're more skilled than your foe, when you have many defensive bonuses (Combat Reflexes, shield, weapon with a Parry bonus, etc.), or when your target is *already* compromised – e.g., kneeling or on bad footing.

The active defense penalties from Riposte and from feinting *are* cumulative. If on your turn you successfully feint a foe, and on his turn he attacks and you parry at a penalty, then you can Riposte on your *next* turn, forcing him to defend with penalties for both the feint and the Riposte. This takes two turns and offers many opportunities for failure . . . but when it works, it's devastating!

You cannot combine Deceptive Attack and Riposte, though. A Riposte *is* a Deceptive Attack – just one where you're taking a defensive risk instead of an offensive one.

### *Unbalanced Parries*

As discussed under *Parry* (p. B269), a weapon that has a "U" in its Parry statistic is *unbalanced*. You cannot parry with it after using it to attack – although you *can* parry with another weapon, or dodge or block. Likewise, if you use it to parry an attack during a Wait, you cannot use your Wait to attack with that weapon later on in the same turn.

Being unbalanced has nothing to do with becoming *unready* after an attack or a parry – that only happens to weapons with "‡" next to their ST statistic. It just means that the weapon has distinct offensive and defensive stances: attacking carries the weapon out of line for defending, and vice versa. Rules that allow you to attack or parry multiple times per turn work normally. You just can't attack *and* parry.

This does make it tricky to execute Riposte (pp. 124-125). You must parry to do this – and since you can't parry after you've attacked, you must forgo attacking with your weapon for an entire turn, use it to parry an attack, and Riposte on your *next* turn. This makes the option less spontaneous than it is with a balanced weapon like a sword or a staff . . . which is realistic.

A Defensive Attack (p. 100) *does* allow a parry after an attack with such a weapon, and is an important exception to these rules.

# Cinematic Combat

Fiction usually depicts combat *dramatically*, as either a heroic contest or a violent ballet. Often the bias is subtle, with the storyteller extending the benefit of the doubt to barely possible feats but otherwise hewing to reality. This is typical of the gossip of real-world martial artists when they relate tales of how *their* style pushes the limits! At the other end of the spectrum are epics that pit the superhuman techniques and unlikely weapons of the heroes against those of the villains, with little regard for physical laws.

Termed "cinematic" because it's most familiar to us from the movies, this dramatic approach isn't unique to the silver screen. This is the world of heroes from earliest myth and legend, battling armies, monsters, and gods; swashbucklers from romantic novels, dueling all comers to certain victory; comic-book ninja and commandos, using sheer skill to make up for small numbers; and masked wrestlers on television, taking hard hits from the top rope and still walking away from the bout.

In campaigns in this vein, the GM should consider using most or all of the optional rules in this chapter that aren't strictly unrealistic but that are possibly *optimistic*. These fall into two main categories:

- Rules that speed up actions or make extra actions possible (or easier), such as *Quick Sheathing* (p. 102), *Multiple Fast-Draw* (p. 103), *Quick-Shooting Bows* (pp. 119-120), *Rapid Fire with Thrown Weapons* (p. 120), *Rapid Strike with Thrown Weapons* (pp. 120-121), *Multiple Blocks* (p. 123), and *Parrying with Two-Handed Weapons* (p. 123).

## *Faster Combat*

You can run extremely detailed fights using ***Martial Arts*** and the ***Basic Set,*** but most gamers find *quicker* combats more fun! Below are tips on how to speed up battle. They're advice, not rules – the GM should use only the suggestions that suit his gaming group.

- *Limit options.* Let the players choose only those options that suit the kind of game you're running: realistic or cinematic, emphasizing unarmed martial arts or weapon styles, etc. Politely but firmly forbid the rest.
- *Encourage options that lower defenses.* Deceptive Attacks, feints, Ripostes, and Stop Hits add complexity . . . but reduced defenses increase the odds that a blow will land and end the fight. This keeps battles from taking forever because nobody ever fails a defense roll.
- *Make a "cheat sheet."* List modifiers and page numbers for all the optional rules you intend to use. An index card is ideal for this – and doubles as a handy bookmark for a page of frequently used rules.
- *Work out everything in advance.* Somewhere on the character sheet of each PC or important NPC, note such things as allowed movement, modified skill, and damage with attacks; jumping distance; slam damage at full Move; and crippling thresholds (damage over HP/2 and HP/3).
- *Require speedy decisions.* Tell each player to have his actions ready when his turn comes. If he doesn't, he must take some "default" action agreed upon in advance: All-Out Defense, Do Nothing, repeat his previous action, etc. "My PC is a kung fu master! He'd know what to do!" doesn't hold water. A second is still a second, even for a kung fu master. There's plenty of time to weigh options while others are taking *their* turns.
- *Encourage "trademark moves."* Have each player work out a few "standard operating procedures" in the form of an entire turn's worth of actions calculated in advance; e.g., "Committed Attack (Strong) and Rapid Strike: thrust to the vitals at skill 13, then a Deceptive swing to the torso for -2 defenses at skill 12." These are good "default" actions for the player who can't make up his mind!
- *Hold players responsible for remembering options.* If you let the players use a specialized rule, make it *their* job to remember its details and location. If they can't remember the rule, their *characters* decide not to use the tactic.
- *Have major wounds end fights.* An NPC should flee or surrender if he takes a major wound (or crippling wound), unless he has a serious mental problem like Berserk. Don't keep going until everyone on one side is unconscious or dead. It takes forever and isn't especially realistic *or* cinematic.

- Rules that make fighters more mobile – especially if they involve acrobatics! These include *Acrobatic Stand* (p. 98), *Feints Using Non-Combat Skills* (p. 101), *Acrobatic Movement* (pp. 105-107), *Acrobatic Attack* (p. 107), *Flying Attack* (p. 107), and *Retreat Options* (pp. 123-124).

None of these options is absolutely cinematic. Used conservatively, they might even be realistic. Nevertheless, a campaign that features a large proportion of these rules will *feel* cinematic, while one that omits most of them won't – regardless of the GM's intent!

Some optional rules offer additional detail that *doesn't* suit a fast-and-loose cinematic game, the worst offenders being *Postures, Hit Locations, and Techniques* (pp. 89-99), *Fast-Draw from Odd Positions* (pp. 103-104), *A Matter of Inches* (p. 110), *Close Combat and Body Morphology* (pp. 114-117), *More Actions After a Grapple* (pp. 117-119), and *Fencing Parries* (p. 122). *Harsh Realism for Unarmed Fighters* (p. 124) and *Limiting Dodges* (pp. 122-123) are meant for realistic characters, and would ruin the fun of cinematic warriors. Finally, *Untrained Fighters* (p. 113) doesn't suit PCs (even untrained ones) in a cinematic campaign – although it's a good option for "cannon fodder" NPCs!

Below are additional rules that can help build a cinematic feel. Except for *Multiple Attacks,* which appears here because it refers to several superhuman advantages, most of these *are* strictly cinematic. Use them in a realistic campaign at your peril!

# Multiple Attacks

Multiple attacks by the same fighter in a single turn almost define cinematic combat, although they can occur even in realistic campaigns. These guidelines help explain how the many options for multiple attacks interact. They apply to all attacks, but focus on melee combat; see *Ranged Attack Options* (pp. 119-121) for additional rules for rapid *ranged* attacks.

Each combatant – however numerous his limbs and whatever his weaponry – starts with *one* attack per All-Out Attack, Attack, Committed Attack, Defensive Attack, or Move and Attack maneuver, and many normally select only *one* of those maneuvers per turn. Three situations modify these basic assumptions:

*Altered Time Rate* (p. B38): Each level of the Altered Time Rate advantage bestows one additional *maneuver* per turn – not just an extra attack! The remaining rules in this section apply *separately* to each All-Out Attack, Attack, Committed Attack, Defensive Attack, or Move and Attack maneuver chosen.

*Extra Attack* (p. B53): Each level of the Extra Attack advantage gives one additional *attack* per All-Out Attack, Attack, Committed Attack, Defensive Attack, or Move and Attack maneuver. Extra Attack benefits *only* those maneuvers. For instance, someone with Extra Attack 2 could use Attack to make three attacks instead of one; if he also had Altered Time Rate 1, he could choose two Attack maneuvers and make three attacks with each.

*All-Out Attack* (p. B365): Selecting All-Out Attack (Double) lets a warrior add *one* attack to his usual number, with that maneuver only. If he has Extra Attacks, he still adds one attack – he doesn't double his attacks! All-Out Attack (Determined), (Long), and (Strong) give no extra

attacks, but their benefits apply to *all* attacks with that maneuver. For those with Altered Time Rate, the effects of All-Out Attack don't carry over to later maneuvers; for instance, a super who chooses All-Out Attack (Double) and then Attack would get one extra attack with his All-Out Attack but only the usual number of attacks with his Attack.

Attacks can involve any combination of unrestrained body parts (hands, feet, Strikers, etc.) and ready weapons. Weapons that become unready after an attack can strike only once. Kicks are at -2 unless improved via a technique. Attacks with the "off" hand are at -4 for those without Ambidexterity (p. B39) or Off-Hand Weapon Training (p. 50).

Once per All-Out Attack, Attack, Committed Attack, Defensive Attack, or Move and Attack maneuver, a fighter who desires more attacks may trade *one* (and only one) of his attacks for *one* of these special options:

*Rapid Strike* (p. B370): Unless he took Move and Attack, a warrior can split one of his melee attacks into *two* attacks with the same weapon or *two* unarmed attacks, at an extra -6. Those with Trained by a Master or Weapon Master take half the penalty, and may be able to attempt three or more attacks; see *Rapid Strike* (below).

*Combination* (p. 80): A martial artist who has studied a Combination can substitute it for an ordinary Rapid Strike. Otherwise, treat this as a Rapid Strike.

*Dual-Weapon Attack* (p. B417): A fighter with two ready weapons in different hands can use one of his attacks to attack with both weapons at once. These two attacks are at an extra -4, but the Dual-Weapon Attack (p. 83) technique lets cinematic martial artists reduce this penalty. This option *is* allowed for two unarmed attacks with different hands.

## Rapid Strike

In a cinematic campaign – especially a *chambara* or *wuxia* one – the GM may wish to allow more than two attacks with a Rapid Strike (p. B370). If so, the penalty becomes -6 per extra attack: -6 for two attacks, -12 for three, -18 for four, and so on. This applies to *all* the attacks; it doesn't accumulate gradually. For instance, three attacks would all be at -12.

Individuals with Trained by a Master or Weapon Master may halve this penalty; e.g., a Weapon Master could make four attacks at -9. In addition, the GM may rule that only those who have these advantages can attempt three or more attacks with a Rapid Strike.

The GM is free to cap the maximum number of attacks possible with a Rapid Strike. However, this rule is fairly self-limiting: a hero *could* attempt 10 attacks . . . but even with Weapon Master, he would be at -27! To ensure that only skilled warriors can make large numbers of attacks, simply limit adjusted skill to 12.

## Feints and Multiple Attacks

A fighter can trade melee attacks for feints (see *Feint*, p. B365) on a one-for-one basis. Modifiers for maneuvers and attack options *do* affect skill for this purpose; e.g., a feint during a Rapid Strike is at -6. A warrior can use Move and Attack to "Move and Feint," but at -4 and with a skill limit of 9, it's self-defeating.

A feint that precedes attacks on the same subject during the same maneuver affects the victim's defenses against those attacks; thus, All-Out Attack (Feint) is no different from using All-Out Attack (Double) to feint and attack the same target. If the attacker uses the last attack of a maneuver to feint a foe, its benefits apply to attacks against that opponent during his *next* maneuver. This maneuver will nearly always occur on his next turn – but after one turn, the feint is no longer effective.

It's "legal" but not terribly effective to attempt multiple feints against the same enemy in the space of a single maneuver. Only the *most recent* feint applies, even if it wasn't the *best* one. It's possible to "undo" a good feint with a lousy one!

A feint *never* unreadies a weapon, even if an attack would.

## Multiple Targets

A fighter who has two or more melee attacks with a given maneuver can use them to attack or feint multiple foes. He can alternate between opponents in any order he wishes – but each *full* yard (hex, on a battle map) he skips between targets "wastes" one attack. Thus, it's most efficient to attack adjacent adversaries from right to left or left to right, striking each enemy in succession.

### What Is . . . a Rapid Strike?

A Rapid Strike (p. B370) is normally two distinct attacks – one after the other – but it doesn't have to be. It might instead be a single motion that connects more than once: a punch with an elbow behind it, a sword cut calculated to hit two legs at once, a knee to the groin that ends with a stamp to the foot, and so on. Since the two blows don't hit the same location at the same time, this is just a "special effect." The target may defend normally against each attack, and has his full DR against both.

Other Rapid Strikes consist of a blow with a vicious follow-up. The target still gets normal defenses and DR against this. For instance, a knife thrust followed by a cut could represent stabbing and then tearing. The victim might twist so that the knife slides out (dodge), use his shield to shove you away (block), or restrain your wrist (parry). His armor DR would affect the second attack – despite the knife being inside his armor – because you have to rip through him *and* his armor. Similar logic applies to a stamp-and-grind with the heel, chop-and-draw with a sword, a grapple that nabs one arm and pulls it across the body to trap the other, and so on.

The GM should permit anything that applies on a per-attack basis – poison or magical flame on a blade, Innate Attack with Aura, and so on – to work once per attack, not just once per Rapid Strike. Simply assume that the target is exposed for longer or over a greater proportion of his body.

Because such interpretations have no game effects, you may take dramatic license when describing a Rapid Strike. This is good roleplaying!

*Example 1:* An attacker with two attacks can only attack adjacent targets (in adjoining hexes, on a map). If he tried to attack two opponents with a gap between them, he'd lose an attack . . . and be back to just one attack.

*Example 2:* Someone who has three attacks and two adjacent opponents could make two attacks on one foe and one on the other, in any order. If his enemies were one full yard apart, he could only attack each of them once – skipping a yard would use up an attack. If he had a third adversary adjacent to the first two, he could opt to attack each of them once, moving from left to right or right to left. Skipping the one in the middle would be like fighting two people a yard apart, and cost him one attack.

When executing a technique specifically designed to engage multiple opponents, its special rules *always* supersede this general rule. For examples, see *Grand Disarm* (p. 84) and *Whirlwind Attack* (p. 88).

### Grappling and Multiple Attacks

Any grappling move that counts as an attack is permitted as part of a multiple attack sequence during a maneuver. You must usually attempt *different* actions (takedown and pin, kick and break free, break free and grapple, etc.). You can't make repeated attempts at a takedown, pin, or lock; try to injure an opponent repeatedly through strangling or an Arm Lock, Neck Snap, etc.; or take multiple shots at breaking free. However, you *can* try the same move against different body parts or opponents, grapple and attempt an instant follow-up, or – if making an attack that must follow a parry, such as Arm Lock – insert attacks between the parry and the follow-up. For instance, if you parried using Judo and then made two attacks, you could feint and *then* use Arm Lock.

## Chambara Fighting

Japanese *chambara* movies and Hong Kong *wuxia* films use wires and camera angles to create the illusion of warriors catapulting through the air, battling while balanced on bamboo canes or telephone wires, leaping from rooftop to treetop, and generally ignoring gravity. Traditionally, fighters in these tales *aren't* comic-book superheroes, capable of flight and telekinesis. They're just so skilled at the martial arts that they can perform the most fantastic feats from martial-arts legend.

The rules below make it possible to simulate this kind of action. They make *no* effort to be realistic! Only use them in highly cinematic campaigns – and only for combatants who have either Trained by a Master or Weapon Master. Even in the most over-the-top movies, only *true* masters can perform these stunts.

### Chambara Movement

Mighty leaps and acrobatic flips almost define the genre. In a chambara campaign, a fighter with Trained by a Master or Weapon Master and both Acrobatics and Jumping at DX level or better may leap his full jumping distance in combat, contrary to *Jumping During Combat* (p. B352). Work out high- and broad-jump distance – for standing and running jumps – and record it on the character sheet to avoid having to figure it out in play. This greatly benefits Flying Attacks (p. 107) and evading by jumping (see *Evading,* p. 105).

The GM should allow *Acrobatic Stand* (p. 98) and *Acrobatic Movement* (pp. 105-107), and *halve* all penalties for these stunts (rounding in the negative direction). For instance, the penalty for Acrobatic Stand becomes -3. In the case of multiple, cumulative penalties, find the final penalty and halve the total.

#### Other Multiple Actions

The *Multiple Attacks* rules apply only to the All-Out Attack, Attack, Committed Attack, Defensive Attack, and Move and Attack maneuvers. A fighter can "trade" attacks for feints, but he can't sacrifice attacks to perform tasks covered by other maneuvers. He cannot make multiple posture changes with Change Posture (but see *Acrobatic Stand,* p. 98), hastily Ready an unready weapon (but he can *draw* several weapons; see *Multiple Fast-Draw,* p. 103), count his turn as more than one second of Concentrate, or Aim or Evaluate on a turn when he attacks. *Exception:* Individuals with Altered Time Rate can do all of these things by taking suitable maneuvers on their turn!

### Chambara Attacks

A trademark of chambara fighting is attacking on the move, striking foes on all sides. In a chambara campaign, the GM should use the expanded rules for Rapid Strike (p. 127) to let martial artists attack as often as their skill allows.

A chambara fighter with more than one melee attack thanks to Extra Attack or All-Out Attack (Double) can "trade" some of these for extra steps on a one-for-one basis. He can insert steps anywhere in his attack sequence – even in the middle of a Combination, Dual-Weapon Attack, or Rapid Strike (none of which can be traded for steps).

*Example:* Serena has Extra Attack 1, giving her two basic attacks. Taking an Attack maneuver, she converts one into a Rapid Strike for three attacks at -6 apiece (-12, halved for Trained by a Master). She trades the other for a step. With the basic step allowed on an Attack, she gets *two* steps. She elects to attack, step, attack, step, and attack again!

Naturally, chambara fighters can use both *Flying Attack* (p. 107) and *Acrobatic Attack* (p. 107). When making an Acrobatic Attack, add the -2 to Acrobatics to any penalty for a specific stunt and then halve it as usual. Also halve the -2 to attack, making it -1, just like a Flying Attack. The GM should invent suitable techniques to capitalize on this. There are three main varieties:

- Acrobatic attacks that let the hero buy off the -4 to hit for a Move and Attack and -1 for an Acrobatic Attack, and ignore the skill limit of 9 when doing so. These have a basic default of -6.

● Flying attacks that permit the fighter to eliminate the -4 to hit for a Move and Attack and -1 for a Flying Attack, and bypass the skill limit of 9. These also have a default of -6.

● Spinning attacks that allow the martial artist to reduce the -5 to hit for a Wild Swing and avoid the usual skill cap of 9. These, too, default at -6.

See *Creating New Techniques* (pp. 89-95) for details. The benefits of these techniques are not "free" to everybody with Trained by a Master or Weapon Master. However, warriors with one of these advantages, Acrobatics and Jumping at DX, *and* at least a point in an offensive technique may attempt an "acrobatic," "flying," or "spinning" version of their technique at default (-6), with benefits as described above.

## *Chambara Defenses*

Retreating great distances by flipping and leaping is the definitive chambara defense! In chambara campaigns, those with Trained by a Master or Weapon Master should have access to the expanded rules under *Retreat Options* (pp. 123-124), even if other fighters do not, and all of the following options:

● They get +3 to *all* active defenses when they retreat – including blocks and parries that would normally get only +1.

● They may retreat more than once, and more than a yard at a time, up to a distance equal to their Move each turn. These retreats get the usual +3, but there's a cumulative -1 per retreat after the first. Any retreat that exceeds one step is at an extra -1 per yard. For instance, a Move 7 fighter could retreat 3 yards at +0 (+3 for retreating, -3 for 3 yards), 1 yard two times at +2 and +1 (the basic +3, -1 and -2 for the second and third retreat), and finally 2 yards at -2 (+3, -2 for 2 yards, -3 for the fourth retreat).

● They can use Acrobatics to enhance *any* defense, not just Dodge. Treat this just like *Acrobatic Dodge* (p. B375), except that it also works with Block and Parry. Any number of defenses can be acrobatic, at a cumulative -1 to Acrobatics per defense after the first.

Another feature of chambara movies is that attacks from behind don't surprise veteran warriors! A fighter with Combat Reflexes *and* Trained by a Master or Weapon Master can sense such an attack. It counts as coming from the side – not the rear – exactly like a "runaround" attack (p. B391), giving the defender -2 to active defenses. Practitioners of any style can learn the Timed Defense technique (p. 89) to buy off even this penalty.

Lastly, the GM should permit all options that enable or enhance multiple blocks and parries – notably *Multiple Blocks* (p. 123) and the two special rules under *Parrying with Two-Handed Weapons* (p. 123). All chambara fighters should be allowed to learn Dual-Weapon Defense (p. 83), too, regardless of their style.

## *Special Feats for Cinematic Skills*

Three cinematic skills are *essential* in chambara campaigns: Flying Leap (p. B196), Light Walk (p. B205), and Lizard Climb (pp. 61-62). These have all their usual functions, plus a few additional ones.

### Flying Leap

A triple-powered leap is sometimes overkill in combat. A jump that merely *doubles* jumping distance – and ST, for a Drop Kick, Flying Jump Kick, etc. – is at +5 to skill.

*Wuxia* movies simulate flying leaps by suspending actors from wires, giving such jumps a lazy, floating appearance instead of an aggressive, ballistic one. Within the story, the explanation is often "lightening the body." If you leap like this, you still have double or triple your jumping distance – but use only your *normal* jumping distance to work out your Move in a slam, and your unmodified ST for a Drop Kick, Flying Jump Kick, etc. This kind of jump is at +5 to skill.

These modifiers only cancel out penalties for hasty use of the skill – they never give a net bonus. You *can* combine the two options for *+10* to skill. This negates the -10 to use the skill instantly and permits a jump for double distance with no bonuses to ST or slam damage, which is still very useful when evading or making a Flying Attack.

Flying Leap costs the usual 1 FP per use with these options, but since they're both less exhausting than full-powered use, success by 5+ means there's no FP cost at all!

### Light Walk

You can use Light Walk to move across almost any fragile or flimsy surface without falling through, including a glass skylight (no modifier), tent (-2), hanging laundry (-4), dense hedge (-6), or canopy of leaves at treetop height (-8). Roll once per turn. This is a free action. Success lets you take your turn normally. Failure means you start to fall. You can still act, but you should probably use your turn to grab something!

Light Walk also allows feats of balance. This is much easier than walking on thin ice or treetops, because it's actually *possible* in real life! All such attempts are at +8, plus the Size Modifier for the *thickness* of whatever you're trying to stand on (see p. B550). For instance, a 1" rail (-11 for thickness) would require a roll at -3. Once again, roll every turn.

You can even try to leap up and land on an enemy's weapon! This requires an Attack maneuver and is all you can do that turn. Roll against Light Walk to hit, at the standard penalty for weapon size. Treat failure as a missed kick. Success means you hit. Your foe can try any active defense – he may injure your foot if he parries (see p. B376) – but if he fails, you're standing on his weapon! He cannot use it to attack or parry. He can take a Ready maneuver to dump you off (roll vs. Light Walk to land; failure indicates a fall), but this unreadies his weapon. If he chooses to fight with another weapon, kick, etc., he's at -4 to hit.

In all cases, if you're knocked back (see *Knockback*, p. B378), apply the penalty for the surface you're balancing on to your roll to stay standing. You may use the highest of DX, Acrobatics, Judo, or Light Walk. Perfect Balance gives its usual +4. If you fail, you fall *through* or *off* the surface!

### Lizard Climb

You can use this skill for movement in combat. Each yard of movement along a wall costs +1 movement point; see *Movement Point Costs* (p. B387). You can grab walls and let go multiple times in the space of a turn, but you must make a new skill roll each time you cling to a wall, with failure meaning a fall that ends your turn.

# Mind Games

An important part of martial-arts mythology, especially in cinematic settings, is that "martial artist" is as much a mindset as it is a skill set. These optional rules address this philosophy.

## *The Contest of Wills*

In martial-arts films and samurai legends, entire battles are fought in the mind. The warriors lock eyes, and then one suddenly breaks eye contact and walks away, beaten . . . or charges, knowing that he's doomed.

To initiate a Contest of Wills, the challenger must Concentrate and lock eyes with his opponent. If his foe accepts the challenge, he must take a Concentrate maneuver as well. If he rejects it, he must make a Will roll to avoid being drawn in anyway. Success means he can take his turn normally and cannot be challenged again this combat.

Once the Contest begins, roll a *Regular* Contest of Will each turn. Either fighter may substitute Intimidation or Mental Strength for Will, if better.

*Modifiers:* Fearlessness; +5 each for Indomitable and Unfazeable; the better fighter gets +1 per three levels by which his best combat skill exceeds his opponent's. Reputation can go either way. For instance, -2 for being a ruthless killer would give +2, but +2 for being merciful might give -2. In some settings, Status and other reaction modifiers apply.

Roll once per turn until somebody wins. Find the winner's margin of victory as if this were a Quick Contest and make a reaction roll for the loser, applying the margin as a bonus. Use the "potential combat situation" results on the *Reaction Table* (p. B560). If this drives the loser to attack, he has the winner's margin of victory as a penalty to his attack rolls!

This rule is for PCs and major NPCs. See *Fear and Martial Artists* (below) for a way to demoralize thugs.

## *Concentration and the Martial Arts*

Losing your cool can mean losing the fight! If a martial artist fails his self-control roll for a mental disadvantage that would *distract* him (GM's opinion), he fights at -2 to DX. This includes submitting to Bad Temper in any fight, Lecherousness when facing a sexy foe, etc., but *not* things like Berserk and Bloodlust.

## *Fear and Martial Artists*

Fear can be a killer, too. A failed Fright Check (p. B360) is likely to stun the victim and make him easy prey. The GM may require Fright Checks from combatants who suffer dismemberment (p. B421) or lose an eye to an Eye-Pluck (p. 72), a nose or an ear to Pressure Secrets (p. 59), or any body part to a bite (see *Teeth,* p. 115). While most Fright Checks in combat are at +5 for the heat of battle, those for gruesome injuries are not!

Heroic PCs can use Intimidation (p. B202) on minor NPCs. The GM may want to quantify the +1 to +4 for displays of strength as +1 per five of their number the NPCs know the heroes have defeated, to a maximum of +4. This doesn't have to be in the same fight! It affects soldiers who hear tales from buddies who survived the last battle, thugs who see the heroes emerge unscathed from a room guarded by a dozen of their comrades, etc. Reputation is another important modifier; see *The Contest of Wills* (above). Enough bonuses make even default skill (Will-5) effective!

## *Faking It*

To convincingly fake martial-arts skill based on what you've seen in demos and movies, make a DX-based Performance roll. Success means your audience believes you! This lets you attempt Intimidation using the rules for specious intimidation. Critical success means you pass yourself off as a master, which may have minor social benefits.

To portray the martial arts on stage or screen, roll against Stage Combat (p. B222). This defaults to Combat Art/Sport skills at -2, and to combat skills and Performance at -3. For scenes involving multiple performers, roll against the lowest of the *worst* performer's skill and the choreographer's Fight Choreography skill (p. B198).

Such tricks provide no combat benefits and are unlikely to fool *real* martial artists! Against a trained fighter, treat these rolls as Quick Contests. He gets an IQ-based roll against his best combat, Combat Art, or Combat Sport skill. You must *win* to convince him you're the real thing.

You can end a jump stuck to a wall that's within reach of your leap. To do so, make a Lizard Climb roll when you land.

If you're against a flat surface, with enough room to climb at least half your height, you can try a Lizard Climb roll to retreat *upward* as part of an active defense. Apply the usual skill modifiers; for instance, if you leave hands free to parry or block, you'll have -2 per extremity less than four dedicated to the climb. Success gives a further +1 to your retreat bonus, making it +4; critical success means your defense succeeds automatically! Failure or critical failure means the defense fails or critically fails.

Some common stunts seen in *wuxia* movies combine Lizard Climb with Light Walk. For instance, running up a bent bamboo cane, about 3" across, would require a Lizard Climb roll (at +2 for bark, +2 for a slope, but -4 for both hands free) *and* a Light Walk roll (at +8 for a feat of balance but -8 for a 3" cane), with failure on either indicating a fall.

# Extra Effort in Combat

The GM may regard *Extra Effort in Combat* (p. B357) as a natural fit to a cinematic ***Martial Arts*** game. And it is! The decision as to *who* may use those rules will influence the campaign's overall flavor, though.

If only individuals with Trained by a Master or Weapon Master can employ extra effort, and if the PCs have those advantages while "cannon fodder" NPCs do not, then combat will move *quickly.* The masters can spend FP to buy a decisive edge over their adversaries and defeat several times their number. This suits games in the action-movie spirit: the heroes emerge from battle tired but victorious after defeating vast hordes of inferior foes!

If both sides have special advantages and can use extra effort, then battles may last a *long* time. Skill being equal, if one side uses extra effort, then the other must do the same to compete . . . and a Feverish Defense standoff between expert fighters results in few fight-stopping hits. This *is* in keeping with showdowns between masters in martial-arts fiction. While fine for dramatic finales, it's a little boring as standard fare.

If *anyone* – even the man on the street – can draw on extra effort, then masters may conserve their energy. They can make multiple accurate attacks *without* extra effort, and have abilities that enhance defense and damage. They'll force mundane foes to use extra effort to keep up, thereby wearing down their enemies to the point where they're easy prey. This supports the myth that true masters make fighting look effortless. It's also a fair way to prevent PCs with special advantages from outclassing those without, keeping combat fun and interesting for everyone.

## *Existing Options*

The extra-effort options on p. B357 generally work as written with the rules in this chapter, but a few notes are in order:

*Feverish Defense:* This is incompatible with Committed Attack (pp. 99-100) as well as with All-Out Attack. The +2 to one defense roll "stacks" with the +1 for Defensive Attack (p. 100) or +2 for All-Out Defense (Increased Defense). *All* of these bonuses are cumulative with the +1 to parry frontal attacks with Defensive Grip (pp. 109-111).

By using all of these options and retreating, a fighter can buy a lot of time. This can slow down combat. To keep things dramatic, the GM may rule that only combatants in the throes of mental disadvantages can go to such extremes. For instance, a hero with Sense of Duty could sacrifice himself in a retreating battle down a narrow corridor as his allies escape, or a villain with Cowardice could clutch his rapier in both hands and be beaten back to the wall, to collapse in exhaustion rather than shed blood.

*Flurry of Blows:* This is "legal" for any number of attacks made with a Rapid Strike during an All-Out Attack, Attack, Committed Attack, or Defensive Attack. The attacker can buy this benefit for some or all of his blows. The cost is 1 FP *per attack.* Those with Trained by a Master or Weapon Master halve the penalty again (drop all fractions). For instance, a Weapon Master making a Rapid Strike for four attacks would have a basic -18, halved to -9 for his advantage. He could use Flurry of Blows to be at only -4 for one, two, three, or all four attacks. This would cost him 1-4 FP.

*Mighty Blows:* This is exclusively an option for Attack; it doesn't work with All-Out Attack, Committed Attack, Defensive Attack, or Move and Attack – or with techniques based on these maneuvers. It *is* compatible with techniques that allow bonus damage on a regular Attack. A fighter with multiple attacks thanks to Extra Attack, Dual-Weapon Attack, Rapid Strike, or a Combination may apply this to more than one attack, but the cost is 1 FP *per attack.*

## *New Options*

These options obey the ground rules given on p. B357. You must declare that you're using extra effort – and spend FP – *before* you roll the dice. Critical failure causes 1 HP of injury in addition to any other results.

*Giant Step:* If you take an Attack or Defensive Attack maneuver, you can spend 1 FP for one extra step. You're buying mobility similar to All-Out Attack, Committed Attack, or Move and Attack without the drawbacks, and *cannot* combine this option with those maneuvers. You may take your extra step before or after you attack; you *can* step, attack, and step again. When using *Chambara Attacks* (pp. 128-129), this extra step work identically to steps gained from sacrificing attacks, and you can combine the two. Critical failure on the attack causes 1 HP of injury to the leg (not the weapon arm), as if dodging.

*Great Lunge:* If you make an Attack, Committed Attack, or Move and Attack in melee combat, you can spend 1 FP to get the effects of an All-Out Attack (Long) (pp. 97-98) *without* sacrificing your defenses. These include +1 reach, -2 damage or -1 damage per die with *swinging* attacks, and the option to drop into a crouch. This is incompatible with Defensive Grip, and with the All-Out Attack and Defensive Attack maneuvers.

*Heroic Charge:* If you make a Move and Attack, you can spend 1 FP to ignore both its skill penalty and its effective skill cap in melee combat. If you do a Flying Attack (p. 107) or Acrobatic Attack (p. 107), the extra -1 or -2 to hit still applies. Likewise, you're still subject to *defensive* penalties (no parry or retreat). Chambara fighters may spend 1 FP to ignore the -6 default penalty for attempting the "acrobatic" or "flying" version of a technique.

*Rapid Recovery:* If you attack with an unbalanced weapon (one with "U" in its Parry statistic) during an Attack maneuver or with *any* weapon using Move and Attack, and a foe later attacks you, you can spend 1 FP to parry with that weapon. You must spend the FP before you try your first parry – but unless this parry critically fails, the weapon can continue to parry afterward, at the usual penalties. In effect, you've returned the weapon to its guard position. This is one of the benefits of Defensive Attack; there's no point in taking this option with that maneuver.

You may use no more than *one* offensive option (Flurry of Blows, Giant Step, Great Lunge, Heroic Charge, or Mighty Blows) and *one* defensive option (Feverish Defense or Rapid Recovery) per turn.

# More Cinematic Combat Rules

The unrealistic *Cinematic Combat Rules* (p. B417) – particularly *Cannon Fodder, Flesh Wounds, Melee Etiquette,* and *TV Action Violence* – are extremely appropriate for a *chambara*-style or Hollywood action-movie game. Some gamers might find them too silly for a serious campaign, though – even one that uses many other cinematic options. Below are further thoughts in this vein. Not all are *rules!* A few are advice to the GM on how to roleplay NPC adversaries.

## *Unarmed Etiquette*

Weapons and shields *can't* parry or block unarmed attacks. This applies to PCs and NPCs alike. Against an unarmed foe, it may be necessary to discard weapons to survive – a weapon in each hand leaves only dodges against unarmed strikes! This reflects how swordfights work in some movies: fighters never use a blade to stop an unarmed attack painfully. *Unarmed* defenses that injure – Aggressive Parry and Jam – aren't affected.

## *Gun Control Law*

If the PCs don't have firearms of their own, ordinary thugs won't use guns except to *threaten* them. When the thugs *attack,* they'll use bare hands or melee weapons as well. "Name" adversaries (a crack sniper hired to kill the PCs, the boss' right-hand man, etc.) may use firearms, but won't defend against attacks intended to disarm them.

## *Imperial Stormtrooper Marksmanship Academy*

If the *Gun Control Law* is broken, the bad guys won't hit with the first shot (or *shots,* if using rapid fire). This always lands close enough that the PCs know they're under fire, but never does any damage. The GM may extend this protection for multiple turns if the PCs are using *Acrobatic Movement* (pp. 105-107) to get away instead of fighting!

## *Shaking It Off*

A PC can undo the effects of a failed HT roll to avoid knockdown or unconsciousness by spending 1 FP immediately after he fails the roll. He feels woozy (the lost FP), but he shakes it off and stays standing. This is useful against knockdown by a 1-HP blow to the head or vitals that *Flesh Wounds* cannot affect (it always lets 1 HP through, which might still cause knockdown), and to weather attacks that *TV Action Violence* won't avert (such as unarmed blows to the torso and explosions that allow no defense roll).

## *Shout It Out!*

In some comedic martial-arts films, fighters loudly name each move from a hidden style before they execute it. Attackers don't merely *use* "Death Palm," "Dragon's Claw," or "Eagle's Beak" . . . they *shout it out.* These attacks are supposedly unstoppable except by potent defenses – but merely knowing a counter isn't enough. The defender must shout out *his* move, too!

To simulate this, the GM may let players *make up* style names and buy Style Familiarity (p. 49) with these fictitious styles at the standard point cost. Each perk represents an entire body of hidden moves. The person who named the style must describe the general "flavor" of its moves; e.g., "Monkey King style is inspired by the monkey's agility and cunning."

A fighter can exploit such a Style Familiarity in two ways. He can shout out the name of an attack before launching it, giving the target -1 to defend against it, *or* he can call out the name of a defense, gaining +1 to his defense roll. If the attacker announces his attack ("Cobra Fist!") *and* the defender names his defense ("Snake Charmer!"), the modifiers cancel out.

These attacks and defenses aren't *actual* techniques like those in Chapter 3 but names the player makes up on the spot in keeping with the spirit of his fictional style. For instance, the Monkey King fighter might defeat a "Crane Style" defense with a "Monkey Snatches Fish from Bird" strike. The actual moves can be standard techniques – even ordinary attacks and parries. The martial artist uses his secret training to enhance them, naming them aloud to channel his chi.

A warrior can shout out only *one* technique – offensive or defensive – per style per battle. Once he has used a move from a secret style, it won't catch his foes off-guard again. If he has several special Style Familiarities, each represents a *different* body of hidden teachings that he can use in the same battle. Opponents might not be surprised by another Monkey King attack – but they won't expect a Righteous Southern Fire move! Reset the count in the next fight, even against the same adversaries. In the movies, old rivals always bring new tricks to a rematch.

The GM might wish to limit martial artists to one such Style Familiarity per full 50 character points they have, to ensure that experienced masters know more secrets than young Turks. He can also introduce *special* moves that have only one specific counter . . . in which case the PCs must develop it on their own or find an instructor who can teach it (an excellent time for *The Training Sequence,* p. 147).

## *Proxy Fighting*

A staple of humorous martial-arts movies is the martial artist who fights indirectly using items found around the battlefield. He doesn't wield these objects as improvised weapons – he uses them as "proxies" through which he can deliver his usual techniques! For instance, he might deliver a Jump Kick by leaping up and kicking a typewriter at a foe, grapple another enemy by slamming a door on him, and parry an attack by spinning an office chair into his assailant's path.

A fighter can only use an object this way if nobody else is holding onto it, its weight doesn't exceed his Basic Lift (use 1/10 the weight of a suspended or rolling item, such as a door or a cart), and it can move to reach the desired target or block the incoming blow. If *all* these conditions are true, the martial artist can use any of his normal techniques at -4. When punching or kicking an object at someone out of reach, add the usual range penalty (see p. B550). Rather than bog down combat with math, assume that maximum range is ST/2 (round *up*).

A skilled martial artist can also use *people* this way – traditionally, young disciples, hapless sidekicks, or adversaries.

For this to work, the master's best melee combat skill (armed or unarmed) must exceed his victim's. He can either knock his proxy's body into other people or grab his unwitting ally and manipulate him like a giant puppet. In either case, if the proxy is armed, the controller *can* use the weapon (at default, if he lacks the necessary skill).

If the master merely wishes to slap another person into his foe, his proxy must be within *his* reach and his intended target must be within his *proxy's* reach. The proxy's facing is unimportant. The controller may attack his proxy with any strike (not a grapple) at an extra -4 plus the penalty to hit the "borrowed" body part: -2 for an arm or a leg, -5 for the head. If he hits and his proxy fails to defend, the proxy is unharmed but the commandeered body part strikes the desired target exactly as if the master had landed his technique directly.

To use someone else as a puppet requires a successful grapple with both hands from behind. The martial artist puts his hands on his proxy's arms, positions his legs behind the other person's legs, and so on. This takes a *full* turn.

On each later turn, determine whether the grappled proxy is willing or unwilling. A willing proxy must be conscious and take a Do Nothing maneuver on his turn (he can still shout and make big eyes). An unwilling proxy is anyone able to protest being used this way, most often an enemy. An unwilling proxy may try to break free as usual on his turn. Someone who is stunned – e.g., a wounded foe or a mentally stunned passerby – counts as willing!

The master cannot use a grappled proxy to perform any maneuver that requires more than a step or any technique that requires a jump. In a chambara game, he cannot use the special mobility rules. Otherwise, he can use all of his usual attacks and defenses. For a willing proxy, all rolls are at -4; for an unwilling one, the penalty equals the proxy's ST/2 (round *up*) but is always at least -4.

When attacking, damage is unchanged in all cases. There's no bonus for working through a heavy object or a strong person, and no penalty for using a light object or a weak person. (Unrealistic? Yes, but this is a *silly* rule!) If the target parries an attack in a way that would damage the attacker, any damage is to the proxy.

When defending, success stops the incoming blow as usual. Objects simply get in the way, although the GM may rule that the attack destroys a fragile object. People "parry" blows with their limbs or weapons, or "dodge" by being pulled aside. Failure means the proxy is hit, not his controller.

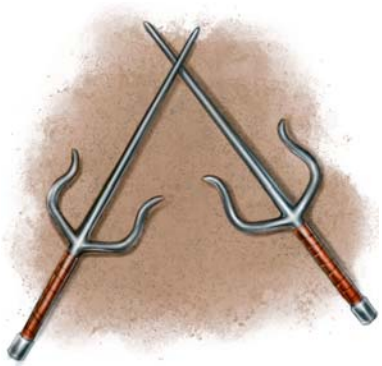
For obvious reasons, it's best not to use your Dependent this way! However, a skilled-but-frail master might fight through his clumsy-but-hardy student – and *any* fighter might find it handy to use one of his nemesis' henchmen as a human shield.

## Bullet Time

At the GM's option, a player may spend 3 bonus character points to *stop time* for his PC in combat. He can do this at *any* time – even between an enemy's attack roll with a gun and the targets' dodge rolls or bullets' damage rolls, hence the name of the rule. The one thing this can't interrupt is death. If a failed HT roll means the PC is dead, he's dead; the player can't stop time to get a dying action.

Entering Bullet Time gives the hero *one* turn to do anything that he could do with a normal turn. After that, ordinary time resumes and the GM assesses the outcome of the fighter's actions. The player cannot spend more points to buy multiple, consecutive turns of stopped time.

Possible effects include:



*Sais*

- All-Out Attack, Attack, Committed Attack, Defensive Attack, and Move and Attack let him attack one or more foes, as his abilities allow. He rolls to hit normally. His targets are defenseless. The GM determines damage effects (knockback, knockdown, etc.) and applies them immediately when time returns to normal, before anything else occurs.
- Attack maneuvers also let him pluck arrows, bullets, etc., out of the air. The player may specify how close he lets them come before he stops time. It takes a DX roll and an attack to grab each projectile. Snatched weapons have no momentum upon returning to normal time, and cannot injure anyone.
- Concentrate lets him activate or deactivate a special ability, operate controls, etc., so that the ability or machine will be "on" (or "off") when normal time resumes.
- Move or Change Posture means that when time speeds back up, he'll be in his new location or posture.
- Ready allows him to draw an item, open a door, etc. When normal time resumes, the item is ready in his hand, the door is open, and so on.

In all cases, if he moves so much as a step during Bullet Time, all "paused" melee or missile attacks on him automatically miss when time starts again. If he moves between a weapon and its intended victim, the attack hits *him* when normal time resumes, although he may defend normally. If his actions move another person into the path of a suspended attack, it hits that person instead – but the victim may defend himself.

During Bullet Time, everything but the PC who initiated the change freezes . . . from *his* perspective. He sees everyone else paused in mid-step, bullets and arrows hanging in air, hand grenades trapped between ticks of the clock, and so on. He and any items he's carrying are the only things that move. Everyone else sees *him* move in a blur.

Bullet Time is similar to *Player Guidance* (p. B347) in that it lets players use unspent points to purchase game-world effects, but the effects are more dramatic. It's designed to simulate video games and "sci-fi wuxia" movies. It's *inappropriate* for campaigns based on traditional *chambara* or *wuxia* films, or quasi-realistic action movies. Even in games where it *is* suitable, the GM should limit it to combatants with Enhanced Time Sense, Trained by a Master, or Weapon Master.

# Tournament Combat

Not all combat is in deadly earnest. In modern times, most martial-arts battles take place in the bloodless, often contact-free environment of the tournament. Even in bygone eras, when martial arts served a deadly purpose day in and day out, tournaments were popular. Tournament combat sometimes served a judicial, religious, or social role, and entire martial arts with few military or self-defense applications existed for tournament battle.

## Roleplaying Tournaments

There are two ways to resolve tournaments and competitions. One is to game them out as regular combat, with each fighter taking his normal actions on a one-second time scale. The other is to use one of the abbreviated methods below, which are designed to answer the questions "Who won?" and "What happened to the competitors?"

### *Quick Contest Method*

The simplest way to resolve a tournament is with a Contest (p. B348) between the fighters. Roll a Quick Contest of combat, Combat Art, or Combat Sport skills; the exact skills involved depend on the type of competition (see *Competition Types,* pp. 134-135). The winner of the Contest wins the match. This is useful when you only need to know who won. It works best for non-contact or light-contact events, or full-contact events where injury is rare (e.g., Kendo or Judo).

This method *can* be used to resolve "death match" tournaments, though – most often those involving NPCs. In this case, if the winning competitor fails his skill roll in the Contest, he takes a full-force hit from his opponent's *best* attack to a random hit location. This represents an injury suffered in the course of the match. The loser also suffers these consequences, even if his skill roll succeeds. If a contestant critically fails, roll *three* attacks in this manner. No defense rolls are allowed. Even if the fighter won, he suffered to do so!

A winning fighter may be victorious but suffer severe or even *fatal* injury. This isn't unrealistic. One Olympic Pankration match in ancient Greece was won posthumously – the winner was mortally wounded but forced his rival to submit before he expired!

For especially dramatic competitions, use this method round-by-round or point-by-point. Award the winning fighter the round or a point. Total up the number of winning rounds or points for each competitor to determine the winner.

### *Detailed Method*

Use this option to resolve competitions in round-by-round detail without playing out each second. For instance, a boxing round is three minutes long. Played out a turn at a time, this would be *180* seconds of combat! Not only is that too long to game out, it's unheard of for fighters to be active for every single second of a match. Realistically, each fighter will spend most of the round circling, evaluating and probing his opponent. These rules provide a snapshot of the "action" while allowing for round-by-round drama.

When using this method, fights consist of *lulls,* during which the contenders rest and circle, and *flurries,* when exchanges of blows take place. The GM should roll secretly for the length of flurries and lulls; realistically, fighters don't know how much of an opening they have to press the action. This also adds tension as a close fight nears its end without a decision.

Each round starts with an initial lull lasting 4d seconds. Then roll 2d to determine the length of the first flurry, 4d for the next lull . . . and so on, until the round ends. During a flurry, play out combat normally using the rules in the ***Basic Set.*** If both parties retreat, step out of each other's reach, or Do Nothing, an early lull occurs (roll 4d for duration). The fighters step back to take a breath, are separated by the referee (if there is one), or otherwise disengage. During a lull, fighters may Change Posture, Do Nothing, Evaluate, Move, Ready, or take appropriate free actions.

A fighter may also attempt to extend a flurry by pressing the fight. If both sides wish to press, the action continues for another 2d seconds without the need for a roll. If only one competitor wishes to press, roll a Quick Contest of Tactics. If the pressing fighter wins, the flurry continues for seconds equal to his margin of victory. Otherwise, a lull begins immediately.

Assess fatigue after each round – or after every two to three minutes, if the contest doesn't have rounds. Use the costs under *Fighting a Battle* (p. B426). Always deduct FP spent on *Extra Effort in Combat* (p. 131) immediately, though.

These rules allow fighters to battle for fairly realistic periods of time. The GM may wish to lengthen or shorten lulls and flurries, depending on the contest. Bare-knuckle boxing matches sometimes took dozens of multiple-minute rounds, with the action coming fast and furious for brief periods, followed by long lulls of little action or extended clinching. For these types of matches, roll only one flurry *per round.* Pressing to extend a flurry may be the only way to score a victory against a reluctant foe, and a wily fighter may be able to stay in the ring with a tougher foe . . . if he can survive the flurries!

## Competition Types

The world has seen *many* different types of tournament combat. The examples below are merely the most common forms.

### *Sport Competitions*

*Demonstrations:* These tournaments are a show of the competitors' artistic form and control. Each performs one or more *kata,* drills, or forms. Judging is point-based. Use Combat Art skills to resolve such competitions.

*Non-Contact:* In these tournaments, fighters throw full-force blows at each other but must *stop* just prior to touching the target. This prevents injury except in rare cases (a critical failure). Judges stationed around the ring or square judge the effectiveness of attacks. Points are scored for proper techniques aimed at specific targets. Typically, play halts after each "hit" so that the judges can score. Then the fighters return to their start positions. Non-contact contests use either Combat Art or Combat Sport skills.

*Light Contact:* Light-contact bouts are similar to non-contact ones, but some physical contact occurs and fighters must pull their blows to avoid inflicting injury. Alternatively, blows are dealt with some force, but armor, padded gloves, or (for weapon competitions) specially designed weapons prevent serious injury; for details, see *Training Equipment* (pp. 232-234). Non-striking sport styles like Greco-Roman Wrestling and Judo, which forbid holds that can cause injury, are also light contact. Use Combat Sport skills to resolve these matches.

*Full Contact:* In full-contact bouts, fighters exchange full-strength blows. Because of the risk of injury, such tournaments are rarely *unprotected.* Most use padding and armor, as well as gloves and foot coverings designed to soften blows. They often restrict "legal" targets, too. For example, competitive Tae Kwon Do only scores points for techniques that hit hard enough to move the target, but limits kicks to above the waist and punches to the torso, and encases competitors in padded chest and head protectors. Full-contact competitions are common in non-striking styles, which usually only forbid holds prone to causing injury (choke holds, damaging arm locks, etc.). Muay Thai, Lethwei, and Kyokushin "knockdown" tournaments (which forbid only punches to the head) are unprotected full contact, while Kendo and Tae Kwon Do are protected full contact. Protected contests use Combat Sport; unprotected matches use actual combat skills.

*No Holds Barred:* These tournaments are full-contact matches with few (or *none*) of the niceties mentioned above. Despite the name, some tactics – usually choke holds, hair pulling, and attacks to the eyes – *are* barred for legal and safety reasons. Mixed martial arts competitions, ancient Greek Pankration matches, and early Sumo tournaments are no holds barred. Use standard combat skills to resolve such bouts.

## *Other Competitions*

Some varieties of tournament combat are less "friendly" than even the most brutal sporting matches . . .

### Judicial Combat

Many societies, especially those of medieval Europe, allowed for trial by combat (p. B508). The fighting was in earnest. Witnesses regarded the winner as having been judged innocent – and the loser, guilty – by God.

Judicial combat often had many rules. For example, if a man faced a woman, he would fight from a waist-deep hole armed with a club, and she would have a shield and a mace with which to subdue her handicapped foe. Knights typically faced each other with matched weapons in a small ring or square, and fought until one party was slain or incapacitated, or surrendered. Pollaxes were common for knightly contests, as was the *ahlspiess* (p. 212).

Some fighters made careers as paid stand-ins for aggrieved parties; see *Duelist* (p. 34). This could backfire, as the practice was often illegal. One such English fighter had a foot cut off as a judicial punishment for selling the use of his sword arm!

Use actual combat to game out judicial contests, not the abbreviated methods under *Roleplaying Tournaments* (p. 134).

### Melees and Jousting

Medieval Europe also featured tournaments to allow knights to practice their combat skills and demonstrate their valor off the field of battle. Melees pitted a mass of knights against each other on a field. Combat was nearly as violent as actual warfare, and injuries and fatalities could result.

In jousts, knights practiced their skill with horse and lance. Competitors often used heavier armor than they would wear in battle, fought with blunt-tipped lances designed to shatter on impact, and were separated by a rail to prevent horses from colliding. Even with these protections, deaths occurred. The best target to hit to knock an opponent down was the visor, which didn't always prevent lethal lance shards from penetrating. Falls from horseback could also prove deadly, especially if the knight was trampled. Geoffrey of Brittany died in this way in 1186, which let John Lackland take the English throne in 1199 – a pivotal event in Western history.

Use combat skills (and possibly actual combat) to resolve early competitions. Later in history, Combat Sport skills – notably Lance Sport – are more appropriate.

### Religious Combat

Tournaments may be held to honor the gods or spirits, or to promote a religious philosophy. A modern example is Sumo, which still has Shinto ritual deeply embedded in its customs and rules. Some faiths regard bloodshed in religious combat to be an ill omen – but in certain settings (especially fictional or fantasy worlds) blood may be *required* for the tournament to be deemed a success!

# Injury and Recovery

Injury is an important part of a ***Martial Arts*** campaign, since it's a likely consequence of fighting, even in a tournament. Below are several variations on the rules for injury and recovery in Chapter 14 of the ***Basic Set.*** They're intended for humans, goblins, cat girls, and similar living beings – not for undead, robots, and other entities with exotic abilities such as Injury Tolerance.

## Realistic Injury

These rules are for GMs who want combat to be painful, gory, and deadly. They're most suitable for grittily realistic campaigns. They don't suit cinematic games at all . . . the GM should instead use *Cinematic Combat Rules* (p. B417) and *More Cinematic Combat Rules* (pp. 132-133) to let heroes avoid death and maiming, and possibly some of the options under *Cinematic Injury* (p. 139).

### *Partial Injuries*

When injury occurs, there's an immediate burst of pain and then adrenaline kicks in to compensate. *Shock* (p. B419) represents this kind of short-term pain. Eventually, though, the adrenaline wears off and the wound starts to *hurt*. Use this optional rule to model the effects of such long-term pain.

You can ignore the effects of a non-crippling injury for 2×HT seconds. After that, you start to suffer impairment. The precise effects depend on the severity and location of the wound, as indicated below. Use the *worst* applicable result. High Pain Threshold halves these DX penalties, rounding in your favor (e.g., -1 becomes no penalty at all). Low Pain Threshold multiplies them by 1.5, rounding against you (e.g., -1 becomes -2).

#### Arm

*Injury up to HP/5:* -1 DX for any action involving that arm, including two-handed tasks.

*Injury over HP/5, up to HP/3:* -3 DX.

*Injury over HP/3, up to HP/2:* The arm is almost broken. It hurts so much that you must make a Will roll to use it. Roll at +3 for High Pain Threshold or -4 for Low Pain Threshold. Success lets you act at -5 DX; failure indicates you Do Nothing!

*Injury over HP/2:* Cripples the arm.

#### Leg

*Injury up to HP/5:* -1 DX to kick with the injured leg. Kicking with the good leg is at -1 if standing – you must support your body with the injured leg – but at no penalty if lying down.

*Injury over HP/5, up to HP/3:* -3 DX to kick with the injured leg. If standing, kicking with the good leg is at -1, but any roll to avoid falling is at -3. If lying down, there's no penalty to use the good leg. Dodge is at -1 and Move is 80% normal if standing.

*Injury over HP/3, up to HP/2:* Your injured leg hurts so much that you must make a Will roll to kick with it, at +3 for High Pain Threshold or -4 for Low Pain Threshold. Success lets you kick at -5 DX; failure means you Do Nothing. You *cannot* kick with the good leg from a standing posture – your wounded leg won't support your weight – but you can use it as usual if lying down. Dodge is at -2 and Move is 50% normal if standing.

*Injury over HP/2:* Cripples the leg.

#### Hand or Foot

Hand and foot injuries don't give a DX penalty, but they *hurt* if you use the wounded extremity to strike. Use the "Bruised Knuckles" rule under *Harsh Realism for Unarmed Fighters* (p. 124).

#### Torso

*Injury over 1/3 HP:* -1 to DX for all purposes.

*Injury over 1/2 HP:* -2 to DX, Move is 80% normal.

*Injury over 2/3 HP:* -3 to DX, Move is 50% normal (the usual penalty for having less than 1/3 your HP remaining).

### *Extreme Dismemberment*

If a *cutting* attack would sever the leg or foot of someone who's standing or lying down, or the arm or hand of a fighter who's grappling or using two hands to wield a weapon, it might cut through the target body part and strike the *other* hand, arm, leg, or foot! To see if this occurs, roll damage normally, subtract DR, and multiply by 1.5 for a cutting attack. If the resulting injury exceeds that required for dismemberment (see p. B421), the attacker may elect to carry his attack through to the other limb or extremity.

To do this, the attacker must make a weapon skill roll to guide his weapon to its new target. Roll against the effective skill of the initial attack at -1. Success means the second limb or extremity is hit. The victim gets no active defense (he has *already* failed to avoid this attack) and the attacker doesn't reroll damage – use the original damage roll. Apply an effective DR equal to the new target's DR, plus the DR of the severed body part, plus HP/2 if that was a limb or HP/3 if it was an extremity (round up).

*Example:* Leif swings his greatsword (2d+3 cutting) at the arm of a mercenary who is wielding a spear in two hands. Leif's skill is 15 and the arm is at -2 to hit, so his effective skill is 13. His attack roll succeeds and his opponent fails to parry – a hit! Leif rolls 12 points of damage. Subtracting DR 2 for his foe's armor leaves 10 points of damage. The cutting modifier converts this to 15 points of injury. The spearman has 11 HP, so Leif must inflict 6 HP (injury *over* HP/2) to cripple the arm. Twice that, or 12 HP, hacks it off . . . so the arm comes off.

But Leif caused *15* points of injury, so he may opt to cut through to the other arm at -1 to his original attack roll, or 12. He succeeds, his target receives no defense, and the damage roll is the original 12. The effective DR of the second arm is its own DR 2, plus the severed arm's DR 2, plus 6 HP for sliced meat and bone. This comes to DR 10, so 2 points of cutting damage penetrate. This deals 3 points of injury to the spearman's *other* arm!

## New Hit Locations

Martial artists fond of surgical precision in combat, especially those buying Targeted Attacks (p. 68) and Combinations (p. 80), won't always be happy with the options under *Hit Location* (p. B398). The GM may allow them to target a few additional hit locations.

Some blows to these new locations count as major wounds, causing HT rolls to avoid knockdown and stunning – see *Major Wounds* and *Knockdown and Stunning* (p. B420). Crippling injuries always count as major wounds *and* render the body part useless. For recovery times, see *Duration of Crippling Injuries* (p. B422). Actual dismemberment (p. B421) is permanent!

These rules assume a square hit on the body part. Hits to the surrounding hit location often overlap these targets, but only a direct hit gets the special effects below.

Injury Tolerance may render some locations nonexistent: joints, spine, and veins and arteries for Diffuse or Homogenous; veins/arteries for No Blood; ear, jaw, and nose for No Head; and veins/arteries in the neck for No Neck. Disadvantages may have similar effects. Invertebrate removes the spine; No Legs means no joints or veins/arteries in the legs, either; and No Manipulators eliminates joints and veins/arteries in *all* limbs.

*Ear* (-7): A fighter who can attack his foe's face or skull can specifically target an ear instead. Treat this as a face hit except when making a *cutting* attack specifically to slice off the ear. In that case, injury over HP/4 is lost but has no special effect . . . but *twice* this amount removes the ear. This is a major wound, but without the -5 to knockdown rolls for a face hit. Missing ears (one or both) permanently reduce Appearance by a level. A miss by 1 hits the torso. To use a cupped hand to concuss the ear and cause deafness, see *Ear Clap* (p. 70).

*Jaw* (-6): The jaw is part of the face and only valid as a separate target from in front. Treat a hit as an ordinary face hit, except that a *crushing* blow gives the victim an extra -1 to knockdown rolls. A miss by 1 hits the torso.

*Joints* (-5 or -7): Limbs and extremities contain vulnerable joints that an attacker can target with a *crushing, cutting, piercing,* or *tight-beam burning* attack. The roll to hit has an *extra* -3: -5 for an arm or a leg, -7 for a hand or a foot. This allows crippling with injury over HP/3 (not HP/2) for a limb, or injury over HP/4 (not HP/3) for an extremity. Excess injury is lost. *Dismemberment* still requires twice the injury needed to cripple the whole body part – not just the joint. HT rolls to recover from crippling joint injuries are at -2. A miss by 1 hits the limb or extremity, but not the joint.

*Nose* (-7): The nose is part of the face, and a valid target only from the front. Treat a hit as a face hit, but injury over HP/4 breaks the nose. This counts as a major wound to the face *and* mangles the nose – the victim has No Sense of Smell/Taste (p. B146) until the injury heals. It's possible to angle a *cutting* attack to lop off the nose, in which case crippling injury counts as an ordinary major wound (no -5 to knockdown for the face) and injury in excess of this is lost. However, *twice* this amount takes off the nose, which reduces Appearance by two levels permanently. In all cases, a miss by 1 hits the torso.

*Spine* (-8): The spine (in the torso) is a hard target – narrow, bony, and buried in meat – but injury there can end a fight. *Crushing, cutting, impaling, piercing,* and *tight-beam burning* attacks from behind can target the spine. The vertebrae provide an additional DR 3. Use the wounding modifiers for the torso, but any hit for enough injury to inflict a shock penalty requires a knockdown roll, at -5 if a major wound. Injury in excess of HP *cripples* the spine. This causes automatic knockdown and stunning, plus all the effects of Bad Back (Severe) (p. B123) and Lame (Paraplegic) (p. B141). Roll twice after the fight to recover, once to avoid gaining each of these disadvantages on a lasting or permanent basis! A miss by 1 hits the torso.

*Veins and Arteries* (-5 or -8): A fighter with a *cutting, impaling, piercing,* or *tight-beam burning* weapon can target a major blood vessel in the neck (jugular vein or carotid artery), arm (brachial artery), or leg (femoral artery). The attack has an *extra* -3: -5 for a limb, -8 for the neck. The sudden blood loss increases the wounding modifier for that hit location by 0.5; e.g., a cutting attack gets ×2 instead of ×1.5 against a limb, or ×2.5 instead of ×2 for the neck. Since the intent is to start bleeding – not to destroy bone and muscle – ignore crippling effects and damage limits for limbs. Realistically, such injuries can cause almost instant unconsciousness, with death coming in *seconds.* The GM may rule that *Mortal Wounds* (p. B423) doesn't apply and that any failed HT roll to avoid death means the victim collapses and bleeds out messily. This is a "special effect" of dying from a vein or artery hit. A miss by 1 hits the neck, arm, or leg, as appropriate.

### Notes for Existing Hit Locations

For greater consistency when using this level of detail, alter the hit locations in the ***Basic Set*** as follows. The GM may reserve extra die rolls for randomly targeted attacks.

*Arms and Legs:* On any arm or leg hit, roll 1d. On a 1, a *cutting, impaling, piercing,* or *tight-beam burning* attack hits a vein/artery, while a *crushing* attack hits a joint.

*Face:* On a hit from in front, roll 1d. A 1 means a skull hit if the attack was *impaling, piercing,* or *tight-beam burning,* a nose hit otherwise. When attacking from behind, the face is at -7 to hit, not -5.

*Hands and Feet:* On any hand or foot hit with a *crushing, cutting, piercing,* or *tight-beam burning* attack, roll 1d. On a 1, the attack hits a joint.

*Neck:* On any neck hit with a *cutting, impaling, piercing,* or *tight-beam burning* attack, roll 1d. On a 1, it hits a vein/artery. Also roll 1d for *crushing* attacks from behind; a 1 indicates a spine hit. Crippling the spine this far up – a "broken neck" – causes Quadriplegic (p. B150), not merely Lame (Paraplegic). This occurs automatically if Neck Snap (p. 77) or a throw from a Head Lock (p. 74) inflicts injury over HP to the neck!

*Skull:* When attacking from behind, the skull is at -5 to hit, not -7.

*Torso:* On a hit with a *crushing, impaling, piercing,* or *tight-beam burning* attack, roll 1d. On a 1, it hits the vitals. Also roll 1d for a *cutting* blow from behind; a 1 indicates a spine hit.

*Vitals:* Crushing attacks *can* target the "vitals" – e.g., the solar plexus from in front or the kidneys from behind – at -3. Wounding modifier is only ×1, but shock requires a HT roll for knockdown, at -5 if a major wound.

## Severe Bleeding

Realistic campaigns should probably use the optional *Bleeding* rules on p. B420. In gritty games, the GM might also want to use the rules below for severe injuries. Where these indicate a penalty to bleeding rolls, this *is* cumulative with the usual -1 per 5 HP of injury. For greater deadliness, add the penalties for multiple injuries and use the highest applicable rate of blood loss.

*Dismemberment:* Destroying a body part causes profuse bleeding. Bleeding rolls are at an extra -1 to HT for a superficial loss (ear, nose, etc.), -2 for an extremity, or -3 for a limb. Add another -1 for an extremity or limb actually *severed* by cutting damage. For a *limb,* make bleeding rolls every 30 seconds – not once per minute – regardless of how it was lost. In all cases, once HP lost to bleeding equal the injury needed to cripple the body part, revert to using the normal bleeding rules.

*Neck: Cutting, impaling,* and *piercing* attacks to the neck can cause severe blood loss even if they don't hit veins or arteries. Make bleeding rolls every 30 seconds, at -2.

*Skull or Eye:* Bleeding due to a *cutting, impaling, piercing,* or *tight-beam burning* attack to the skull – directly or via an eye – reduces blood flow to the brain. The amount of blood might not be especially large but *any* blood loss is severe; lasting harm occurs in only a short time. Make bleeding rolls every 30 seconds.

*Veins and Arteries:* Bleeding rolls are at -3 – or at -4 if the injury was due to a cutting attack. Make bleeding rolls every 30 seconds. This assumes a severe but not automatically lethal cut. See *New Hit Locations* (above) for the "instant death" due to bleeding.

*Vitals:* Internal bleeding from injuries to vital organs is usually fatal without surgery. Make bleeding rolls every 30 seconds, and roll at -4.

### Bandaging Severe Wounds

A minute's work with bandages won't stop *really* severe bleeding. Optionally, apply the total penalty to bleeding rolls – for both the size and location of the wounds – to First Aid rolls made to halt bleeding (see *Bandaging,* p. B424). To staunch bleeding from the skull, eye, neck, vitals, or veins and arteries, make a Surgery roll at the same penalties; First Aid won't suffice.

## Lasting and Permanent Injuries

Lost HP represent blood loss and general trauma, but some hit locations have more enduring effects. Wounds to limbs and extremities can cripple (see *Effects of Crippling Injury,* p. B421). *New Hit Locations* (p. 137) gives rules for severed ears and noses, and for crippling injury to the joints and spine. Since these effects are the primary reason to strike such body parts in combat, they belong in any campaign that allows fighters to target these hit locations in the first place.

At the GM's option, severe *internal* injuries can cause lasting or permanent infirmity, too. These effects take time to show up – but when they do, they can end an adventuring career. Thus, it's probably a good idea to reserve them for realistic historical and military games, horror campaigns, and so on, where a "war wound" or slow decline is in-genre.

On a major wound (injury over HP/2) to the *neck, skull, veins/arteries,* or *vitals,* roll 3d on the appropriate table to see whether there is any effect beyond lost HP. If there is, make a HT roll to determine whether the condition is temporary, lasting, or permanent, just as per *Duration of Crippling Injuries* (p. B422). Rapid Healing (p. B79) has its usual effects.

### *How **GURPS** Works: "Stun" vs. "Real" Injury*

A common misconception is that barehanded combat inflicts "stun" injury that somehow differs from "real" injury caused by weapons. This is untrue in real life *and* in ***GURPS.*** A punch or a kick rarely bleeds much, giving the illusion of lesser harm – but if it sends a man to the ground, breaks his arm, or knocks him out, it inflicts genuine, tissue-destroying damage. Being crushing, a fist or a foot might lack the wounding modifier of a cutting, piercing, or impaling weapon, but it has the same potential to maim or kill as a crushing weapon. Realistic PCs trading kicks and arm locks should understand that while it takes longer to dish out 20 HP, the injuries are as deadly as 20 HP lost to stabs and bullets, and won't heal any faster. Cinematic PCs often have access to abilities that mitigate this.

### Neck Wounds Table

Roll 3d. *Death* from a cutting attack means partial or complete decapitation. Those attempting magical or technological resuscitation must first reattach the head!

**3 –** Respiratory or circulatory problems, giving -1 HT. Critical failure on the recovery roll means delayed death by aneurysm. Treat this as Terminally Ill (Up to two years); see p. B158.
**4, 5 –** Stroke resulting in brain damage. Roll on the *Skull Wounds Table* for effects.
**6, 7 –** Severe neurological damage, resulting in Numb (p. B146).
**8-13 –** No special effect.
**14, 15 –** Damage to the throat, resulting in Disturbing Voice (p. B132) – or Cannot Speak (p. B125), if injured to -HP or worse.
**16, 17 –** As **4, 5.**
**18 –** Severely reduced neck mobility, giving -1 DX.

### Skull Wounds Table

Roll 3d. *Death* from a skull injury means the brain is destroyed, preventing ultra-tech "brain reading."

**3 –** Widespread neurological damage, giving Epilepsy (p. B136).
**4 –** General cognitive impairment, giving -1 IQ.
**5 –** Damage to the prefrontal cortex, giving Low Empathy (p. B142).

**6 –** Damage to the temporal lobes, giving Partial Amnesia (p. B123) – or Total Amnesia, if injured to -HP or worse.
**7 –** Damage to the parietal lobe, giving Dyslexia (p. B134).
**8 –** Damage to the cerebellum, giving slurred speech. Treat this as Stuttering (p. B157).
**9 –** Damage to the occipital lobes, giving Bad Sight (p. B123). Critical failure on the recovery roll means Blindness (p. B124)!
**10, 11 –** No special effect.
**12 –** Ruptured eardrums or damage to the temporal lobe, giving Hard of Hearing (p. B138). Critical failure on the recovery roll means full Deafness (p. B129).
**13 –** Damage to the cerebellum, giving a level of Ham-Fisted (p. B138) – or two levels, if injured to -HP or worse.
**14 –** Widespread brain damage, giving Neurological Disorder (Mild). See p. B144.
**15 –** Brain stem damage that impairs reaction time ("startle response"), giving -1 Basic Speed.
**16 –** Severe damage to the cerebellum, giving -1 DX.
**17 –** As **14,** but Neurological Disorder (Severe).
**18 –** As **14,** but Neurological Disorder (Crippling).

### Veins and Arteries Wounds Table

Roll 3d. *Death* from such a wound means the victim "bleeds out." This is messy and obvious, makes ordinary resuscitation impossible, and tends to disappoint vampires.

**3 –** Circulatory damage, giving -1 HT. Critical failure on the recovery roll means delayed death resulting from aneurysm. Treat this as Terminally Ill (Up to two years); see p. B158.
**4, 5 –** For an artery in the arm or leg, lack of blood flow cripples the limb; treat this as a crippled limb. For a vein/artery in the neck, roll on the *Neck Wounds Table* instead.

*Royal Odysseus pondered if he should hit him with all he had and drop the man dead on the spot, or only spar, with force enough to knock him down.*

*– Homer,* ***The Odyssey***

**6, 7 –** Circulatory damage, giving one level of Easy to Kill (p. B134) plus one extra level if injured to -HP, two extra levels at -2×HP, and so on.
**8-13 –** No special effect.
**14, 15 –** A severe tear that counts as Wounded (p. B162). This *can* become permanent, like any other crippling injury.
**16, 17 –** As **4, 5.**
**18 –** A blood clot travels to the brain and causes a stroke. Roll on the *Skull Wounds Table* for effects.

### Vitals Wounds Table

Roll 3d. At the GM's option, *death* from such a wound means an instantly lethal blow to the heart!
**3 –** Severely weakened vital organ(s), giving -1 HT. Critical failure on the recovery roll means eventual death due to organ failure. Treat this as Terminally Ill (Up to two years); see p. B158.
**4 –** Stabbing pains in the chest or abdomen that count as Chronic Pain (p. B126). The GM assesses effects worth *roughly* -1 point per lost HP. For instance, 21 HP of injury might cause Chronic Pain (Agonizing; 4 hours; 9 or less) [-22].
**5 –** Damage to the kidneys, liver, pancreas, or other organs, resulting in Restricted Diet (p. B151). The special diet amounts to a "very common" item.
**6 –** Shock to the immune system, giving one level of Susceptible to Disease (p. B158) plus one extra level if injured to -HP, two extra levels at -2×HP, and so on.
**7 –** Reduced cardiovascular fitness, giving -1 FP plus an extra -1 FP if injured to -HP, -2 FP at -2×HP, and so on.
**8 –** Weakened heart, giving one level of Easy to Kill (p. B134) plus one extra level if injured to -HP, two extra levels at -2×HP, and so on.
**9-12 –** No special effect.
**13 –** A deep hole that counts as Wounded (p. B162). If this becomes permanent, it may be deliberate (a result of surgery) or the result of incomplete healing.
**14 –** General damage to the vital organs, leading to Slow Healing 1 (p. B155).
**15 –** Severely reduced cardiovascular health, giving Unfit (p. B160) – or Very Unfit, if injured to -4×HP or worse.
**16 –** Chronic health problems that require daily care. Treat as Maintenance (Physician; 1 person; Daily); see p. B142.
**17 –** As **16,** but requires care three times per day. Treat as Maintenance (Physician; 1 person; Three times daily).
**18 –** As **16,** but requires *constant* life support. Treat as Maintenance (Physician; 1 person; Constant).

## Cinematic Injury

Characters in martial-arts films commonly have an unrealistic capacity for surviving brutal punishment. In some tales, the hero takes a beating, then gets a second wind and wins the fight. In others, fighters are simply hurt less by fists, feet, etc., than by blades, bullets, fire, and poison. *Flesh Wounds* (p. B417) can simulate the first type of "realism." Exotic advantages offer other ways to handle both situations.

Regeneration is an excellent alternative for second winds. Damage Resistance, Injury Tolerance, and piles of HP are handy for warriors who can absorb massive damage. See *Advantages* (pp. 42-53) and *Extra Hit Points* (p. 49) for discussions of these traits in ***Martial Arts*** campaigns, and *Desirable Advantages* (p. 43) for some related traits.

The GM decides who can possess these capabilities. He might make them available only to those with Trained by a Master or Weapon Master. He might make them options or mandatory "campaign advantages" for *all* PCs and important NPCs. It's even possible to give everyone in the game world such traits – at least in a silly game. If so, the GM should consider applying the advantages' *effects* without charging points. If everybody is super-tough, it isn't an advantage worth noting.

# Chapter Five
# Styles

*Del Duque's cape swirled dramatically as he sized up the henchmen that El Asesino Oscuro had thrown in his path.*

*The tattooed Japanese with no neck grunted. "We're gonna find out what you look like* ***without*** *the mask."*

*"Monsieur might have noticed," the Frenchman commented, swiping at the air with his cane, "that this isn't a lucha libre match."*

*"Louis, Jin, and me, we're here to break a few bones,* ***puta,*** *" spat the tall one Del Duque knew only as Leonardo, punctuating his words with a swift kick.*

*Behind his mask, Del Duque smiled. Sumotori, savateur, capoeirista . . . these would be easy. He had come expecting ninja!*

"Martial arts" describes a huge variety of disciplines with many different objectives and philosophies (such as those discussed in *External vs. Internal, Hard vs. Soft,* p. 162). It can be hard to tell where one art ends and another begins, but in general, a "martial art" or "style" is any body of fighting methods and tactics – aesthetic, competitive, or combative in focus – taught together for long enough to acquire a distinct identity. In ***Martial Arts,*** these terms are often synonymous with "school" or even "master," and occasionally refer to a collection of schools – even rivals – that teach the same abilities *in game terms.*

This means that if a single set of skills and techniques describes a whole collection of related traditions, ***Martial Arts*** treats them as one style – although the entry for that style discusses its history and variants. Conversely, if several traditions with identical origins teach different skills and techniques – common when a venerable style diverges to serve multiple, incompatible purposes – they get separate entries. The most common schism is that between a style's "combat" forms and other forms; see *Do vs. Jutsu* (p. 148).

***Martial Arts*** distinguishes styles on the basis of abilities in order to provide another tool for individualizing characters – another roleplaying "hook." Each player can pick the style that suits his vision of his PC and be certain that this selection influences his options on the battlefield. The chosen style sets aside *his* PC's actions from those of PCs who practice other styles, thus ensuring that each hero is distinctive even in combat, where dice and rules often threaten to eclipse roleplaying.

To ensure that there are plenty of choices, this chapter describes many different styles – some defunct, some current, and some fictional. The GM is free to modify these to suit his game and his view of the martial arts. In a realistic campaign, nearly any combination of *believable* abilities is supportable; the world is full of hybrid styles and breakaway schools. In a cinematic campaign, all that matters is that each style offers an interesting set of cinematic abilities so that players can use it to create fun and memorable PCs!

# Components of a Style

In game terms, the tactics and methods of a style are a collection of skills, techniques, and perks. Some of these components represent the style's most basic principles, taught to all students. A martial artist must buy *all* such required elements to qualify for lessons that teach the style's more advanced moves, which *aren't* mandatory.

The next few sections explain how a martial artist must spend points acquired though training at his style (for details on point costs and learning times, see *Buying a Style,* pp. 146-148). This means his starting points plus points earned by studying at his school, unless the GM rules otherwise. He can spend points awarded during adventures however he wishes, within the limits set by *Adding and Improving Skills and Techniques* (p. B292). He can even learn his style's advanced elements by studying another style that treats them as basic . . . although his master might disapprove!

Not all styles have every component discussed below. Some consist of core skills without techniques. Others offer no perks. Many lack cinematic abilities. If a style omits any of these items, it's *intentional.*

## Cinematic Abilities and Prerequisites

Heroic Archer, Trained by a Master, and Weapon Master are explicitly listed as optional traits only for styles for which they're extraordinarily appropriate. A student of *any* style must possess one of these traits in order to learn cinematic skills, though – these advantages are *prerequisites* for such skills. A martial artist who lacks such an advantage must learn it (see *Learning Secret Martial-Arts Techniques,* p. B293) before he can have cinematic skills that depend on it. The GM decides whether the master who taught him his mundane abilities can provide this training.

Cinematic skills may have mundane skills as prerequisites, too. If these aren't part of the style, the student is expected to venture outside his school, learn the necessary skills, and return. The absence of extracurricular skills from the style doesn't make them any less necessary.

Attempts to improve a style's cinematic *techniques* are subject to the same rules.

## Skills

A style's skills are its irreducible core. They represent the majority of any student's training. The most important skills are of course *combat* skills: weapon skills for armed styles; Boxing, Brawling, and Karate for unarmed striking styles; Judo, Sumo Wrestling, and Wrestling for unarmed grappling styles; and a mixture of these for well-rounded styles.

Non-combat skills may show up as well, and say a lot about the style's character. Arts with a strong sports element require Games. Styles for mounted warriors include Riding. Very formal styles incorporate Savoir-Faire (Dojo). Some traditional martial arts claim to be a path to enlightenment, and teach Meditation, Philosophy, or Theology.

To learn a style and qualify to buy *any* of its other components, a student must spend at least a point on each skill under "Skills" (but not those under "Cinematic Skills" or "Optional Traits"). This is figured into style cost.

### *Cinematic Skills*

A style often carries a body of legend . . . tales of feats that true masters can perform. These are its cinematic skills, and represent a heroic exaggeration of its teachings. Not every style includes cinematic skills. Modern "scientific" styles developed for military, police, or sporting purposes are too young to have much of a mythology – and their no-nonsense instructors tend to shoot down improbable claims.

A martial artist must spend at least a point on each of his style's mundane skills and buy its Style Familiarity (p. 49) before he can learn his style's cinematic skills. Thus, in a ***Martial Arts*** game, the prerequisites of these skills are the usual ones (see *Cinematic Abilities and Prerequisites,* see left) *plus* the basic components of an appropriate style.

## Techniques

Each style lists the techniques that students can *improve* via study at any orthodox school of that art – or even without instruction, if they earn enough points during an adventure – once they've bought Style Familiarity and spent a point on each of the style's skills. Anyone may *attempt* any technique that defaults to any of his skills. If it doesn't appear as part of a style he knows, though, raising it above default requires outside instruction.

*Wax on, right hand. Wax off, left hand. Wax on, wax off. Breathe in through nose, out the mouth. Wax on, wax off. Don't forget to breathe, very important.*

*– Miyagi,* ***The Karate Kid***

The GM may ease this restriction, but enforcing it has its benefits. For one thing, it gives combat a roleplaying dimension, with each fighter having his own "repertoire" of moves. It also makes it easier for players to remember the techniques available to them, as it's simpler to learn the game effects of a handful of techniques than those of every possible technique – especially for players who lack personal martial-arts experience and have trouble visualizing what's going on.

A martial artist doesn't *have* to spend points on any of his style's techniques. They're always optional. In game terms, raising one or two techniques per skill above default – possibly to their maximum – is a good investment. It's an inexpensive way to enjoy a higher effective combat skill in some specialized situations. This is realistic. Martial artists who have learned a style's basics (its skills) do tend to specialize in a few favorite moves.

However, a martial artist who wishes to improve more than a couple of techniques for a skill is better off raising the skill. He'll need a lot of time and points to improve his skill to the point where his default with a technique equals a specialist's level . . . but when he's done, he'll be a formidable foe. This, too, is realistic. In the long term, a well-rounded fighter *will* be more successful, because he'll have more tools in his toolbox.

### *Cinematic Techniques*

A style's cinematic techniques are the least-realistic techniques commonly attributed to it. They're separated from regular techniques only because they're more appropriate for cinematic campaigns than for realistic ones. To *improve* them, a martial artist must have Trained by a Master or Weapon Master, Style Familiarity, and at least a point in each of the style's mundane skills. Any martial artist can *attempt* his style's cinematic techniques at default, however.

## Perks

Most styles include a few useful bits of knowledge that, once taught, change the way a martial artist views and practices his art. There's a clear difference in thinking "before" and "after" learning each of these things. Many of them *seem* obvious once learned – but most aren't! Unlike skills and techniques, you either know these secrets or you don't. Once you do, you work them into your exercises and your grasp of them improves in tandem with your skills; you don't study them independently.

In game terms, these are martial arts-related perks. They come in two varieties, both acquired just like skills and techniques. See Chapter 2 for much more information.

### *Style Familiarity*

Each style has its own Style Familiarity perk. This represents rote memorization of the art's stances and movements. It has little to do with *performing* such moves – that's skill. It simply makes it possible to recognize those forms well enough that they won't come as a complete surprise. In game terms, a fighter with Style Familiarity ignores -1 in defense penalties from feints and Deceptive Attacks by co-stylists. Any martial artist who "knows" a style should have its Style Familiarity. Some stripped-down self-defense schools omit this . . . with negative consequences.

To learn a style and be able to buy its Style Perks and cinematic skills and techniques, a student *must* buy its Style Familiarity perk. This is figured into style cost.

### *Style Perks*

Improvements to combat skills and techniques correspond primarily to increases in accuracy. Not all advanced martial-arts classes have this goal in mind, however. Some teach how to fight under adverse conditions, eliminating penalties rather than providing bonuses. Others show students new, unorthodox applications of lessons they've already learned. Familiarization with another style – with the goal of imparting the tools to adapt its techniques – is common, too. Unusual exercise regimens intended to toughen body parts or develop other physical advantages are yet another possibility.

Each form of special training corresponds to a special perk called a "Style Perk." An exceptional time investment in learning the style's more mainstream components is the surest path to Style Perks. A student with Style Familiarity may buy one Style Perk per *full* 10 points he has in that style's techniques and *required* skills. A martial artist never has to learn Style Perks. The training they represent isn't universal, and is optional even when offered.

## Optional Traits

The components discussed so far are things taught by almost every school of a style. Some are more common than others; many are optional. However, the GM should make them available to PCs who meet the prerequisites and receive instruction in the style, unless there's a good setting-related reason to forbid this.

Items listed under "Optional Traits" are less cut-and-dried. They aren't so much components of the style as they are elements frequently associated with it. Possibilities include extra "entrance requirements" enforced by demanding masters; prerequisites for instruction in the art's more mainstream teachings at certain schools; advanced training; and *consequences* of training. Where left unspecified, such details are up to the GM.

## Advantages

Optional advantages are most often either traits that would lead somebody to study and succeed at the style or learnable advantages (p. B294) taught only at particular schools. More rarely, they're entrance requirements for exceptionally strict schools. See *Desirable Advantages* (p. 43) for many suitable examples. A few traits bear special mention:

*Cultural Familiarity:* Martial artists might have no choice but to travel abroad if they wish to study certain styles. Even if they learn at home, a martial art from a foreign land might encourage or even pressure them to become familiar with the art, food, music, and values of its background culture. This is especially true when the master hails from that culture! Any of these situations could justify Cultural Familiarity (p. B23).

*Languages:* As noted for Cultural Familiarity, those who study foreign styles might end up immersed in foreign ways. This definitely includes Languages (p. B23). A given master or school might refuse to instruct students in any language *but* that of the style's homeland, because only that tongue has a vocabulary capable of properly explaining the style's moves . . . or because the master speaks only that language!

*Unusual Abilities:* The style's teachings might even enable students to buy cinematic advantages: Enhanced Time Sense, Extra Attack, Innate Attack, etc. These are subject to the same prerequisites as cinematic skills. See Chapter 2 for many examples.

## Disadvantages

Optional disadvantages are a mixture of traits that might influence a martial artist to pick this style over another, pledges required of new students at strict schools (most of which are self-imposed mental disadvantages; see p. B121), and side effects of training. A particular disadvantage can fall into more than one category. For instance, someone might elect to study Sumo because he's Fat . . . or end up Fat after practicing Sumo and eating the diet it prescribes. See *Common Disadvantages* (p. 53) for possibilities.

## Skills

Optional skills fall into three categories:

- Skills that only some masters regard as "basic." If the GM rules that an optional skill works this way, it goes on the main skill list *for that school* and adds a point to style cost.
- Skills that all students of the style are encouraged to study in order to gain a fuller understanding of the style. These are never necessary for the skilled *practice* of the style.
- Skills reserved for advanced students. These play a similar role to techniques, Style Perks, and cinematic skills: they're never required, but martial artists who wish to learn them must first buy Style Familiarity and put a point into each of the style's basic skills.

The GM decides which niche each optional skill occupies.

# Style vs. Style

A source of perpetual debate in the martial-arts world is the question "Which styles are better than what others?" The reality – which ***GURPS*** tries to model – is that almost any martial art can make a capable fighter out of somebody with suitable physical, mental, and emotional potential . . . but some styles do so more readily than others.

Not all styles are created equal – some truly *are* superior for certain purposes. Styles created for combat turn out apt fighters but rarely graceful *kata* performers or tournament winners. Dedicated sports styles produce contenders who perform better under controlled conditions than in a "street fight." And styles optimized for fitness and relaxation rarely train warriors or champs, but are more likely than other styles to have a positive effect on the average person's health.

There is no "best" or "ultimate" style, though. Styles are good for what they're designed for. Judo, Tae Kwon Do, and Karate were designed as sports. Their practitioners focus on competition – although some become tough fighters. On the other hand, a Jeet Kune Do, MCMAP, or Krav Maga stylist learns to fight. He'd probably lose badly in a kata competition or a light-contact match scored on proper form, but pit him against an assailant in a dark alley and the result would be quite different. Mixed martial arts (p. 189) attempt to bridge this gap, training martial artists for full-contact matches but sharply limiting the use of techniques that are effective but likely to inflict crippling injury.

In a cinematic game, all bets are off. A realistic combat style might churn out capable warriors . . . but these would face easy defeat at the hands of disciples of more artistic styles with working chi powers. Sports styles might be every bit as effective in a deadly fight as in the ring. And the most "peaceful" arts might teach techniques capable of defeating any foe!

## School vs. School

It's rare for every school of a style to teach in an identical fashion – or even to profess a uniform style. Some belong to large federations that attempt to dictate a standardized curriculum. Others are independent, however, or part of a loose group that doesn't try to enforce standards.

The GM can use this to justify modifying a style for the students of a specific school or master. He should be generous in allowing *players* to request changes to styles – within limits. Players who desire custom-designed styles should refer to *Creating New Styles* (p. 146) instead.

# Choosing a Style

Every would-be student asks, "Which style should I study?" The answer depends in part on that to a more fundamental question: "What do I want to do?" Possibilities include getting in shape, competing, fending off muggers, fighting crime, and killing enemy soldiers. It's tempting to select a style whose history and reputation seem compatible with your objectives, but it's crucial to realize that the goals of the school you choose, and of its teachers, are far more important than the style itself. The police academy and YWCA anti-rape program might both teach "karate" – and even share instructors – but you can be sure that the two courses are very different!

The short answer, then, is that nearly any style will do – if your instructor puts the right "spin" on it. Pick a style that's common in your game world . . . or one you've heard of in real life . . . or simply one that sounds interesting. It really doesn't matter, as long as your choice isn't *too* outlandish (e.g., Yabusame – horse archery – isn't practical for self-defense!). Then modify the style's training with the "lens" below that best matches your goals. All of these style variations, being practical, automatically exclude *cinematic* skills and techniques.

*Military:* Start with any non-military style and spend an extra point on each of Knife and Spear. If the style includes Combat Art/Sport, Games, or Savoir-Faire (Dojo), make these skills optional – although services that encourage competition might teach Combat Sport or Games. Add Retain Weapon for Knife, Pistol, and Rifle to the style's techniques. Remove any "fancy" technique that would be difficult to teach usefully in a few weeks of training; this includes any Average technique with a default penalty of -5 or worse and any Hard technique with a default of -4 or worse. The result is a no-nonsense variation on the local fighting style. In affluent nations, recruits might learn a dedicated military style instead; see *Styles for Soldiers* (p. 145).

*Police:* Start with any style and spend two extra points: one on Judo *or* Wrestling, one on Shortsword *or* Tonfa. Combat Art/Sport, Games, and Savoir-Faire (Dojo) become optional skills – officers may learn them on their own time. Some instructors integrate Guns (Pistol), Guns (Shotgun), and Liquid Projector (Sprayer) into the training. Add Handcuffing and Retain Weapon (with any weapon your department issues) to the style's techniques. Omit Average techniques with a default penalty of -5 or worse and Hard

## Ultimate Styles

In some game worlds, *Style vs. Style* (p. 143) is hokum. There *is* an "ultimate" style (or styles – some settings have several), and it's the wellspring of all other martial arts. Other styles are merely *aspects* of the True Way. The ultimate style *is* the True Way.

Trained by a Master is always a prerequisite for learning an ultimate style. By definition, anyone who knows the ultimate source of the martial arts is a master! Weapon Master is suitable for an armed ultimate style – although most ultimate styles profess that "a true master needs no weapons" and provide the ability to back up the claim. Those trained in an ultimate style are familiar with every style derived from it and must purchase a 20-point Unusual Background that counts as Style Familiarity with *all* styles.

An ultimate style contains all techniques and all of the skills from which they default, as well as all cinematic skills. It may also contain a few "invincible" or "unstoppable" moves with ludicrously steep default penalties; design these using *Creating New Techniques* (p. 89-95). It sometimes contains Combat Art and Sport versions of its combat skills, but a master can usually get by on defaults from his extraordinarily high combat skills. The GM might even consider using *Wildcard Skills for Styles* (p. 60).

Fictional ultimate styles include Sumito (from Steven Perry's "Matador Series") and Sinanju (from Warren Murphy and Richard Sapir's *Destroyer* books). Some people claim that certain real-world styles are ultimate styles. T'ai Chi Chuan (pp. 200-201), Shaolin Kung Fu (p. 194), Ninjutsu (see *Ninja and Ninjutsu,* p. 202), and Te (pp. 169-170) would all work as the basis for an ultimate style. So would Pankration (pp. 188-189), which some speculate came to India with Alexander the Great and went on to China. In all cases, use the details below and *ignore* the entry for the style's realistic version (which might still exist for use by lesser martial artists).

### *Ultimate Combat*

**9 points**

*Skills:* Acrobatics; Breath Control; Judo; Jumping; Karate; Parry Missile Weapons; Sumo Wrestling; Wrestling.

*Techniques:* All.

*Cinematic Skills:* Blind Fighting; Body Control; Breaking Blow; Flying Leap; Hypnotic Hands; Immovable Stance; Invisibility Art; Kiai; Light Walk; Lizard Climb; Mental Strength; Power Blow; Precognitive Parry; Pressure Points; Pressure Secrets; Push; Sensitivity; Throwing Art; Zen Archery.

*Cinematic Techniques:* All.

*Perks:* Skill Adaptation (Brawling techniques default to Karate); Style Adaptation (All); any cinematic Style Perk; any Style Perk from a style descended from the ultimate style (GM chooses).

*Optional Traits:* Altered Time Rate; Ambidexterity; Combat Reflexes; Enhanced Time Sense; Extra Attack; Weapon Master.

techniques with a default of -4 or worse. The specifics of weapons training and techniques depend on the jurisdiction and the individual instructor.

*Self-Defense:* Buy any style *without* its Style Familiarity perk. Keep all of its skills. Hard techniques, Style Perks, and optional traits aren't taught. Training seldom exceeds a point in Judo and/or Karate, and perhaps a point in a few of the style's Average techniques (Arm Lock, Elbow Strike, and Knee Strike are popular) – although modern women's self-defense courses might add Eye-Rake, Targeted Attack (Karate Kick/Leg), and similar Hard techniques for discouraging stronger assailants. Those without previous training typically find self-defense lessons stressful, so *Quick Learning Under Pressure* (p. B292) applies when learning in play. Once per class, roll for each skill and, when the skills are known, each technique. Improvement past the first point in each of these things requires the usual 200 hours a point.

*Street:* Streetfighters typically rely on Brawling and Melee Weapon skills, but some train. Choose any style and spend an extra point on Brawling if it lacks striking skills or on Wrestling if it has no grappling skills. Put another point into a Melee Weapon skill of your choice – typically Axe/Mace (for wrenches and pipes), Flail (for chains), or Knife. Remove Combat Art/Sport, Games, and Savoir-Faire (Dojo) skills. The GM, playing the role of the instructor, should add a single unorthodox technique (such as Head Butt) or Style Perk (often Clinch or Improvised Weapons) to the style. Optional traits are usually ignored.

*Trained by a Fraud:* You learned from a fraud or a con-artist. He might have been well-meaning but incompetent; a grifter selling a fake art; or a businessman who put fees for memberships, belts, and tests ahead of solid instruction. Regardless of your teacher's motives, your training is showy but useless. Replace all of the style's skills with Combat Art versions of its combat skills. Techniques don't change, but the GM should add one or more worthless techniques (see *Useless Techniques,* p. 95). You may also have a Delusion (pp. 53-54). Overconfidence is appropriate, too: you believe that your skills are as effective as your instructor claims, which could get you into deep trouble . . .

Lenses are entirely *optional.* Purists, historical warriors, and cinematic heroes should probably learn "traditional" styles as written. If you do choose a lens, though, it's best to apply it to a style with goals that complement it. In all cases, it's helpful to know which arts favor what uses. The next few sections loosely categorize styles by purpose.

## Self-Defense

One can learn almost any style for "self-defense," but some styles are more suitable than others. Today, these are generally *unarmed* styles, both because most people don't go armed at all times and because there are legal consequences to using a weapon in self-defense. In earlier times – or in rougher areas – weapons might be more common. Those concerned with self-defense in such situations tend to learn armed styles (or simply carry firearms!).

Common styles for self-defense include Aikijutsu (p. 149), Hapkido (p. 161), Karate (pp. 169-172), Krav Maga (p. 183), and Tae Kwon Do (p. 200) – with or without the "Self-Defense" lens. Short-course self-defense training typically has the lens. However, some students show up seeking self-defense lessons, enjoy the experience, and stay to learn the entire style.

## Styles for Cops

Police fall somewhere between civilians seeking self-defense lessons and soldiers seeking weapons training. Soldiers learn to *kill.* Civilians train to ward off attackers with minimal harm – and minimal legal consequences! Police generally have restrictions on the amount of force they can use but enjoy greater latitude than civilians.

Police styles favor techniques that can physically control or incapacitate an opponent without inflicting injury. Even societies that presume "guilty until proven innocent" tend to prize capture over killing. These goals differ from those of military styles, which seek to disable the opponent without regard to his safety.

Tokugawa-era Japanese police trained in Taihojutsu (p. 201); modern Japanese officers train in Aikido (p. 149), Judo (p. 166), and/or Kendo (p. 175). In the U.S., the style depends on the department. Examples include Aikido (p. 149), Boxing (pp. 152-153), Brazilian Jiu-jitsu (pp. 167-168), Hapkido (p. 161), and Karate (pp. 169-172) . . . and it's common for American lawmen to be dedicated students of *other* styles on their own time.

## Styles for Soldiers

Military styles – unlike those for self-defense or law enforcement – don't concern themselves with the opponent's safety. The goal is to incapacitate the target expediently and by the best available means. In recent centuries, this has most often meant using a firearm.

Historically, emphasis on the martial arts increased with troop quality. Peasants and irregulars rarely received *any* martial-arts instruction, while professional soldiers learned a combat style. The nobility and other elite warriors – those with ample time to train and the economic means to do so constantly – learned complex styles or even multiple styles. This is still true today: elite special-operations forces generally enjoy superior training.

Near the start of the 20th century, most soldiers learned little more than a series of set attacks and responses. Genuine styles soon emerged, emphasizing a few broadly useful techniques and plenty of aggressiveness. Dedicated military styles include Fairbairn (pp. 182-183) and MCMAP (pp. 183-185). The versions of Krav Maga (p. 183) and Sambo (p. 185) given in ***Martial Arts*** are "combat" forms of those arts, taught mainly to troops. Some services use stripped-down Brazilian Jiu-jitsu (pp. 167-168), or forms of Judo (p. 166) or Jujutsu (pp. 166-168). Most troops learn bayonet fighting, too; use Jukenjutsu (p. 197) to represent all such training.

## Streetfighting

"Streetfighting" systems are generally simpler and more direct than other martial arts. They eschew fancy techniques, *kata,* and art or sport forms in favor of what works in a fight, and openly accept "dirty" techniques such as shots to the groin or eyes (see *Go for the Eyes!,* p. 72). Practicality trumps attractiveness and legality.

Some styles were born "stripped down" for use on the street: Krav Maga (p. 183) is a streetfighting system and Jeet Kune Do (pp. 164-165) is – in the words of Bruce Lee, its creator – "scientific streetfighting." However, nearly *every* modern style claims some degree of street utility. The more combat-oriented the style, the less modification it needs for this to be true. Omitting forms, kata, belts, and similar formalities is widely regarded as being a necessary step. A student of even the most artistic style can become a streetfighter – it just requires extreme dedication and training.

Streetfighting styles also include ad hoc "prison" or "prison yard" styles. These have a relatively small body of techniques; they only retain what works. Weapons, if any, are improvised. Emphasis is on quickly eliminating the opponent before the guards see who did what to whom.

# Buying a Style

Buying a style is a simple matter of purchasing its individual elements at their usual point costs, subject to the rules under *Components of a Style* (pp. 141-143). Since a style's basic components are typically taught together, and are prerequisites for its advanced abilities, it's useful to know their minimum cost. This is the "style cost," which appears at the start of each style entry.

Style cost is a point for Style Familiarity plus an additional point per basic, mundane skill. It always equals the number of skills in the style, plus one. Cinematic and optional skills only increase style cost if the GM deems them "required training" in his campaign. No other traits ever influence style cost.

For game purposes, a martial artist doesn't "know" a style until he buys all of its basic components by spending points equal to style cost. He can always spend more; style cost is the *minimum* investment to unlock the style's advanced abilities. The next few sections discuss different ways of making this investment.

## Styles Bought During Character Creation

A newly created martial artist who's supposed to "know" a style should possess *all* of the traits included in its style cost. If he has these things, he can enter play with points in the style's techniques, cinematic skills (as long as he meets their other prerequisites), and Style Perks (one per 10 points in the style's skills and techniques). He may also purchase any optional abilities that the GM has set aside for the style's advanced students.

## Learning New Styles During Play

A PC can learn a new style during the course of the game. As a rule, he *must* have a teacher; therefore, his first task is to find an instructor. Depending on the campaign and the

### Creating New Styles

This chapter presents many historical styles and a few non-historical ones. It doesn't have space for every historical style, though – and fictional worlds need *original* styles. These are good reasons to design new styles.

#### *GM-Developed Styles*

The GM has free rein to develop new styles. The only hard-and-fast rule is that a style *needs* a unifying philosophy – even if it's only "defeat all foes in total combat" – or it will feel like a haphazard group of skills and techniques, tossed together on a whim. In particular, look out for techniques and skills that don't mix well. For instance, the aesthetics of Karate Art are at odds with the pragmatism of Head Butt, and Breath Control and Combat Art/Sport would seem impractical next to Melee Weapon skills in a style intended for soldiers.

A useful method of generating new styles is simply to rename existing ones – perhaps Martian Kung Fu is just Wushu with a different name. Another option is to modify a style with one of the lenses under *Choosing a Style* (pp. 144-146) or a GM-created lens. Yet another is to modify an existing style to suit the peculiarities of a nonhuman race; e.g., Dwarven Ogre-Slayers learn Sumo but add Brawling to its skills and Head Butt and TA (Head Butt/Groin) to its techniques.

#### *Player-Developed Styles*

A player might want his PC to develop a custom style in play – whether a "self-defense" version of an existing style for quickly training NPCs or fellow PCs, or a whole new style that will cement his place in history. That's fine! There's no harm in letting a player select combat skills, techniques, and perks that his PC *knows,* call them a style, and formalize it by spending a point on Style Familiarity. Multiple PCs can even pool abilities by teaching each other. Anyone who wants credit as a cofounder must know *all* of the style's abilities, though; "the guy who taught Judo to the founder" doesn't count.

A player might also wish to create styles *out* of play, for his PC to learn or to add color to the game world. This is riskier. The GM must ensure that the player isn't trying to design an "ultimate style" or "the style with every technique I want an excuse to learn." Such styles should also be in tune with the setting's history and flavor.

## The Training Sequence

In a realistic game, learning a new style involves studying with a teacher (see *Learning New Styles During Play,* pp. 146-147). Training is a common theme in cinematic stories, too, but traditionally occurs far faster than *Improvement Through Study* (p. B292) allows – never mind the glacial pace of *Learning Secret Martial-Arts Techniques* (p. B293). Cinematic heroes learn entire *styles* in mere days or weeks! Movies help suspend disbelief by inserting a "training sequence." This is a series of brief scenes – a *montage* – depicting the hero's steady improvement and suggesting a lot of time and effort. It always ends in time for the hero to win the big tournament or defeat the bad guys (whose plans were conveniently on hold).

This optional rule describes such a training sequence in game terms. It's for cinematic games where the PCs lack the downtime for realistic training – and for any gaming group that regards Time Use Sheets (p. B499) as boring accounting. It isn't just for martial arts. The GM may use a training sequence whenever the PCs have a few days to learn from a great master: musical skills from Apollo, spells from an archmage, and so on.

There are two criteria for a training sequence:

*1. A legendary master.* The teacher must be a true master of his art. He must have level 20+ with the skills being taught and level 12+ with the Teaching skill. Moreover, he must possess a special advantage that represents his "spark." For martial arts, this is Trained by a Master or Weapon Master. It might be Magery 3+ for magic, the Spirit meta-trait for shamanic rituals, and so on. Details are up to the GM, who should choose requirements that suit his campaign.

*2. An exceptional student.* A new martial artist must have no attribute below racial average (10 for a human), and at least two that are two or more levels above this (12+ for a human). The GM may allow Reawakened or a suitable Destiny to substitute; he might even *require* such a trait. A skilled martial artist adding a new style must know all the skills of another style at level 16+. If he's trying to add cinematic skills or techniques, he also needs Trained by a Master or Weapon Master. Vary this as needed; for instance, a wizard might need IQ *four* levels above average and related spells (or the Thaumatology skill) at 16+.

If both conditions are met, choose a training time and roll against the master's Teaching skill.

*Modifiers:* The Teaching modifiers on p. B224; the bonuses under *Equipment Modifiers* (p. B345) for lavish training facilities, but never a penalty for poor (or *no*) equipment; the modifiers under *Time Spent* (p. B346) for training periods shorter or longer than a full week (-9 for a day, -7 for a weekend, +2 for a month, or +4 for a season).

Success doesn't give the students points but enables them to spend *earned* points on any perks, skills, or techniques the master teaches, to a maximum of points equal to the margin of success. Students with Eidetic Memory add five points to this limit; those with Photographic Memory add 10. Those who have the Laziness disadvantage halve the final limit. Critical success means each student also *gains* a free point, which he must spend on the abilities his master taught.

Failure means the students learn nothing. On a critical failure, they also suffer training injuries. When the training sequence ends, apply the instructor's most damaging attack to a random hit location for each student, as if he had struck them!

This rule works best when the heroes have the chance to earn points during game sessions building up to an important tournament or showdown, or on a quest for a legendary master. Just before the adventure's finale, the GM cuts to the training sequence, describes the lessons and exercises, rolls the dice, and lets the players spend points. Then regular game time resumes and the heroes can use their new abilities to compete, confront their enemy, or pass their "final exam."

style, this might be as simple as opening the Yellow Pages or as complex as a quest!

Once the PC has a teacher, he may spend character points on the abilities of the new style, starting with its required components. He must put at least a point into each basic skill he doesn't already know and then buy Style Familiarity. After spending points equal to style cost, he may acquire advanced abilities if he wishes.

The student can earn the points for his new style via study (see *Improvement Through Study,* p. B292) or on an adventure that exercises suitable skills. Either way, the most realistic rate of learning is a point per 200 hours of supervised lessons and practice. For a cinematic alternative, see *The Training Sequence* (see above).

## Combining Styles

Every style has flaws. Striking styles are vulnerable to limb captures by grapplers. Grappling styles – especially ground-fighting ones – aren't ideal for fighting multiple aggressors. Unarmed styles are weak against weapons. Weapons training is worthless without a weapon. Hand-to-hand styles can't fend off ranged weapons. And so on.

One way to patch these holes is to learn a style that aims to be truly comprehensive, but such breadth implies a massive time investment by the student. The more common solution is to learn multiple styles. For instance, Muay Thai (pp. 185-186) stresses striking over grappling, while Brazilian Jiu-jitsu (pp. 167-168) emphasizes grappling but teaches few strikes . . . and a martial artist who learned *both* would be a formidable unarmed fighter.

A PC who *starts* with several styles must buy each style as described in *Styles Bought During Character Creation* (p. 146). He must pay the full style cost for each style, even if they have overlapping skills. This represents the minimum investment in time and effort to learn those styles.

However, the martial artist doesn't have to buy duplicate skills multiple times. If he already possesses some of a style's components, for whatever reason, these *do* satisfy his styles' requirements. For instance, if he knows three styles that include Karate, he need only buy Karate once – not three times! If this means that the sum of the style costs for his styles exceeds the points he actually needs to meet the basic requirements of those styles, he can spent the "excess" points on *any* component(s) of those styles.

*Example:* Maj. Milstein learns Krav Maga (p. 183) and Sambo (p. 185). Krav Maga has a style cost of 3 points, for Style Familiarity (Krav Maga), Karate, and Wrestling. Sambo has a style cost of 4 points, for Style Familiarity (Sambo), Judo, Karate, and Wrestling. Maj. Milstein *must* spend 7 points – but Karate and Wrestling overlap, so he can spend the 2 points this "saves" him on any component of *either* style. He puts them into the Leg Lock technique from Sambo.

The same rules apply to second and later styles learned *in play.* The student doesn't "know" a new style until he spends points equal to its cost, as described in *Learning New Styles During Play* (pp. 146-147). If he already knows some of the basic components of the new style, though, he can use points that would normally go toward those things to buy other elements of that style or any overlapping one.

# Historical and Modern Styles

Below is a selection of historical and modern martial arts. It's only a small sampling, highlighting widely known or *interesting* styles. There are hundreds if not thousands of styles – and many have numerous sub-schools or regional or ethnic variants, or looked quite different at various points during their history.

## Do vs. Jutsu

Traditional Japanese martial arts have names ending in either *-do,* meaning "way," or *-jutsu,* meaning "art." In theory, a style with a -do name is artistic, and emphasizes self-development or physical exercise under controlled conditions. A -jutsu ending denotes a style that focuses on techniques with practical applications in lethal combat, practiced under rigorous circumstances. Thus, "Aikijutsu" is a variety of combat grappling while "Aikido" is a form of spiritual enlightenment through martial training. Most modern schools follow this naming practice.

The distinction isn't rigid, though. Some schools that offer -do forms teach skills intended for combat, while certain schools of -jutsu forms instruct students in sportive or artistic styles. For example, Yoshinkan Aikido teaches the Tokyo Metropolitan Riot Police course – a one-year black-belt program of harsh training and grueling practice under realistic conditions – alongside its regular curriculum. On the other hand, modern Naginatajutsu schools restrict targets, and use wooden naginata for *kata,* bamboo-tipped naginata for competition, and kendo armor . . . all despite the -jutsu suffix.

Confusing matters further is the fact that some non-Japanese schools have adopted these suffixes, teaching Muay Thai Do or even T'ai Chi Jutsu. Not all instances of "do" refer to the Japanese word, either. The Korean art of Tae Kwon Do *is* a sport but *isn't* a "do" form, and Bruce Lee's Jeet Kune Do most definitely isn't an art or sport form!

***Martial Arts*** takes the stance that, in general, -do forms teach Combat Art or Sport skills while -jutsu forms offer combat skills. If there's any doubt, ***Martial Arts*** assumes the combat form simply because ***GURPS*** is an adventure game and Art/Sport skills aren't very useful in the deadly situations that adventurers get into!

### *Style Origin*

Every style has an "origin story." For recent styles, this is mundane historical record. For traditional styles, it's often mythical and unverifiable, laced with tales of mystical or divine influence. For instance, many Japanese *ryuha* claim as their origin an enlightening vision that inspired the founder to develop new tactics. Dozens of kung fu styles trace their genesis to the Shaolin Temple; others supposedly mimic the movements of animals. Ancient cultures often held that the gods themselves taught mortals the first fighting arts!

The truth is usually more pedestrian. Many styles emerged from much earlier ones whose origins are lost to history. Modern styles that trace their lineage to ancient times often derive more from *other* modern styles than from their supposed ancient heritage. For instance, modern Pankration styles are based largely on Jujutsu and Wrestling, and have no direct connection to ancient Greece. Similarly, Tae Kwon Do claims to be an amalgamation of multiple Korean styles but owes a lot to modern Karate, from which it borrowed its ranking system and *kata.*

For each style, ***Martial Arts*** gives the most common origin story *and* the historically verifiable facts, where these differ. In a cinematic campaign, legendary origins might be true. Such a game is also likely to have "ultimate styles" that spawned all other styles (see *Ultimate Styles,* p. 144).

When creating a new style, the GM should consider fabricating an origin story. This can be prosaic (like the origin of Jeet Kune Do) or seated in myth and legend (like the tales of the Shaolin Temple). In settings with strong fantastic or supernatural elements, many styles might *truly* be wisdom from the gods! Cultists trained in the sanity-blasting art of *Cthulhu Ryu* would be frightening indeed.

## *Style Variations*

These style write-ups are merely guidelines. Not every school adheres rigidly to its style's traditional teachings or to a curriculum sanctioned by widely recognized masters. Some offer heavily modified styles. Others just borrow a name; for instance, a "karate" academy might teach a *Korean* striking art and a "jujutsu" instructor might give lessons in some style of Judo or Wrestling.

*Sport Forms:* Where a style has both combat *and* sport forms, the sport form appears in a nearby box unless it's the style's main version.

# AIKIJUTSU

**2 points**

Aikijutsu (also called *Aikijujutsu*) was the grappling art of the Japanese *bushi*. Samurai used its techniques when disarmed, and to subdue foes in situations where using weapons was forbidden – such as in the presence of one's lord. Famous schools include Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu and Ueshiba Morihei's Aikijutsu. At least one school claiming to date from the 11th century still exists today.

Aikijutsu assumes that the enemy *will* resist, and doesn't wait for him to take the initiative. Stylists use few All-Out or Committed Attacks, and prefer to avoid directly confronting force with force. A typical move is to grapple the opponent, throw him, and then place him in a painful or crippling lock. Some schools teach fighters to attack or feint to provoke a reaction, and then take advantage of the foe's movement to grapple or throw him. These schools would add the Karate skill and Feint (Karate) technique, or teach Jujutsu (pp. 166-168) alongside Aikijutsu.

Historical Aikijutsu schools, especially prior to the Tokugawa era, assumed that both attacker and defender would be armored. They taught techniques for grappling, locking, and disarming an armored opponent on uneven ground. Even modern schools routinely teach how to defend against swords, staves, and knives. Faced with an armed adversary, a stylist would let him attack, then use Disarming or Arm Lock to take away his weapon or cripple his limb.

Japanese culture regarded rising to one's feet in the presence of one's lord as rude, so a samurai would learn to grapple with and disarm an assailant attempting to harm his lord without rising from his knees. For this reason, Aikijutsu teaches techniques for use while kneeling.

*Skills:* Judo.

*Techniques:* Arm Lock; Breakfall; Disarming (Judo); Ground Fighting (Judo); Low Fighting (Judo); Trip.

*Cinematic Skills:* Immovable Stance; Mental Strength; Pressure Points; Push.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Hand-Clap Parry; Roll with Blow.

*Perks:* Armor Familiarity; Power Grappling; Sure-Footed (Uneven).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes; Forceful Chi; Language (Japanese).

*Disadvantages:* Code of Honor (Bushido); Duty (To lord).

*Skills:* Broadsword; Karate; Savoir-Faire (Dojo); Shortsword; Staff; Theology (Shinto).

*Techniques:* Finger Lock.

## *Aikido*

**3 points**

Ueshiba Morihei founded Aikido in 1920s Japan as a more peaceful, artistic version of Aikijutsu. Its goals are spiritual development and finding inner harmony, but it has also become popular for self-defense. While O-Sensei (as Ueshiba is known) emphasized the development of the spirit and *ki*, some schools focus on the mechanics of locks and throws.

Aikido's main technique is the throw. Aikido throws describe a circular motion. The attacker (called the *uke* in training) flows with the defender's movement, assisting the throw and using Breakfall to land safely. Needless to say, this makes Aikido's throws less useful in a real fight than those of a style that trains against resisting opponents. Stylists don't regard this as an obstacle to the art's development, but it does limit Aikido's self-defense value.

Some Aikido schools *don't* assume an unresisting foe. A notable example is the Tokyo Metropolitan Riot Police course taught by the Yoshinkan Aikido school in Tokyo, Japan. Such teachings are sometimes termed "hard" Aikido. Even these schools teach artistic techniques and expect cooperation between uke and defender, though. To represent "hard" Aikido, add the Judo skill.

A few Aikido schools add strikes (*atemi*) to distract or "soften" the foe – and often to finish him once he's down! Use the style under *Aikijutsu* (see left) for this, with the addition of Karate.

Ueshiba was said to be capable of almost superhuman feats of skill, including the ability to dodge bullets with ease. In a cinematic game, these might be a set of secret techniques passed on to exceptional students.

*Skills:* Judo Art; Savoir-Faire (Dojo).

*Techniques:* Acrobatic Stand; Arm Lock; Breakfall; Finger Lock; Ground Fighting (Judo Art); Low Fighting (Judo Art).

*Cinematic Skills:* Immovable Stance; Invisibility Art; Mental Strength; Pressure Points; Push.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Attack (Judo Art); Roll with Blow.

*Perks:* Power Grappling; Skill Adaptation (Acrobatic Stand defaults to Judo Art).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Cultural Familiarity (Japan); Enhanced Dodge; Inner Balance; Language (Japanese).

*Disadvantages:* Delusions.

*Skills:* Breath Control; Judo; Knife Art; Staff Art; Theology (Omoto); Two-Handed Sword Art.

# Armatura

**6 points**

Armatura was the fighting style of the Roman legions during the 1st through 3rd centuries A.D., when they were a professional army. The legions' armament dates to the 4th century B.C., however, and this style might have its roots in that period. The basic forms taught to legionaries, auxiliaries, and marines were similar – although the various arms emphasized different weapons. In many cities, young men of the upper and middle classes took instruction in military combat as a matter of pride. They, too, learned Armatura – but from professional instructors, sometimes brought in from gladiatorial schools.

Legionaries carried two *pila* (throwable spears). They would hurl one or both while the enemy was at a distance, and then engage with shield and *pilum* if holding ground, shield and *gladius* (sword) if assaulting. They trained to lead with their shield and use it offensively to shield bash or shove the enemy; Beats (pp. 100-101) with the shield were common. They also learned to minimize the disadvantages of their large shield, stabbing around it while using it for cover. Defensive Attacks (jabbing thrusts) were routine. More aggressive attacks – but only rarely Committed Attacks – generally followed up a successful shove or Beat. Parries were less common than blocks.

Auxiliary infantry learned a similar style but carried different equipment. Replace Shortsword with Broadsword and make Thrown Weapon (Spear) optional. *All* Roman troops prided themselves on their knowledge of dirty tricks. It would be reasonable to add a variety of unsporting techniques to any version of the style.

The Roman legions were a prosaic bunch; there are few tales of legendary feats of arms. However, given the great store Roman writers put by the stamina and bravery of their troops, cinematic legionaries might merit high FP, several levels of Fearlessness, and the Immovable Stance skill. Enhanced Block, and the skills Kiai (for the *barritus* battle cry) and Power Blow, also fit.

All Roman soldiers of the mid-to-late Empire probably learned Armatura. It became less common toward the end of the Empire – as auxiliaries became an increasingly large part of the Roman forces, it grew harder to find the necessary training. Armatura is also useful as the basis for styles for troops armed like Roman legionaries in fantasy worlds.

*Skills:* Hiking; Shield; Shortsword; Spear; Thrown Weapon (Spear).

*Techniques:* Feint (Shield or Shortsword); Retain Weapon (Shortsword or Spear); Targeted Attack (Shortsword Thrust/Vitals).

*Cinematic Skills:* Immovable Stance; Kiai; Power Blow.

*Perks:* Naval Training, for marines; Shield-Wall Training; Teamwork (Armatura).

### Optional Traits

*Secondary Characteristics:* Improved FP.

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes; Enhanced Block; Fearlessness; Fit.

*Disadvantages:* Duty; Stubbornness.

*Skills:* Axe/Mace; Brawling; Riding (Horse); Swimming; Wrestling. Auxiliaries might have Bow or Sling. All but the greenest of legionaries should know Soldier/TL2, which includes training at building forts *quickly*. Their supervisors would have Engineer/TL2 (Combat).

# Armatura Equestris

**6 points**

The cavalrymen of the Roman Empire combined the military traditions of various subject peoples into a highly effective martial art. Their composite style blended standoff tactics (every soldier had to be proficient with either the javelin or the bow) with hand-to-hand techniques. Training included horsemanship. Some troops even learned how to cross bodies of water with their mounts while still in formation.

Roman horsemen wielded a medium shield of light construction in a mobile blocking style, and strove to keep the enemy on their shield side. The majority relied on the spear and the javelin as weapons, but riders often had training with the thrusting broadsword (similar to that of auxiliary infantry) and some troops were mounted archers. Cavalrymen thrust the spear downward rather than couching it like a lance. When tossing the javelin, they sometimes hurled it end-over-end instead of in a flat trajectory, to better slip around a defender's shield – a kind of Deceptive Attack (see *Tricky Shooting,* p. 121).

Armatura Equestris survived through much of the Dark Ages. Other European cavalry of the period used a similar style with heavier armor and longer spears, as did Byzantine horsemen. The latter favored the bow while Western forces preferred the javelin.

There are few legends of amazing abilities among the Roman cavalry. However, they sometimes claimed incredible skill both as riders and with their weapons. One left an epitaph commemorating how he shot an arrow into the air and then split it in two with a second arrow before it hit the ground . . . while on horseback . . . while his mount was swimming the Danube! Heroic Archer and the Zen Archery skill would fit heroes of this caliber.

The traits below assume a bow-armed cavalryman. For a javelin-equipped horseman, replace Bow with Thrown Weapon (Spear) and Horse Archery with Mounted Shooting (Thrown Spear/Horse). Some cavalrymen were recruited from the infantry; these should have the training under *Armatura* (see above), too. Armatura Equestris suits realistic "Knights of King Arthur." For the abilities of *legendary* Arthurian knights, see *Knightly Mounted Combat* (pp. 175-177).

*Skills:* Bow; Broadsword; Riding (Horse); Shield; Spear.

*Techniques:* Cavalry Training (Broadsword or Spear); Combat Riding; Hands-Free Riding; Horse Archery; Quick Mount.

*Cinematic Skills:* Zen Archery.

*Perks:* Strongbow; Sure-Footed (Water).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Animal Empathy; Combat Reflexes; Heroic Archer.

*Disadvantages:* Duty; Overconfidence; Stubbornness.

*Skills:* Axe/Mace; Brawling; Fast-Draw (Arrow); Knife; Swimming; Wrestling.

# Bajutsu

**3 points**

Bajutsu was the traditional Japanese art of horsemanship. It taught the horseman how to control his mount. He had to study *fighting* from his mount separately. Other cultures that employed cavalry took a similar approach and had identical styles. Riders trained in Bajutsu or its equivalent should study an armed style separately or merge its techniques with those of Bajutsu via the Style Adaptation perk. For candidate styles, see *Armatura Equestris* (p. 150), *Furusiyya* (pp. 159-161), *Knightly Mounted Combat* (pp. 175-177), and *Yabusame* (p. 181).

Cinematic Bajutsu masters often have fantastic mounts and/or high levels of Animal Friend. They can also learn unique specialties of certain cinematic skills that enable them to augment their *mount's* abilities. These skills can't exceed the horseman's Riding skill, and work on the horse – not the rider.

*Skills:* Animal Handling (Equines); Riding (Horse).
*Techniques:* Combat Riding; Hands-Free Riding; Quick Mount; Staying Seated.
*Cinematic Skills:* Flying Leap (Horse); Immovable Stance (Horse); Light Walk (Horse).
*Perks:* Style Adaptation (Any mounted style).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Ally (Mount); Animal Empathy; Animal Friend; Signature Gear (Mount); Speak With Animals (Horses, -80%).
*Disadvantages:* Sense of Duty (Animals).
*Skills:* Acrobatics; Savoir-Faire (Dojo).
*Techniques:* Cavalry Training; Horse Archery; Mounted Shooting.

# Bando

Bando is one of a range of Burmese martial arts that fall under the umbrella term *Thaing*. Prior to World War II, there were nine regional Bando styles. After WWII, most of these merged into ABA Bando, which is now common worldwide. This style appears below, along with the rarer Kachin Bando.

Bando is famous for its many animal forms, each of which represents an aspect of the style. Only the master's family learns the full style. This helps keep the style "pure" and prevents outsiders from learning all of the master's tricks.

All Bando styles practice physical toughening techniques such as striking tree trunks, heavy bags, or other hard objects. Physical fitness is emphasized – as is heedlessness of death.

## *ABA Bando*

**4 points**

Dr. Maung Gyi – son of one of the men who developed Bando after World War II – introduced Bando to the U.S. in 1959, formed the American Bando Association (ABA), and founded its namesake style. ABA Bando is a powerful style meant for self-defense and combat situations. The ABA describes it as the "Jeep of martial arts": practical and reliable, but free of frills.

Stylists are known for their aggressiveness. Attacks are fast and continuous, aimed at overwhelming and defeating the foe. Rapid Strike and All-Out Attack (Double) are very common as the practitioner rains down blows on his adversary. He'll attack the legs in order to disable his opponent, and then switch his attention to the skull, face, and body to finish him. The goal is a rapid and decisive victory. The precise methodology depends on the fighter's animal form. Deer emphasizes flight and escape, snake focuses more on grapples and chokes, boar prefers a full-bore, head-on attack heedless of injury, and so on; see *Bando Animal Forms* (see above).

ABA Bando has a belt system like that of the Japanese martial arts, and students also wear the *gi*. Many techniques are adaptations from non-Burmese systems. This makes the system more eclectic and flexible but subjects it to claims that it's "watered down." Instruction in ABA Bando is available worldwide.

*Skills:* Judo; Karate; Savoir-Faire (Dojo).
*Techniques:* Aggressive Parry (Karate); Arm Lock; Counterattack (Karate); Elbow Strike; Hammer Fist; Head Butt; Head Lock; Knee Strike; Stamp Kick.
*Cinematic Skills:* Breaking Blow; Mental Strength; Power Blow.
*Cinematic Techniques:* Roll with Blow.

## Bando Animal Forms

Bando contains various animal forms, the exact number of which depends on the specific school. There are typically 12 in ABA Bando (boar, bull, cobra, deer, eagle, monkey, paddy bird, panther, python, scorpion, tiger, and viper) and 16 in Kachin Bando (barking deer, boar, bull, cobra, crocodile, eagle, monkey, paddy bird, panther, python, scorpion, sun bear, tiger, viper, white elephant, and white rhino). These forms aren't sub-styles! They describe the personality, tactics, and favored techniques of the *fighter* – not of Bando itself. They also differ from kung fu animal forms, which aim to replicate the *animal's* tactics.

The lineage holder and his immediate family train in all of Bando's techniques and skills. Outsiders, even trusted students, learn only the small subset of moves appropriate to their animal form. This makes them effective fighters . . . but they lack the gamut of skills necessary to defeat the lineage holder and his family. A student who wishes to learn the full style must persuade his master to part with a family secret – or to let him join the family.

The GM may wish to treat each animal form as a separate Style Familiarity – e.g., Style Familiarity (Kachin Bando, Bull Form) – and reserve the full version – e.g., Style Familiarity (Kachin Bando) – for the lineage holder and his family.

*Perks:* Iron Legs; Power Grappling; Special Exercises (Striker, Crushing with Limb, Shin); Style Adaptation (Any modern style).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Fearlessness; Fit; High Pain Threshold.

*Disadvantages:* Bloodlust.

*Skills:* Knife; Philosophy (Buddhism); Smallsword; Whip; Wrestling.

## *Kachin Bando*

**3 points**

Kachin Bando is a fighting style of the Jingpaw, or "men of the hills" – a northern Burmese people famous for their guerrilla campaigns against the Japanese in World War II. History credits them with killing more than 10,000 Japanese soldiers while losing only a few hundred men. "Kachin" is a Burmese term meaning "savage," sometimes used by outsiders to describe the Jingpaw. Strong animists, their Bando has 16 animal forms.

Kachin Bando incorporates many *Naban* (wrestling) moves. These include "bottom riding" techniques very similar to the guard of Brazilian Jiu-jitsu. The style respects no rules in true combat; it uses biting, eye-gouging, raking with the fingernails, and other "dirty" techniques. Advanced students may learn Banshay (p. 176) or just a few weapons, such as the knife and kukri.

Kachin Bando is an aggressive style aimed at quickly disabling or killing the enemy. Stylists throw shin kicks to the legs to cripple the foe, or to the head to knock him out, and often aim vicious hand strikes at the head and neck. If the fight goes to the ground, the fighter is likely to apply a Choke Hold, Leg Lock, or Arm Lock – using his hands *or* legs – to kill or incapacitate his opponent. Feints aren't common, while full-bore attacks are; a Committed Attack (Strong) or even All-Out Attack (Strong) with a punch, kick, or Knee Strike is a favorite way to knock out the enemy. Defenses are similarly hard: the Bando man likes to use Jam against kicks and Aggressive Parry (often with the elbow) to stop punches.

Students usually start by learning Lethwei (p. 186). Once they have a firm grounding in that art – and possibly after proving themselves in a few fights – they graduate to Bando lessons. Schools outside of Burma sometimes teach the full style from the outset, since Lethwei contests are less common than mixed martial arts fights and self-defense applications.

Cinematic Kachin Bando stylists should focus on brutal "hard" techniques rather than on chi abilities. As the Jingpaw are animists, spirit magic might suit a cinematic master – but the optional advantages below are more fitting than chi powers *or* magic.

Kachin Bando remains obscure today. Northern Myanmar is difficult to access and in a constant state of low-level rebellion, while there are few instructors outside the region. The style *is* taught in the Eastern U.S., however. Kachin Bando has no ranking system, uniform, or association.

*Skills:* Karate; Wrestling.

*Techniques:* Aggressive Parry; Arm Lock; Choke Hold; Elbow Strike; Eye-Gouging; Eye-Rake; Ground Fighting (Karate or Wrestling); Hammer Fist; Head Butt; Jam; Kicking; Knee Strike; Leg Lock; Low Fighting (Karate or Wrestling); Lower-Body Arm Lock; Lower-Body Leg Lock; Push Kick; Triangle Choke.

*Cinematic Skills:* Power Blow.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Roll with Blow; Timed Defense.

*Perks:* Biting Mastery; Iron Legs; Neck Control (Karate); Power Grappling; Special Exercises (Striker, Crushing with Limb, Shin); Style Adaptation (Lethwei).

### Optional Traits

*Secondary Characteristics:* Improved FP and HP.

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes; Damage Resistance (Tough Skin, -40%); Fearlessness; Fit or Very Fit; Hard to Subdue; High Pain Threshold; Striking ST.

*Disadvantages:* Bloodlust; Overconfidence.

*Skills:* Axe/Mace; Judo; Knife; Shortsword.

# Boxing

**4 points**

This is the *modern* sport of boxing. It developed out of bare-knuckle and no-holds-barred matches in the 19th century, but it has deeper roots: the ancient Greeks boxed in the Olympics and the Romans featured boxing in their arenas. Historically, most matches were bare-knuckle – although the ancient Greeks and Romans wore the *myrmex* (p. 220) or *cestus* (p. 214) to inflict more damage! Before modern times, matches weren't timed; victory was by either submission or incapacitation.

Modern boxing stresses footwork, hand speed, and striking power. Permissible targets are the front of the torso above the waist, the head, and the arms – but only the head and torso count for scoring. It's illegal to grapple, kick, or indeed strike with anything but the knuckles of the hand. Boxers wear padded gloves to protect their hands. Because gloved hands rarely get hurt punching the skull, there's a heavy emphasis on head blows. Severe head trauma can occur from prolonged bouts (or prolonged careers!) and deaths in the ring occur every year. Today's matches typically have 10 to 12 three-minute rounds, but 15 rounds or even unlimited rounds were common in the past.

Boxing rewards defensive tactics and guarded movement. In game terms, boxers stick to Defensive Attack (the jab), Feint, Wait, and Evaluate until an opening presents itself for an Attack. This goes on until one contender is worn down, stunned, or otherwise vulnerable – then his opponent delivers a Committed Attack or even an All-Out Attack to finish the bout. Move and Attack is deprecated in favor of more cautious movement, and All-Out Attack is rare *except* to finish a beaten adversary.

Special tricks and techniques are common. Combinations (p. 80) are a favorite, the classic "one-two" being a straight left-hand punch followed instantly by a straight right-hand punch. Boxers learn to lean into the ropes that border the ring to absorb some of the force of punches (cinematic boxers might be able to roll with a punch *anywhere,* not just in the ring). Dirty tricks – blows to the vitals or groin, "accidental" head butts, and even gouging the eyes with the thumb – can cost you points or get you disqualified, but sneaky (or desperate!) boxers employ them nonetheless.

Boxing is a sport, but boxers hit hard and practice with full contact. All should learn the Boxing skill – although Boxing Sport is appropriate for amateur bouts, exhibitions, and purely point-based tournaments. Boxers who cross-train to become kickboxers or train to fight outside the ring commonly learn Low-Line Defense.

"Roadwork" – jogging and running – has been part of boxers' training since at least the time of ancient Greece. The Running skill isn't mandatory, but a PC boxer would need a good explanation for a trainer or gym that didn't expect him to run! Roadwork is the standard way to build up the stamina and overall fitness that are crucial for boxers. Improving endurance, strength, and staying power is at least as important as developing technique. The GM should let boxers who *do* train like this increase ST, DX, and HT, provided they have the points.

Boxers are legendary for their agility and ability to take punishment without serious harm – perhaps because they're so fit and train in conditions that match their competitive arena. The optional traits below reflect this. Higher-than-usual HP and Basic Speed, and even low levels of Striking Strength, might be realistic. The GMs should certainly permit cinematic boxers to possess such traits, as well as DR (Ablative, -80%) so they can take shots without feeling it.

## The Sweet Science

Before the ring and gloves, boxing was a sport of the ancient Greeks. It never disappeared – although from the Middle Ages until about the Napoleonic period, fighters used the Brawling skill as often as the Boxing skill, and brute strength generally garnered more admiration than technique. Certain tactics common to ancient and modern boxing, such as sidestepping and slipping, fell into disuse.

### *Ancient Greek Boxing*

**3 points**

In ancient Greece, boxing was a brutal Olympic sport. Fighters wore little or no hand protection, but sometimes donned the *myrmex* or *cestus* to dish out more punishment. Only the head and torso were legal targets. Bouts could result in serious injury or maiming. All of this (along with the style traits below) applies equally to Roman boxers. Many Greek boxers trained in Pankration (pp. 188-189), too. Such athletes should learn that style instead but add Style Familiarity (Boxing) and Games (Boxing) to reflect participation in both sports.

*Skills:* Boxing; Games (Boxing).
*Techniques:* As *Boxing* (pp. 152-153), but add Exotic Hand Strike (Boxing).
*Perks:* Skill Adaptation (Exotic Hand Strike defaults to Boxing); Special Exercises (DR with Ablative); Special Exercises (Striking ST +1).

### *Bare-Knuckle Boxing*

**3 points**

Before being codified as a sport, boxing was an often-illegal contest with few rules. Ground techniques were forbidden, but fighters used standing grapples, chokes, and all manner of blows prohibited in modern matches. Many cultures have some form of stand-up, bare-knuckle contest. This style with the "Street" lens (p. 38) can represent the techniques used in underground "boxing clubs" and back-alley brawling.

*Skills:* Boxing; Wrestling.
*Techniques:* As *Boxing* (pp. 152-153), but add Head Butt.
*Perks:* As *Boxing*, but replace Clinch with Skill Adaptation (Head Butt defaults to Boxing).

#### Optional Traits

*Secondary Characteristics:* Improved FP, as matches have *no* time limit and frequently go on for hours.

*Skills:* Boxing; Boxing Sport; Games (Boxing).
*Techniques:* Counterattack (Boxing); Feint (Boxing); Targeted Attack (Boxing Punch/Face); Targeted Attack (Boxing Uppercut/Face); Uppercut.
*Cinematic Skills:* Power Blow.
*Cinematic Techniques:* Roll with Blow.
*Perks:* Clinch (Boxing); Neck Control (Boxing); Special Exercises (DR with Ablative); Special Exercises (Striking ST +1); Unusual Training (Roll with Blow, Only against the ropes).

#### Optional Traits

*Attributes:* Reduced IQ (too many head blows!).
*Secondary Characteristics:* Improved Basic Speed and HP.
*Advantages:* Fit or Very Fit; Hard to Subdue; High Pain Threshold; Striking ST.
*Disadvantages:* Reduced Appearance.
*Skills:* Running; Savoir-Faire (Gym).
*Techniques:* Low-Line Defense (Boxing).

## Capoeira

**4 points**

Capoeira is an acrobatic martial art developed in Brazil by African slaves imported by the Portuguese. Its exact origins are unclear, but it seems to have grown out of a fusion of fighting arts from several parts of Africa. Savate (pp. 193-194) might have influenced it as well. In any event, Capoeira has existed in some form since the 16th century, although it has become more organized and visible in recent times.

Dance is a traditional form of practice and demonstration in African martial arts. Capoeira inherited this trait. Tradition claims that its dances enabled slaves to practice their art under the nose of unwitting overseers. Whatever the truth, dance and Capoeira are closely linked. Musical instruments – notably the *berimbau* (a bow-like stringed instrument) and drums – are a fixture at the Capoeira *jogo* (match), and strikes occur within the context of the rhythm and beat.

Capoeira fighters claim that slaves could do the style's athletic kicks – especially its signature handstand kicks – while chained at both wrists and ankles. This might be optimistic but it's in-genre for a cinematic game. A trained *mestre* (master or teacher) could certainly defend himself once freed! Thus, Capoeira let escaped slaves protect themselves from recapture.

Capoeira stylists are in constant motion, mixing high-line strikes with low-line sweeps in a flowing series of attacks. Kicks make frequent use of Deceptive Attack, for kicks coming out of acrobatic moves, *and* Telegraphic Attack, for showy, easily spotted kicks. Fighters commonly alternate between Committed Attack and All-Out Defense (Increased Dodge). A handstand kick – executed by standing on one or both hands and then kicking out with the feet – is an All-Out Attack (Strong) with one foot or an All-Out Attack (Double) with two. Because acrobatic moves are so fundamental to the style, practitioners may learn the Acrobatic Kicks perk as soon as they have a point in Acrobatics (*instead* of the usual 10 points in skills and techniques).

*Knobbed Club*

Groundwork and defense are also important. Stylists use Sweep to take a foe to the floor and Scissors Hold to grapple a vulnerable adversary. They dodge more often than they parry, making frequent use of retreats and Acrobatic Dodge.

Early forms of Capoeira were taught informally, without an established curriculum or ranks. Fighters typically learned it from fellow slaves – or later, on the street – and honed their skills by putting the lessons to practical use. These "schools" also trained with such easily found weapons as knives, machetes, razors, and sticks. Dirty fighting tactics were common, especially holding razors between the toes (requires the style's unique Razor Kicks perk and inflicts thrust-1 *cutting*) and throwing dirt in the eyes. This variety of Capoeira still exists on the streets in certain places.

Modern schools often mix Capoeira with Karate, Jujutsu, and other Asian martial arts. Some have ranking systems with colored *cordões* (cords, worn as belts), fairly uniform clothing, and *kata*-like drills. An *academia* of this kind might place more emphasis on jogo and sportive play, and teach Karate Art and Wrestling Sport instead of combat skills – although this isn't universally true. Students rarely get training in weapons other than sticks, which are used in a dance-like drill to make music (add Smallsword Art).

Cinematic mestres should definitely have actual combat skills and weapons training! Any cinematic ability that improves leaping and dodging is suitable, as is the Springing Attack technique.

*Skills:* Acrobatics; Karate; Wrestling.

*Techniques:* Acrobatic Stand; Axe Kick; Back Kick; Ear Clap; Feint (Karate); Hammer Fist; Head Butt; Jump Kick; Kicking; Scissors Hold; Spinning Kick; Sweep (Karate).

*Cinematic Skills:* Flying Leap; Power Blow.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Roll with Blow; Springing Attack.

*Perks:* Acrobatic Feints; Acrobatic Kicks; Razor Kicks; Technique Mastery (Kicking).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Enhanced Dodge; High Pain Threshold; Language (Portuguese); Musical Ability, especially in sport and art forms.

*Disadvantages:* Bloodlust; Overconfidence; Reputation (Uses dirty tricks).

*Skills:* Dancing; Knife; Musical Instrument (Berimbau and others); Savoir-Faire (Dojo); Shortsword; Singing; Smallsword.

## Chin Na

**2 points**

Traditional Chinese kung fu has four parts: kicking, punching, grappling, and seizing vital points. Chin Na (roughly, "seize and control") – also called "Chin Na Kung Fu" – is a term for the last two aspects. It's a truly ancient art. Grappling has been part of China's martial tradition since before written record, and joint-manipulation and locking techniques are equally old.

Martial artists typically learn Chin Na as part of one or more other Chinese styles, most of which describe their joint-locking methods as "Chin Na." Chin Na is also the subject of many texts on its own, however, and remains remarkably consistent across styles that teach it. It's sometimes taught independently, to students from many arts. For game purposes, it qualifies as its own style.

Chin Na aims to control and defeat the opponent by manipulating joints and activating pressure points. It regards painful locks that force the victim to submit without permanent injury as merciful, as its methods can cripple or kill! The Chin Na practitioner attempts to get a hold on his adversary – usually by making a parry that sets up an Arm Lock or Finger Lock. In a life-or-death struggle, he'll use more harmful techniques. He might even act offensively, grappling his enemy in order to use locks and throws. Fully offensive postures such as All-Out and Committed Attack are uncommon, though.

Chin Na is often taught alongside traditional healing and first aid. Students are expected to be able to use their knowledge to heal as well as to harm. Cinematic practitioners can utilize their extensive knowledge of pressure points to kill or to heal, and might become inured to pain thanks to endless practice with their *sifu*.

*Skills:* Judo.

*Techniques:* Arm Lock; Choke Hold; Finger Lock; Head Lock; Leg Grapple; Trip.

*Cinematic Skills:* Pressure Points; Pressure Secrets.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Pressure-Point Strike.

*Perks:* Technique Mastery (Arm Lock); Technique Mastery (Finger Lock); Unusual Training (Pressure Points).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* High Pain Threshold; Language (Chinese).

*Disadvantages:* Pacifism (Cannot Kill).

*Skills:* Esoteric Medicine; First Aid; Philosophy (Buddhism or Taoism); Physiology; Savoir-Faire (Dojo).

# Dagger Fighting

**3 points**

This knife-fighting style is based on medieval and Renaissance European martial arts but differs little from Asian, African, and ancient Roman arts. It would fit into almost any setting "as is." Likewise, while "dagger" historically described a fairly specific weapon (see Chapter 6), Dagger Fighting works with *any* of the fighting knives used worldwide for streetfighting and personal defense, and as auxiliary weapons in dueling and warfare – singly or in pairs. Practitioners typically favor larger blades, however.

Most schools taught both the "sword" grip (the normal grip) and the "ice pick" grip (see *Reversed Grip,* pp. 111-112). Dagger fighters learned to switch rapidly between grips to take full advantage of the fluid mix of knife work and grappling that characterizes a knife fight. Tactics emphasized feints, disarms (barehanded and by slashing hands and arms), and direct attacks. "Spinning" techniques – for instance, turning one's back on an advancing enemy in order to drive one's knife backward and into him – weren't unknown.

## "Kung Fu"

"Kung fu" is a Chinese term for "hard work" or "good effort." Originally applied to any endeavor, it has become synonymous with the martial arts. Kung fu isn't a specific style. It's a blanket term for *all* Chinese martial arts. The uninformed often misapply it to other fighting arts, though – much as they do "karate."

Many of the styles in this chapter are forms of kung fu: Chin Na (p. 154), Hsing I Chuan (pp. 162-163), Hung Gar (p. 163), Pa Kua Chuan (pp. 187-188), Pak Hok (p. 188), Praying Mantis (pp. 191-192), Shaolin Kung Fu (p. 194), T'ai Chi Chuan (pp. 200-201), Wing Chun (pp. 203-204), and Wushu (pp. 206-207). Kuntao (pp. 178-179) is a variety of kung fu taught in Indonesia. Other styles drew heavily on kung fu during their development, including Jeet Kune Do (pp. 164-165), Kajukenbo (p. 168), and Kempo (pp. 172-173). There are hundreds if not *thousands* of kung fu styles and sub-styles!

The dagger fighter prefers to circle his foe, feinting, jabbing, and watching for any weakness or opportunity. This is a series of Wait, Evaluate, Feint, and Defensive Attack maneuvers. He'll move in for the kill only when his adversary is vulnerable – injured, feinted, etc. Multiple, darting attacks are more likely than a single powerful blow, and the fighter might deliver several potentially lethal blows to ensure that his enemy dies quickly enough to be unable to return the favor.

Most attacks target the arm or hand to disarm, or the neck or vitals to kill. Stylists do stab but often prefer the cut, simply because a slash at arm's length offers superior reach. Single-knife schools also grapple using the empty hand (often known as the "live hand"). Moves include grabbing the opponent's weapon and grappling his weapon arm in order to break it or render his weapon harmless, usually after a parry.

As martial arts go, Dagger Fighting comes with few improbable claims. A couple of cinematic skills fit the style, though. Hypnotic Hands suits the complex rhythms of knife work, while Power Blow would let low-damage knives deal powerful blows that could instantly cripple limbs or kill.

Modern knife-fighting schools are remarkably similar to historical ones but tend to replace the emphasis on parrying larger weapons (such as swords) with gun-disarming techniques. It's difficult to find training in serious knife-fighting in realistic conditions outside of military and covert-ops circles. Moreover, it's often illegal to carry a weapon-length knife, and *using* even a legal one can mean trouble with the law! This last matter isn't a modern phenomenon. Even in historical settings where everyone carried and used knives as tools, ordinary citizens often regarded skilled knife-fighters as desperados or criminals.

In any era, many knife-fighters learn another style as well – either armed or unarmed.

*Skills:* Knife; Wrestling.

*Techniques:* Arm Lock (Knife or Wrestling); Armed Grapple (Knife); Back Strike (Knife); Choke Hold (Knife); Feint (Knife); Retain Weapon (Knife); Reverse Grip (Knife); Spinning Strike (Knife).

*Cinematic Skills:* Hypnotic Hands; Power Blow.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Attack (Knife or Wrestling); Fighting While Seated (Knife).

*Perks:* Off-Hand Weapon Training (Knife); Quick-Swap (Knife).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Ambidexterity.

*Disadvantages:* Reputation (Thug).

*Skills:* Brawling; Fast-Draw (Knife); Main-Gauche; Thrown Weapon (Knife).

*Techniques:* Disarming.

# Escrima

**4 points**

Escrima is likely the best-known martial art of the Philippines. Famous as a stick- and knife-fighting style, it includes unarmed techniques as well. The notes below apply not only to Escrima but also to the related styles Kali and Arnis, and to the numerous variations on all three arts.

"Escrima" and "Arnis" are bastardizations of the Spanish terms *esgrima* (fencing) and *arnes* (harness, short for "harness of the hand"), but the styles don't derive from Spanish fencing. The true origin of Escrima is unclear, but some sources date it to at least 1521, when natives armed with sticks and bows fought with Ferdinand Magellan's expedition and slew Magellan. Local folklore – and the simple nature of the style's weapons – point to an even longer history.

Escrima training starts with sticks made of fire-hardened rattan, palm, or ebony. Later training adds knives (used in both normal and "ice pick" grips) and – in some schools – machetes. Empty-hand movements are based on stick and knife techniques, and every unarmed motion is amplified when a weapon is in hand. The *guro* (master) decides when the student is ready to graduate from sticks, to blades, and finally to empty hands. *Escrimadors* (as Escrima stylists are known) also learn a number of locks and holds, using the stick as a lever to disarm, immobilize, or choke the opponent.

Escrimadors prefer the Defensive Attack and Attack maneuvers to Committed Attack and All-Out Attack. They'll often attack the enemy several times in rapid succession – the style accepts that a foe rarely falls to a single technique – and skilled fighters will employ Rapid Strikes. Kicks tend to be low-line Defensive Attacks. Movement is "triangular," with the fighter moving between the points of an imaginary triangle rather than straight forward or back. This is true both on the offensive (attacks tend to be indirect) and on the defensive (the Sideslip retreat option is more common than the Slip or simple retreat).

Escrima is *aggressive*. It always assumes that the foe is armed, and escrimadors learn to parry an opponent's weapons and counterattack swiftly. Emphasis is on attacks to the arms, hands, and legs rather than to the body, the goal being to disarm or cripple the foe before he can injure the escrimador – a strategy sometimes called "defanging the snake." The stylist finishes disarmed or weakened adversaries with attacks to the vitals, neck, and skull, or using a lock or choke. Even the style's defenses work toward these goals, with Aggressive Parry being typical. Traditional parrying surfaces are the elbows, knees, and shins – not the forearms and legs.

In addition to the above, early escrimadors learned to use bows and shields, throw knives, and render first aid. They often studied tactics for fighting in small groups or against multiple foes. These skills are optional, but a historically accurate escrimador would know them all!

Modern Escrima schools sometimes limit training to stickfighting in light-contact, heavy-padding bouts. Students of such schools wouldn't learn Karate or Main-Gauche, and should replace Smallsword with Smallsword Sport, making style cost 2 points. This isn't universal – plenty of schools emphasize real contact, minimal protection, and harsh training. A few also add the *balisong* (p. 212) and techniques to draw it quickly.

Breakaway schools – famously, Dog Brothers Martial Arts in the U.S. – add ground techniques from Brazilian Jiu-jitsu, as well as additional locks and holds. Such schools teach attacks off standing grapples. One such tactic is to parry and Slip to close with the opponent, and then grapple him and seek a stick-assisted Choke Hold. Schools like this add Wrestling, Ground Fighting (Wrestling), and Ground Fighting (Smallsword). Style cost becomes 5 points.

Escrima incorporates several subsystems for using two weapons at once, including *sinawali* (two sticks), *espada y daga* (sword/stick and knife), and *daga y daga* (knife and knife). Even in a realistic game, escrimadors may learn an Unusual Training perk that lets them improve Dual-Weapon Attack. Both attacks must be directed at a single foe.

*Skills:* Karate; Main-Gauche; Smallsword.

*Techniques:* Aggressive Parry (Karate); Arm Lock (Smallsword); Armed Grapple (Smallsword); Choke Hold (Smallsword); Disarming (Smallsword); Elbow Strike; Feint (Main-Gauche or Smallsword); Knee Strike; Targeted Attack (Main-Gauche Swing/Arm); Targeted Attack (Main-Gauche Swing/Hand); Targeted Attack (Smallsword Swing/Arm); Targeted Attack (Smallsword Swing/Hand).

*Cinematic Skills:* Mental Strength; Power Blow; Pressure Points.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Attack (Main-Gauche or Smallsword); Dual-Weapon Defense (Smallsword).

*Perks:* Off-Hand Weapon Training (Main-Gauche or Smallsword); Unusual Training (Dual-Weapon Attack, Both attacks must target the same foe); Weapon Adaptation (Shortsword to Smallsword).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Ambidexterity; Combat Reflexes.

*Disadvantages:* Berserk (see *Berserk and the Martial Arts*, p. 179); Bloodlust.

*Skills:* Bow; Boxing; Fast-Draw (Balisong, Knife, or Sword); First Aid; Judo; Savoir-Faire (Dojo); Shield; Staff; Tactics; Thrown Weapon (Knife); Wrestling.

## Fencing Styles

Like "kung fu" and "karate," "fencing" describes an entire spectrum of martial arts. In ***GURPS,*** it refers to any of the many sword styles built around the fencing skills (p. B208): Rapier, Saber, and Smallsword – and sometimes Main-Gauche. Some historical masters were willing to mix and match weapons, unarmed techniques, and tactics to suit their personal taste. Others dedicated themselves to a single weapon.

Below is a sampling of some major schools of fencing. In each case, there were *many* minor variations. In a campaign set in an appropriate era, the GM may require a separate Style Familiarity for each master's teachings!

### *Italian School*

**5 points**

Italian fencing originated in the 16th and 17th centuries, and revolved around the teachings of such masters as Camillo Agrippa, Ridolfo Capo Ferro, and Girard Thibault. The main weapon was the rapier, with a knife, a cloak, or occasionally a second rapier (the two constituting "a case of rapiers") held in the off hand. The Italian School emphasized counterattacks in "one time," meaning a combination defense/riposte instead of a parry-and-counterattack rhythm. This strategy sacrificed some defensive surety for a chance to strike back.

Fighters of this school make extensive use of the Riposte (pp. 124-125), and follow up this gambit with an Attack or even a Committed Attack, but only rarely with a Defensive Attack. Italian stylists seek to counter the foe *quickly,* forgoing some defense for a good offense. Defensively, Italian School fencers are more likely to dodge, or to parry with a secondary weapon, than to parry with their main blade while pressing the attack. This aggressive counterattacking can get a fencer in trouble; the Overconfidence disadvantage definitely fits!

Grappling was very much a part of the style. Some schools taught throws in addition to grapples and locks, and even instructed students in catching an incoming blade with the off hand. Such schools would substitute Judo for Wrestling.

Cinematic fencers frequently augment this style with Acrobatics and Jumping to gain additional mobility. They

# Stickfighting

Stickfighting is one of the most ancient forms of combat – only slightly more recent than unarmed grappling and striking. A primitive ancestor of man armed with a thighbone and an Escrima *guro* doing *sinawali* with rattan sticks are both stickfighters; Escrima is but one of hundreds of stickfighting styles known to the world throughout history. Adventurers will encounter stickfighting across Africa, Asia, Europe (Ireland, Portugal, Russia . . .), and the Americas, from prehistoric times to the present day.

## *African Stickfighting*

**2 points**

Sub-Saharan Africa has a rich stickfighting tradition. Some styles use a stick grasped in the middle as a parrying stick and another stick gripped at the end to strike. Such styles sometimes use a weapon much closer to a knobbed club (p. 219) for striking – add Axe/Mace for the primary stick, making style cost 3 points, and use Smallsword for the off-hand parrying stick. (Irish shillelagh fighting uses similar tactics: attacks are with a knobbed club, parries are with a shorter stick in the off hand.)

*Skills:* Smallsword.
*Techniques:* As *Escrima* (pp. 155-156), but remove all Karate and Main-Gauche techniques. For styles with Axe/Mace, any technique listed for Smallsword is also available for Axe/Mace.

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Ambidexterity.
*Skills:* Brawling.

## *La Canne de Combat*

**2 points**

French cane fighting emerged during the Napoleonic period, when wearing swords was banned within Paris' city limits. Parisians switched to canes and wielded them with sword techniques. Some schools used a crook-topped cane as long as 5 1/2 feet; these schools would replace Smallsword with Staff and add the Hook (Staff) and Sweep (Staff) techniques. This style was often taught in conjunction with Savate (pp. 193-194).

Modern French cane-fighting schools teach double-cane techniques, as well as Knife (for the bowie knife and straight razor), Shortsword (for the cutlass), Staff, and Whip. Some add firearms training, too.

The style used with the German *dusack* (p. 215) would be similar; simply replace Smallsword with Shortsword. Martial artists who prefer long, narrow canes would replace Smallsword with Rapier. In both cases, adjust the techniques to match the master skill.

*Skills:* Smallsword.
*Techniques:* Disarming (Smallsword); Feint (Smallsword).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Ambidexterity.
*Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Attack (Smallsword).

## *Victorian Singlestick*

**2 points**

The sport of singlestick originated in 18th- and 19th-century Britain and America. Based on saber and broadsword practice, participants would carry a single stick, with the other hand either held or tied behind the back. American president Teddy Roosevelt was an enthusiastic singlestick player. Singlestick also influenced the Sikh sport of *gatka,* or sword-dancing. *Gatka* practitioners should add the Dancing and Stage Combat skills, making style cost 4 points.

*Skills:* Broadsword Sport.
*Techniques:* Feint (Broadsword Sport).

### Optional Traits

*Skills:* Games (Singlestick).

often have access to a body of amazing techniques with which to defeat lesser foes, including the legendary flying lunge and mastery of two-weapon fighting. Weapon Master (Rapier and Main-Gauche) is indispensable!

Italian masters often trained students in weapons of war as well. The broadsword, longsword, two-handed sword, and pike were standard military weapons of the age, and more useful than a rapier against armor or when fighting in formation.

*Skills:* Main-Gauche; Rapier; Shield (Buckler); Wrestling.
*Techniques:* Bind Weapon (Main-Gauche or Rapier); Counterattack (Rapier); Disarming (Main-Gauche or Rapier); Feint (Main-Gauche or Rapier); Targeted Attack (Main-Gauche Thrust/Vitals); Targeted Attack (Rapier Thrust/Face); Targeted Attack (Rapier Thrust/Neck); Targeted Attack (Rapier Thrust/Vitals).
*Cinematic Skills:* Flying Leap.
*Cinematic Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Attack (Main-Gauche or Rapier); Dual-Weapon Defense (Main-Gauche or Rapier); Flying Lunge (Rapier); Grand Disarm (Rapier); Hand Catch; Initial Carving (Rapier).
*Perks:* Off-Hand Weapon Training (Rapier); Technique Adaptation (Counterattack).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Ambidexterity; Combat Reflexes; Enhanced Dodge.
*Disadvantages:* Overconfidence.
*Skills:* Acrobatics; Broadsword; Cloak; Jumping; Rapier Art; Savoir-Faire; Spear; Two-Handed Sword.

## *La Verdadera Destreza*

**4 points**

La Verdadera Destreza ("The True Skill") was the Spanish school of swordsmanship. It was a *civilian* art. In fact, the Spanish were among the first to recognize that military and civilian swordfighting were distinctly different. It developed as a method of dueling and satisfying the demands of honor – a testament to the Spanish sensitivity to honor.

> *What noise is this? Give me my long sword, ho!*
>
> *– Capulet,* ***Romeo and Juliet***

The stances and techniques of La Verdadera Destreza drew heavily from mathematics and science, and stylists – *diestro* – studied Classical geometry and natural philosophy in addition to the sword. The ideal diestro remained cool and detached, projecting dignity and grace. He avoided excessive motion and "vulgarity" in form or technique in favor of efficient, geometry-based movements. He learned to watch his opponent and "read" his stance in order to respond at the best moment. The diestro also maintained blade-to-blade contact as much as possible in order to sense his adversary's intent from his blade. Masters were said to be able to use these methods to fight effectively even in the dark!

La Verdadera Destreza emphasizes reaction to the opponent's opening. The diestro stands erect, point toward the enemy, awaiting the perfect moment to strike. He attacks only when he achieves *desvio:* redirection of (or possibly *indifference* to) his foe's weapon. Thus, the style's signature moves are the Evaluate and Wait maneuvers. When the adversary launches an attack that leaves him vulnerable, the diestro parries and then follows up with a Counterattack to a vital location. He eschews the similar but riskier Riposte (pp. 124-125).

The style also teaches disarms and counters to disarms, and how to fight with either hand – indeed, some stylists learn to fight with two rapiers simultaneously. Unarmed techniques aren't part of the style. The diestro defeats his foes using his blade, not by wrestling.

In a cinematic game, the sensitivity and poise of the diestro suggest several special abilities. The style is also well-suited to Weapon Master (Rapier). Cinematic stylists *won't* be flashy fencers like those in the movies. Instead, they'll be extremely composed, unflappable, and imperturbable in the face of the enemy.

*Skills:* Expert Skill (Natural Philosophy); Mathematics/TL2 (Pure); Rapier.

*Techniques:* Bind Weapon (Rapier); Counterattack (Rapier); Disarming (Rapier); Feint (Rapier); Retain Weapon (Rapier); Targeted Attack (Rapier Thrust/Face); Targeted Attack (Rapier Thrust/Neck); Targeted Attack (Rapier Thrust/Vitals).

*Cinematic Skills:* Blind Fighting; Light Walk; Mental Strength; Precognitive Parry.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Attack (Rapier); Dual-Weapon Defense (Rapier); Initial Carving (Rapier).

*Perks:* Chi Resistance (Kiai); Off-Hand Weapon Training (Rapier); Sure-Footed (Uneven).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes; Danger Sense; Enhanced Parry (Rapier); Unfazeable; Weapon Master (Rapier).

*Disadvantages:* Code of Honor (Spanish); Overconfidence.

*Skills:* Body Language; Cloak; Main-Gauche; Philosophy (Hermetic); Rapier Art or Sport; Savoir-Faire.

*Perks:* Weapon Bond.

## *Transitional French School*

**4 points**

Thanks to gunpowder, the popularity of armor continued its decline in the years after the Italian School (p. 156) appeared. Heavy armor-piercing weapons, in turn, also became less common. The rapiers of the time capitalized on the prevalence of light weapons and armor by becoming shorter and lighter.

In France, a fencing style soon emerged to take advantage of this. The heyday of this "Transitional French School" was between 1640 and 1720 – a period known today as the Transitional Era – when fencers widely regarded it as a superior way to use a rapier. Its masters taught that the sword alone was the basis of both offense and defense, and did away with defensive weapons such as the cloak and main-gauche. Its importance faded with the early 18th-century development of the smallsword and the rise of schools that favored it (see *French Smallsword,* p. 159).

A fencer of this style *usually* starts the fight on the defensive. He favors Evaluate and Wait until he parries and creates an opening, and then opens his own offensive with a Counterattack. Deceptive Attacks are common, typically in the form of a glide along the opponent's blade. However, the rapierist might also attempt extremely aggressive (and risky!) attacks, such as an All-Out Attack (Long) ending in a crouch – a floor lunge – to attack a distant foe, or a two-step Committed Attack (Determined) to press an adversary who's giving ground.

Cinematic masters of this style are much like those of the later French Smallsword style. They're highly mobile, attempting acrobatic techniques, great leaps, and fantastic lunges. High DX, Basic Speed, and Acrobatics are common, and Perfect Balance is extremely useful for running along banisters and landing after chandelier swings!

Historically, this style gave equal weight to elegance of execution and effectiveness of technique, and some masters taught methods that were more artistic than practical. For these, eliminate Rapier but retain Rapier Art. Such *salons* were a great place to learn both secret techniques (p. 86) and useless techniques (p. 95). Most schools took their training seriously, though, and prepared students for deadly duels.

*Skills:* Games (Sport Rapier); Rapier; Rapier Art.

*Techniques:* Bind Weapon (Rapier); Close Combat (Rapier); Counterattack (Rapier); Disarming (Rapier); Feint (Rapier); Retain Weapon (Rapier).

*Cinematic Skills:* Flying Leap.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Flying Lunge (Rapier); Initial Carving (Rapier).

### Optional Traits

*Secondary Characteristics:* Improved Basic Speed.

*Advantages:* Enhanced Parry (Rapier); Perfect Balance; Status; Wealth.

*Disadvantages:* Code of Honor (Gentleman's); Delusion ("My style is inherently superior to all others."); Overconfidence.

*Skills:* Acrobatics; Broadsword; Jumping; Main-Gauche; Savoir-Faire; Shield Art (Buckler); Two-Handed Sword Art.

## *French Smallsword*

**4 points**

French Smallsword represented the apex of the fencing arms race. As fencers placed increasing emphasis on the riposte, they sought progressively shorter blades to give them greater speed and maneuverability. The result was the smallsword: a short, stiff thrusting blade. The attendant fencing style became a gentleman's martial art, with the riposte and elegant form as its core values. Proponents claimed that its defensive techniques applied to *all* combat – not just to smallsword fencing. Such claims resemble those of an "ultimate style" (see *Ultimate Styles*, p. 144). In a cinematic game, smallsword fencing might indeed hold all of the secrets of combat!

French Smallsword's signature tactic is the Riposte (pp. 124-125): a parry and counterattack "in one time." Disarms are also routine; a stylist might parry his enemy's blade, whip it from his grasp, and then dispatch his unarmed victim. Some fighters even attempt this as an All-Out Attack (Double) – but should it fail, the would-be predator is likely to end up prey. Smallsword fencers often use All-Out Attack (Long) to lunge at a distant foe, typically stabbing but occasionally making a Tip Slash (p. 113). Advanced students learn to grapple, but the aim is always to ward off the opponent's attack and run him through.

Cinematic masters of this style are fluid, elegant, and acrobatic. The Jumping and Acrobatics skills are as common as Enhanced Parry. Swashbucklers might swing from chandeliers, slide down banisters, and disarm half a dozen foes with a single sweep of the blade. They're blindingly fast *and* incredibly agile, and able to use their prodigious defensive abilities with any weapon. High DX and Basic Speed are a must!

This style was common from the early 18th century until about 1830. Its main weapon was the smallsword, but masters were still expected to train students in the cavalry saber and sometimes the cutlass. Smallsword fencing was significantly more artistic than the rapier styles it replaced. While it was a functional martial art, many students learned an overly artistic form . . . yet believed in its utter invincibility. Such students would often know secret techniques (p. 86) or useless techniques (p. 95).

*Skills:* Games (Sport Fencing); Smallsword; Smallsword Art.

*Techniques:* Bind Weapon (Smallsword); Close Combat (Smallsword); Disarming (Smallsword); Feint (Smallsword); Retain Weapon (Smallsword); Targeted Attack (Smallsword Thrust/Vitals).

*Cinematic Skills:* Flying Leap.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Flying Lunge (Smallsword); Grand Disarm (Smallsword); Initial Carving (Smallsword).

*Perks:* Quick-Sheathe (Sword); Quick-Swap (Smallsword).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Enhanced Parry (All); Perfect Balance; Status; Wealth.

*Disadvantages:* Code of Honor (Gentleman's); Delusion ("My style is inherently superior to all others"); Overconfidence.

*Skills:* Acrobatics; Broadsword; Broadsword Art; Jumping; Main-Gauche; Main-Gauche Art; Riding (Horse); Savoir-Faire; Shortsword; Shortsword Art; Staff Art; Two-Handed Sword Art; Wrestling.

## Furusiyya

**5 points**

Furusiyya was the combat horsemanship style of the Mamluks, slave soldiers trained from childhood. It evolved out of earlier tactics used widely by Muslim armies. Manuals surviving from the 13th century detail the Mamluk version, but researchers believe that Furusiyya was essentially identical across the Islamic world. The practitioners of Furusiyya – like their contemporaries, the elite knights of Europe – regarded their combat skills as a fine art. Not all Muslim warriors received such extensive training, but their basic skills were similar.

Contrary to longstanding myth, Islamic horsemen wore armor – sometimes more than their Christian opponents. However, the training and tactics of Furusiyya prepared them better for the role of light cavalry. The style depended heavily on the bow and spear held two-handed, although fighters did use the small shield in close quarters. Furusiyya's weapons also included such exotica as fire siphons, naphtha grenades, and crossbows that launched primitive Molotov cocktails. Like many exotic weapons, such things were probably less effective than bows and spears (or else *everyone* would have used them!). In a cinematic campaign, though, the GM should let stylists use these devices to good effect.

Those trained in Furusiyya learn a fast-paced, fluid style of combat. They keep their distance from the enemy and engage the foe only on ground of their choosing. Mounted, they alternate between raining down arrows and swooping in using the spear. The bow always precedes the spear against uninjured, prepared opponents. When closing with the spear, stylists use Evaluate to look for an opening. The attack itself is two-handed and overhand – often a Committed Attack (Strong) or an All-Out Attack (Strong).

Furusiyya fighters also use the broadsword, emphasizing the cutting stroke. Some use two swords in a double-blade style. This is only somewhat cinematic. Even in a *realistic* game, it's possible to use one blade to Beat (pp. 100-101) and the other to strike a blow as part of a Dual-Weapon Attack.

# Sport Fencing

Sport fencing largely eliminates moves that are dangerous to one's opponent. The point is to test skill – not to kill one's adversary – so sport styles favor safety and structure over the rough-and-tumble of combat fencing. For instance, sport fencers rarely swing their weapons; even saber cuts are powered by wrist and fingers, not hip and shoulder, making them faster but reducing the odds of injury. Matches take place on a strip and emphasize linear movement . . . unlike duels of the past, which took place wherever honor demanded. Further distinguishing sport fencing from combat are such rules as "right of way" and "priority," which determine which hits count and which fencer can attack, and in what manner.

In game terms, sport fencers don't use the Strong option for All-Out or Committed Attack. The Determined, Feint, and Long versions are quite common, however. The Deceptive Attack and Riposte combat options see extensive use, too.

Cinematic sport fencers aren't bound by these restrictions. The GM ought to let such PCs learn combat *and* Combat Sport skills, and give them access to the full range of maneuvers and combat options. Their techniques should work as well in battle as on the strip.

Below are several sport-fencing styles. *Schläger* is less common than the others and uses a bare blade; injury determines the victor.

## *Épée*

**3 points**

Épée uses a sporting version of the rapier. Only thrusting attacks can score but the entire body is a valid target. No "right of way" rules apply.

*Skills:* Games (Epee Fencing); Rapier Sport.
*Techniques:* Counterattack (Rapier Sport); Feint (Rapier Sport).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Enhanced Parry (Rapier).

## *Foil*

**3 points**

The foil (p. 215) was developed in the late 19th century as a practice blade. Épée fencers often learn Foil as an introduction to fencing, but it *is* a full-fledged sport of its own. The only valid target in Foil is the torso. Thrusts only count if you have "right of way," which lasts from the start of your attack until your opponent successfully parries and ripostes, giving *him* the right of way.

*Skills:* Games (Foil Fencing); Smallsword Sport.
*Techniques:* Counterattack (Smallsword Sport); Feint (Smallsword Sport).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Enhanced Parry (Smallsword).

## *Saber*

**3 points**

Saber fencing developed from cavalry sword practice. Since cutting attacks are very effective from horseback, Saber includes both cuts *and* thrusts. Valid targets are the body above the hip line. "Right of way" applies in Saber just as in Foil.

*Skills:* Games (Saber Fencing); Saber Sport.
*Techniques:* Counterattack (Saber Sport); Feint (Saber Sport).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Enhanced Parry (Saber).

## *Schläger*

**3 points**

Schläger (or *Mensur*) is the form of "academic" swordplay used as a test of personal quality by German fraternities since the late 18th century. It still has its adherents. It uses the sharp-edged *mensurschläger* (p. 220). Participants don goggles and wrap the head and neck to prevent serious injury. They then trade Defensive Attacks, slashing at the face – the only valid target – until someone is cut deeply enough to bleed. This frequently scars, and some fighters participate expressly to gain a dueling scar as a badge of honor!

*Skills:* Broadsword Sport; Games (Schläger Fencing).
*Techniques:* Feint (Broadsword Sport); Targeted Attack (Broadsword Cut/Face).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Enhanced Parry (Broadsword).
*Disadvantages:* Distinctive Features (Dueling scars).

Cinematic stylists routinely brandish two swords, launch devastating spear thrusts, and make incredible long-distance bow shots from horseback. Legends of Furusiyya-trained warriors emphasize their speed and accuracy, not mythical abilities. Heroic Archer is very appropriate.

The Mamluks of Egypt practiced Furusiyya until the early 19th century; Mamluk cavalry fought Napoleon at the Battle of the Pyramids. Its heyday was during the 13th-century Crusades. Finding a Furusiyya teacher shouldn't be difficult for Muslim PCs. Non-Islamic warriors are probably out of luck . . . although some auxiliaries in Crusader armies – the mostly Christian, mostly locally born *turcopoles* – trained to fight in the same manner.

*Skills:* Bow; Broadsword; Riding (Horse); Spear.
*Techniques:* Cavalry Training (Broadsword or Spear); Combat Riding; Hands-Free Riding; Horse Archery; Quick Mount; Targeted Attack (Broadsword Swing/Neck); Targeted Attack (Spear Thrust/Vitals).
*Cinematic Skills:* Zen Archery.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Attack (Broadsword).

*Perks:* Off-Hand Weapon Training (Broadsword); Strongbow; Unusual Training (Dual-Weapon Attack, Both attacks must target the same foe).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Enhanced Parry (Any); Heroic Archer.

*Disadvantages:* Disciplines of Faith; Impulsiveness; Overconfidence.

*Skills:* Animal Handling; Axe/Mace; Brawling; Crossbow; Fast-Draw (Arrow); Liquid Projector (Flamethrower); Shield; Throwing.

## Hapkido

**5 points**

Hapkido ("Way of Coordinated Power") is a Korean martial art developed during the 1950s. Its founder learned Aikijutsu (p. 149) in Japan, and combined it with Judo (p. 166) and Korean striking arts on returning home. One of his students later named the resulting style. Hapkido incorporates strikes, throws, and joint locks, as well as weapons training for advanced students. It uses a colored belt system similar to that of Tae Kwon Do (p. 200). Despite its recent origins, the style has spread rapidly; it isn't difficult to find a Hapkido school in Korea, Europe, or North America.

Three main principles guide Hapkido methodology. The Circle Principle states that all techniques are round and cyclical, each feeding off the results of the previous one. The River Principle says that the style must conform to the circumstances but unleash power in a sudden torrent, like a river. The Influence Principle holds that the martial artist should use movements that influence his opponent to make responses that he can anticipate and counter. The idea is to make one's *adversary* do most of the work that leads to his defeat.

Stylists use locks, throws, and strikes, separately and in combination. They often let the opponent strike first, neutralize his attack, and then counter it. A counter to a high kick might be a Leg Grapple followed by a Sweep or a takedown; a counter to a punch might be a parry followed by an Arm Lock and/or a Judo Throw. The martial artist sometimes follows the victim of a throw to the ground to apply a Choke Hold. It's also common to mix in kicks and punches; for instance, after an Arm Lock and before a Judo Throw. Hapkido includes spectacular kicking techniques, too: jumping kicks, kicks thrown from a kneeling posture at a foe behind, and high kicks. Many of these follow a successful Arm Lock, to ensure that the target won't be able to defend effectively.

Hapkido weapons include the short staff, sword (often a bokken), and jutte. Many masters reserve training in these for higher-ranking students. However, even beginners learn *defenses* against such weapons.

Hapkido is young, but like many arts it claims a heritage that includes ancient styles. The cinematic skills and techniques below are those that match the legends of these "ancestor" martial arts, as well as the stories surrounding the style's founder and his most important students. Masters are said to have great control of their minds – and sometimes those of their students, even at great distances . . .

*Skills:* Judo; Karate; Karate Sport; Savoir-Faire (Dojo).

*Techniques:* Arm Lock; Back Kick; Breakfall; Choke Hold; Head Lock; Jump Kick; Kicking; Leg Grapple; Leg Lock; Spinning Kick; Sweep (Judo or Karate).

*Cinematic Skills:* Breaking Blow; Flying Leap; Power Blow.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Flying Jump Kick; Roll with Blow.

*Perks:* Back Kick possible from kneeling without posture penalty.

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Language (Korean); Telepathy Talent.

*Disadvantages:* Overconfidence.

*Skills:* Broadsword; Jitte/Sai; Knife; Staff.

## Hoplomachia

**5 points**

Hoplomachia was the armed combat style of the ancient Greek city-states. Most citizens learned only the spear and shield, but dedicated warriors studied the entire art. The style outlasted the citizen armies, and was common among professional soldiers and mercenaries alike. For an earlier style suitable for "heroic" Greek warriors, see *Heroic Spear Fighting* (p. 196).

*Hoplomachoi* (as practitioners were known) lead with their medium shield, often held out at an angle in front of the body or even horizontally, rim pointed toward the enemy. They use shield bashes, Beats (pp. 100-101) with the shield, and shoves to render the foe more vulnerable before bringing the spear into play. Favorite targets for the spear are the less-armored neck and face. Defensively, stylists prefer to block with the shield rather than parry with the spear. Close in, hoplomachoi make aggressive use of the spiked spear butt or resort to a sword – typically a shortsword but occasionally a broadsword. A common tactic is to grapple an adversary in order to drive the sword or butt spike into him.

Practitioners of Hoplomachia often acted as teachers, offering their services to young men seeking training in the style as well as in unarmed combat styles; see *Pankration* (pp. 188-189) and *Ancient Greek Boxing* (p. 153). Greek society was divided on their status: some thought them essential to a city's military strength while others regarded them as dangerous men of doubtful morals. Indeed, a number of philosophers agued that this kind of training was detrimental to a soldier because it taught him how to defend *himself* rather than to rely on his comrades in a firm battle line. Whatever the prevailing view, a teacher would not be difficult to find in ancient Greece.

*Skills:* Shield; Shortsword; Spear; Wrestling.
*Techniques:* Close Combat (Shortsword); Feint (Shield); Spinning Strike (Spear); Targeted Attack (Spear Thrust/Face); Targeted Attack (Spear Thrust/Neck).
*Cinematic Skills:* Immovable Stance; Push, used with shield.
*Perks:* Grip Mastery (Spear); Naval Training, for elite *epibatai,* or marines, aboard triremes; Teamwork (Hoplomachia).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes; Cultural Familiarity (Ancient Greece); Enhanced Block; Language (Ancient Greek).
*Disadvantages:* Duty (Polis); Reputation (Dangerous man of doubtful morals); Sense of Duty (Polis).
*Skills:* Boxing; Brawling; Broadsword; Hobby Skill (Feats of Strength); Running.

## External vs. Internal, Hard vs. Soft

Martial artists often distinguish between "external" and "internal" styles. External arts stress physical achievement and strong attacks. Internal ones emphasize spiritual development, and sometimes have deep philosophical underpinnings (e.g., in Taoism or Buddhism). This distinction originated in China, which traditionally sorted the martial arts into the Wudong schools (Taoism-based styles such as Hsing I Chuan, Pa Kua Chuan, and T'ai Chi Chuan), which were deemed "internal," and the Shaolin schools (all other Chinese styles), which were identified as "external."

Another common way of classifying the martial arts is to dub them either "hard" or "soft." Hard styles are those that meet force with force in an effort to overwhelm the opponent, while soft ones are those that yield to aggression and attempt to redirect the enemy's force. Faced with an attacker, a hard school defends and then counterattacks – or even seizes the initiative and attempts to defeat the foe *before* he can attack. A soft stylist seeks to avoid confrontation, and responds with a throw, trip, or lock if attacked.

The "external vs. internal" split is more legendary than actual. An external style might counsel spiritual development; for instance, Nito Ryu Kenjutsu (pp. 174-175) is solidly external but its creator wrote a deeply philosophical work on the martial arts: *A Book of Five Rings.* The "hard vs. soft" dichotomy is similarly idealized; few "hard" styles lack "soft" parries and retreats. And while external styles *tend* to be hard and internal ones *tend* to be soft, this isn't universal. Hsing I Chuan (see below) is hard *and* internal, while Judo (p. 166) and Wrestling (pp. 204-206) are soft *and* external. A single art might have elements from each of these four categories!

Today, these terms describe a style's methodology more than anything else. "Hard" is another way of saying that the art makes heavy use of striking (Boxing, Brawling, Karate, and Melee Weapon skills), as exemplified by Boxing (pp. 152-153), Jeet Kune Do (pp. 164-165), Karate (pp. 169-172), Wing Chun (pp. 203-204), and most armed styles. "Soft" suggests a preference for grappling (Judo, Sumo Wrestling, and Wrestling skills); Aikido (p. 149), Chin Na (p. 154), Pa Kua Chuan (pp. 187-188), and T'ai Chi Chuan (pp. 200-201) are good examples. "External" and "internal" are used the same way by everyone but purists.

# Hsing I Chuan

**3 points**

Hsing I Chuan (also known as *Hsing-yi* or *Xingyichuan*) is one of China's three main "internal," or Taoist, styles. Unlike its sister arts Pa Kua Chuan (pp. 187-188) and T'ai Chi Chuan (pp. 200-201), Hsing I Chuan is linear and direct. Modern research traces its origins to a teacher in mid-17th century Shanghai, who developed it from spear techniques. However, legend attributes its invention to General Yue Fei in the Song Dynasty (960-1127), who created it as a style for army officers. Supposedly, masters passed down the art in secret until the mid-1600s, when it became widespread.

Hsing I Chuan is organized around five "fists" (strikes) and 12 animal styles. The fists are named for the five traditional Taoist elements and the type of strike used: water ("drilling"), wood ("penetrating"), earth ("crossing"), metal ("splitting"), and fire ("pounding"). This focus on strikes makes Hsing I Chuan unusual for an "internal" style. The style is linear and depends on very firm stances; Hsing I Chuan fighters are famously hard to budge. The stylist relaxes his body until the last instant, when he tenses to strike, defend, or throw. In training, forms are less common than two-person drills aimed at teaching the proper feel for combat.

Hsing I Chuan is an offensive-minded martial art. Its normal stance is compact, faces the foe, and keeps the hands up to defend the vitals and face. Practitioners seek to attack first. If this is impossible, the stylist attempts to avoid his enemy's attack and then launch an overwhelming counterattack into his assailant's motion. The most common methods of doing so are the Counterattack technique and the Riposte option (pp. 124-125). Typical follow-ups to parries include Exotic Hand Strike (usually aimed at the torso), Sweep, and Arm Lock.

Hsing I Chuan makes more use of the hands than the feet, and kicks are uncommon. The style also favors crippling and killing attacks over throws and merely painful locks. After injuring a foe with a lock, a Hsing I Chuan stylist releases his grip in order to free both hands for defense. Practitioners tend to favor a single, powerful attack over multiple strikes; a straightforward Attack or Committed Attack (Strong) is common, only rarely with the Rapid Strike option.

Hsing I Chuan formerly used many weapons, including the spear, staff, various edged swords, the hook sword, and the halberd. Modern schools often omit weapons training. Advanced students sometimes still learn these traditional weapons, though.

Cinematic Hsing I Chuan masters are said to be unmovable after settling into a stance, capable of defeating foes with a shout, and able to sense danger as it approaches. They often perfect Power Blow in order to deliver body-shattering strikes.

Hsing I Chuan and Pa Kua Chuan share a history. Past masters of these arts befriended one another and exchanged techniques and forms. Students of one style often train in the other, and some forms of each school are amalgamations of both. Hsing I Chuan schools aren't common, but there are instructors worldwide.

*Skills:* Judo; Karate.

*Techniques:* Arm Lock; Counterattack (Karate); Exotic Hand Strike; Sweep (Judo or Karate); Trip.

*Cinematic Skills:* Breaking Blow; Immovable Stance; Kiai; Mental Strength; Power Blow; Pressure Points; Pressure Secrets; Sensitivity.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Lethal Strike; Pressure-Point Strike; Springing Attack; Timed Defense.

*Perks:* Style Adaptation (Pa Kua Chuan); Technique Adaptation (Counterattack).

### Optional Traits

*Secondary Characteristics:* Improved Per.

*Advantages:* Danger Sense; Enhanced Parry (Bare Hands).

*Disadvantages:* Bloodlust.

*Skills:* Breath Control; Broadsword; Polearm; Savoir-Faire (Dojo); Shortsword; Spear; Staff.

## Hung Gar Kung Fu (Tiger-Crane Style)

**4 points**

Legend has it that one of the Five Masters who survived the burning of the Shaolin Temple in the 17th century passed along his kung fu skills to fellow rebels against the Manchu in the form of Hung Gar. Later, one of the style's most famous practitioners – Chinese folk hero Wong Fei-Hung (p. 22) – created the tiger-crane variation described below. The actual history is hard to verify. Hung Gar certainly existed in Wong Fei-Hung's time, as he built upon an existing system rather than inventing his own. It *might* stretch back as far as the 17th century, but that's conjecture. Today, Hung Gar is taught worldwide. It isn't difficult to find a master, but the style has a reputation for extremely strenuous apprenticeships.

There are many forms of Hung Gar, but all include the tiger as the basic animal form. Tiger-crane combines the physical power and courage of the tiger with the committed strikes, deceptive movements, and counterattacks of the crane (see *Pak Hok*, p. 188). Hung Gar is a southern Chinese style, and emphasizes firm stances, close-in tactics, low-line kicks, and high-line punches. It teaches fighters to use both hands equally, to fight armed and unarmed, and to keep their balance on slippery planks and rocking boats. Students study deep breathing and remain in deep stances for long periods of time in order to learn to hold firm against a foe.

Stylists prefer to use Aggressive Parry to ward off attacks, and then follow immediately with a Counterattack. This counter is very strong and often a Committed Attack or even an All-Out Attack. The style's teachings consider evasion less important than the ability to withstand attacks and counter them in place.

Hung Gar also has an armed component. Masters sometimes reserve this training for advanced students. Weapon forms include staff, spear, broadsword, paired broadswords, paired butterfly swords, whip, polearm, knife, and double whip.

Hung Gar holds chi development in high regard, as its deep breathing and strong stances suggest. Thus, cinematic masters should be capable of great feats. They should also be strong, fit, and possess remarkable patience and endurance. Exceptional physical abilities – including high ST, HT, and FP – are as likely as chi powers.

*Skills:* Breath Control; Karate; Philosophy (Buddhism).

*Techniques:* Aggressive Parry (Karate); Counterattack (Karate); Exotic Hand Strike; Hammer Fist; Jam; Stamp Kick.

*Cinematic Skills:* Body Control; Immovable Stance; Power Blow; Pressure Points; Pressure Secrets.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Pressure-Point Strike.

*Perks:* Iron Body Parts (Any); Naval Training; Off-Hand Weapon Training (Any); Sure-Footed (Slippery).

### Optional Traits

*Secondary Characteristics:* Improved FP and HP.

*Advantages:* Ambidexterity; Fit or Very Fit; Language (Cantonese); Striking ST.

*Disadvantages:* Overconfidence.

*Skills:* Broadsword; Judo; Knife; Polearm; Shortsword; Spear; Staff; Whip.

*Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Attack (Broadsword, Shortsword, or Whip).

## Hwa Rang Do

**5 points**

Hwa Rang Do (HRD) is a Korean art with ties to the fighting and healing techniques of the Hwarang (p. 14). It's said to have originated from *um yang kwan* ("hard and soft together"), martial skills influenced by 1,500 years of Korean history. The modern style known as Hwa Rang Do was founded in Seoul in 1960, by Dr. Joo Bang Lee. It isn't simply a fighting style; black sash-ranked students learn healing and philosophy, and study chi and meditation intensively. HRD is most common in the U.S., South Korea, and Europe, but there are schools worldwide.

Hwa Rang Do combines striking and grappling, and mixes these unarmed techniques with weapons training. Strikes are both linear and circular. Grappling includes throws and submission holds, often in conjunction with pressure-point activation.

Hwa Rang Do stylists prefer to open a fight with punches and kicks in an attempt to disable or injure the foe. The spinning kick is one of the style's signature moves, and is performed jumping, standing, kneeling, and as a leg sweep – most often as a Committed Attack (Determined). After injuring his opponent or successfully parrying an attack, the HRD stylist closes in to grapple, seeking to finish the fight with an Arm Lock, Judo Throw, takedown, or choke. Fighters train to move smoothly into and out of grappling range, using strikes and grapples interchangeably.

Even low-ranked students learn weapons; PCs who study HRD should start buying weapon skills immediately. Standard weapons are the *sang-jyel-bong* (nunchaku), staff, spear, broadsword, knife, and short staff. Optional weapons training is extensive, and includes the baton and bow. HRD schools also encourage parallel training in *Kumdo* (Korean Kendo – use the rules for *Kendo,* p. 175). At advanced levels, weapons training mixes takedowns, sweeps, and strikes.

Hwa Rang Do has a large body of legendary abilities. The extensive study of chi and practice of chi-based feats make it especially powerful in a cinematic campaign. Legends attribute body- and mind-control powers, telepathy, and secret pressure-point techniques to masters – and note that training in such matters is part of the curriculum for high-level black sashes even today.

*Skills:* Judo; Karate; Karate Sport; Savoir-Faire (Dojo).

*Techniques:* Arm Lock; Back Kick; Breakfall; Counterattack (Karate); Disarming (Judo); Exotic Hand Strike; Head Lock; Jump Kick; Kicking; Spinning Kick; Sweep (Karate).

*Cinematic Skills:* Body Control; Breaking Blow; Power Blow; Pressure Points; Pressure Secrets.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Pressure-Point Strike.

*Perks:* Chi Resistance (Any); Spinning Kick takes no posture penalty; Unusual Training (Breaking Blow, Only vs. well-braced objects out of combat).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Fit or Very Fit; Language (Korean); Telepathy Talent.

*Disadvantages:* Overconfidence.

*Skills:* Breath Control; Broadsword Art; Esoteric Medicine; First Aid; Flail; Judo Art; Karate Art; Knife; Meditation; Shortsword; Smallsword; Spear; Staff; Two-Handed Sword Art.

## Jeet Kune Do

**3 points**

In 1967, Bruce Lee (pp. 24-25) founded Jeet Kune Do (JKD) in California. He welcomed all students who could meet his high standards of training. In describing his art, Lee said, "Jeet Kune Do is a process, not a goal; a means but not an end, a constant movement rather than an established static pattern." In other words, Lee didn't consider JKD to be a style – although this didn't prevent fiction, movies, and schools from representing it as one after his death. JKD is taught worldwide today. *How* it's taught varies greatly; see *The Tao of Jeet Kune Do* (see box).

Jeet Kune Do rejects the aesthetic and spiritual considerations of traditional martial arts. Lee believed that those styles were incomplete and restrictive, and placed too much emphasis on set patterns. JKD emphasizes spontaneity; it's a set of tools for engineering a flexible response to *any* violent situation. Anything that works is acceptable: grappling, throwing, striking, ear twisting, biting. JKD favors direct attack and instant counterattack over traditional "defend-then-counter" approaches. It also demands rigorous physical training – a legacy of its founder's obsession with fitness and the great demands his art makes of its practitioners.

### *The Tao of Jeet Kune Do*

Jeet Kune Do (JKD) is an evolving art. Bruce Lee himself felt that it wasn't a style at all, but a process. He believed that even *naming* JKD might have been an error – it made it easier to mistake his process of exploration for a finished result.

While Lee didn't favor stagnation in the martial arts, he did believe that he had stripped his fighting style down to a core of simple, useful techniques applicable to all humans. Yet he also felt that martial arts were about "honestly expressing yourself," and that each person would have to learn about him- or herself through the arts – not simply study another's way. His paradoxical endorsement of both the individual need to explore and learn *and* the idea that all humans have the same tools to fight with led JKD to develop along two different paths after his death.

Some schools teach a fairly rigid curriculum in an attempt to match Lee's style as it was at the time of his death. They believe that one should not throw away Lee's experience, teaching, and knowledge in favor of new developments. Other schools heavily add to and subtract from JKD, and maintain that the true lesson of JKD is that it must continue to grow. Ironically, *both* types of schools have often added additional techniques and skills to the JKD syllabus, while Lee saw JKD as a process of subtraction – like a sculptor removing what's unnecessary to depict his subject.

With the GM's permission, players should be able to add to or subtract from the techniques listed under *Jeet Kune Do* (p. 165) to represent the curriculum of *their* school. JKD/Escrima and JKD/grappling-style blends are especially common. Other schools may teach another style but import a few tools or techniques from JKD and use the JKD name. These schools should simply add Style Adaptation (JKD) to their main style; they don't teach the full version of JKD.

Jeet Kune Do fighters typically put their "power side" (dominant hand) forward. This is the opposite of what most styles counsel, including Boxing. Stress is on the attack, even when on the defensive; the Counterattack technique and the Riposte option (pp. 124-125) are favorite tactics. Deceptive Attacks stacked with feints are also common, as Lee was a great believer in "progressive indirect attacking": throwing a series of strikes and using each attack to draw an opening for the next. JKD practitioners aim kicks at the legs to bring down the opponent, and hand strikes at the eyes, face, vitals, and groin.

## Martial-Arts Uniforms

The stereotypical martial-arts uniform is the ubiquitous Japanese *gi* (slang for *dogi*). Worn by *judoka* and *karateka,* it consists of loose, string-drawn cotton pants and a wrap top, cinched with an *obi* (belt) denoting rank. The traditional gi is white, but many schools wear black, blue, or even multicolored gis – either for style (black became popular during the ninja-crazed 1980s) or for practical reasons (black doesn't show stains!). Asian and Asian-derived styles often use the gi.

Many other styles have trademark garb. Boxers wear shorts, *sumotori* wear a *mawashi,* wrestlers wear a singlet, and Tapak Sutji Pentjak Silat students wear a red uniform with yellow striping. There are countless other examples.

Some Aikido, Aikijujutsu, and traditional Japanese *budo* schools (teaching Kendo or Kyudo, for example) use the *hakama,* or split skirt. Worn over a normal gi, this is split front and back to allow free movement of the legs.

Kung fu schools often adopt the pajama-like silk shirt common in China, along with gi-like drawstring pants. These uniforms are likely to be brightly colored, not white or black. Most have sashes instead of belts.

Mixed martial arts practitioners commonly wear shorts and gloves (women add a sport top) – the expected uniform in no-holds-barred matches. Typically, students train in shorts and t-shirts. Brazilian Jiu-jitsu stylists are a notable exception, usually training (and competing) in a gi, which they regard as an important part of their art.

Modern schools emphasizing "street use" or self-defense often train in street clothes. Students of historical schools – especially in styles that teach skills meant for actual combat – also tend to wear day-to-day clothing, not a uniform. This *may* be fairly uniform in nature, but such martial artists don't change into special clothes to train!

*Uniforms in Combat:* The crucial difference between fighting in and out of clothing – including uniforms and armor – is that nudity offers fewer handholds, making it easier to break free. If you're naked or in a skin-tight outfit, you get +1 to break free. Increase this to +2 if sweaty (at least 1 FP lost to exertion or heat) or +3 if oiled (lasts for one fight and costs $2 per application). Elaborate garb, including traditional Japanese costume, has many handholds and gives *-1*.

If JKD has a signature attack, it's the "straight blast." This starts with a front-hand straight punch with the striker's full body weight behind it – often a Committed Attack. It's frequently used to intercept an attacker (see *Stop Hits,* p. 108). The opening blow is then followed by a series of Rapid Strikes to disrupt and overwhelm the victim.

Lee built JKD from a number of styles. It draws heavily on Wing Chun (pp. 203-204), and also on Boxing (pp. 152-153), Escrima (pp. 155-156), fencing, other kung fu styles, and Lee's own extensive experience and experimentation. He added spectacular high kicks for their cinematic impact, but primarily used low kicks in practice. The central philosophy of JKD was reduction – not addition. Lee experimented with many techniques from other arts but only kept a tight core of broadly useful ones. JKD fighters don't have a wide range of techniques but rather an extensive range of applications for the small set they practice. Recognizing his art's stripped-down nature, Lee sometimes referred to JKD as "scientific streetfighting."

While Lee demonstrated his ability with weapons on film, JKD is an unarmed martial art. Nevertheless, some schools offer weapons training – and cinematic Bruce Lee clones should possess numerous weapon skills to better match his movie exploits! Lee also enjoyed *tameshiwari,* or breaking, but regarded it as an amusing stunt and not a combat skill. JKD is a combat style. No sport version exists, although Lee chose his moves on the set as much for how they looked as for how well they would work in a fight.

Lee had little regard for the special powers that some traditional martial-arts masters claimed. This didn't prevent admirers from ascribing such abilities to him – a result of his charisma, skill, and fame. The cinematic components below reflect Lee's exploits *in the movies.*

*Skills:* Judo; Karate.

*Techniques:* Counterattack (Karate); Ear Clap; Elbow Strike; Eye-Poke; Feint (Karate); Head Butt; Kicking; Knee Strike; Stamp Kick.

*Cinematic Skills:* Power Blow; Pressure Points; Pressure Secrets; Push.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Flying Jump Kick; Lethal Eye-Poke; Lethal Strike; Pressure-Point Strike.

*Perks:* Biting Mastery; Style Adaptation (All); Technique Adaptation (Counterattack); Technique Adaptation (Feint).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes; Fit or Very Fit.

*Disadvantages:* Delusion ("Bruce could . . ."); Obsession (Perfect my martial art).

*Skills:* Brawling; Flail; Running; Savoir-Faire (Dojo); Smallsword; Staff; Thrown Weapon (Shuriken); Wrestling.

*Techniques:* Jump Kick.

*Perks:* Off-Hand Weapon Training (Flail or Smallsword).

# Judo

**4 points**

Judo is a Japanese combative sport that focuses on grapples and throws. It was one of the first martial arts taught on a large scale in the West. It became popular in Europe in the 1920s and '30s, and in America after World War II. Today, Judo is an Olympic sport that attracts competitors from around the world.

While Judo evolved from Jujutsu (see below), it's definitely a sport. It concentrates on throws, not on locks or chokes, and has many modifications aimed at reducing the likelihood and severity of injuries. Judo doesn't teach counters to punches and kicks, either, and many moves that work well against another *judoka* (Judo player) on a mat would be dangerous at best in a real fight. Some schools use *kata* to walk through various throws and holds, and competitions often feature artistic displays of kata. Judo training isn't gentle, though; competitive players use *randori* – a form of freestyle sparring – to prepare for matches.

Judo was partly responsible for the Western myth that a small-but-skilled martial artist could defeat any foe, no matter how large. In reality, many techniques legal in Judo matches depend as much on strength as on skill. Judo tournaments have weight classes for a reason!

If Judo has a body of larger-than-life lore, it's the exotic techniques, strange abilities, and unlikely victories of weak over strong depicted in Western television and movies – notably in the 1960s – with no explanation other than "I know Judo!" Wildly inaccurate depictions sometimes even included "Judo strikes," especially chops with the edge of the hand. The cinematic skills and techniques below assume that legends about the style's founder *and* the movies' wildest claims are all true. Cinematic judoka should *always* buy Judo in addition to Judo Sport.

Early Judo included a full repertoire of punches, kicks, and throws, and both standing and ground-fighting techniques. For this kind of Judo, use Jujutsu.

*Skills:* Games (Judo); Judo Sport; Savoir-Faire (Dojo).
*Techniques:* Arm Lock; Breakfall; Ground Fighting (Judo Sport).
*Cinematic Skills:* Blind Fighting; Immovable Stance; Mental Strength; Power Blow; Pressure Points.
*Cinematic Techniques:* Roll with Blow.
*Perks:* Power Grappling; Technique Mastery (Judo Throw); Technique Mastery (Sacrifice Throw).

### Optional Traits

*Secondary Characteristics:* Improved FP.
*Advantages:* Fit or Very Fit; Hard to Subdue.
*Disadvantages:* Delusions.
*Skills:* Judo; Judo Art.
*Techniques:* Choke Hold; Feint (Judo Sport).

# Jujutsu

*Jujutsu* originally referred to the unarmed fighting arts of Japan – and certain armed ones, too. Today, the term is commonly associated with locks, holds, and throws. Like "karate" and "kung fu," "jujutsu" is a broad label. It describes a variety of styles: ground-fighting schools that finish foes with chokes, stand-up throwing-and-locking styles, and striking arts indistinguishable from Karate (pp. 169-172).

"Jujutsu" no longer describes strictly Japanese styles, either. Brazilian Jiu-jitsu (pp. 167-168), for instance, originated in South America after an expatriate Japanese instructor introduced Judo (see left) and Jujutsu (see below) there. Several variants have been developed in the U.S., too.

Below are two representative styles. See *Aikijutsu* (p. 149) and *Aikido* (p. 149) for some noteworthy forms of "jujutsu" that differ enough to merit separate treatment.

### *The J-Word*

*Jujutsu* is the name of a traditional Japanese martial art. It has seen several different transliterations over the centuries, but we favor "jujutsu" in ***Martial Arts.*** Many fighting styles – some only loosely connected Jujutsu (see below) – use variant spellings: jujitsu, jiu-jutsu, jiu-jitsu, and others. Whichever spelling one prefers in the Roman alphabet, all of these terms originate from the same *kanji,* or Chinese characters, in Japanese. Some specific usages:

*Jiu-jitsu:* Used by the Gracie and Machado families for their Brazilian Jiu-jitsu styles, as well as by many American schools.
*Jiu-jutsu:* A transliteration found in older sources but uncommon today.
*Jujutsu:* The most common modern transliteration, used for the traditional art.

## *Jujutsu*

**3 points**

The style described below is a purely unarmed art; *bushi* would study it as part of a larger *ryu* (see *Ryu,* p. 12). Historical Jujutsu forms ranged from arts that focused on grapples and throws to "hard" styles that differed little from karate. This version is a mixed style that uses grappling and striking equally.

Jujutsu is a very direct martial art. The fighter uses strikes to injure and weaken the enemy, followed by locks and throws to disable him or render him helpless. Kicks tend to be low-line. Other strikes target the vitals, neck, groin, and especially the face (a man in armor is usually least-armored there). Stylists train extensively at armored grappling techniques, known as *kumi uchi.* Locks, pins, and throws are much more effective than unarmed blows against an armor-clad adversary!

Cinematic *jujutsuka* (Jujutsu fighters) use their knowledge of pressure points and vital areas to overcome their foes. They're forceful and direct, using kiais and lethal attacks to stun and then slay opponents.

Jujutsu styles *often* vary from the components listed below. Individual schools may add or subtract techniques. Today, Jujutsu usually omits weapons entirely, rarely if ever teaches tactics for use in armor, and emphasizes grappling over striking. Strikes are still a core tactic, but stylists use

them more to supplement or set up grapples than as primary attacks. Some modern schools still utilize weapons in training, but mainly to teach how to defend against weapons, not how to use them.

*Skills:* Judo; Karate.

*Techniques:* Arm Lock; Back Kick; Disarming (Judo); Elbow Strike; Low Fighting (Judo or Karate); Targeted Attack (Karate Kick/Leg); Targeted Attack (Karate Punch/Face); Targeted Attack (Karate Punch/Neck).

*Cinematic Skills:* Immovable Stance; Kiai; Mental Strength; Pressure Points; Pressure Secrets.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Hand-Clap Parry; Lethal Strike; Pressure-Point Strike.

*Perks:* Armor Familiarity; Power Grappling; Sure-Footed (Uneven).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes; Forceful Chi.

*Disadvantages:* Duty.

*Skills:* Broadsword; Knife; Savoir-Faire (Dojo); Shortsword; Spear; Staff; Two-Handed Sword.

*Techniques:* Ground Fighting (Judo or Karate).

## *Brazilian Jiu-jitsu*

**3 points**

The Gracie family developed Brazilian Jiu-jitsu (BJJ) during the early 20th century, after Japanese-born *judoka* and wrestler Maeda Mitsuyo taught them Judo and Jujutsu. Maeda and the Gracies created a style that emphasized ground fighting and technique over brute strength. The Gracies first exhibited their skills as part of a circus wrestling team, taking on fairground challengers. Over the decades, the Gracies stripped away techniques that they deemed inefficient and sharpened their focus on *ne waza,* or ground techniques.

The Gracies became famous by issuing challenges to all comers, including world-champion boxers (none of whom accepted). They fought no-holds-barred matches called *vale tudo* (Portuguese for "anything goes") to demonstrate their skills. In the early 1990s, an American form of vale tudo emerged – the "Ultimate Fighting Championship" – which gave the Gracies a venue in which to fight. They did well, with Royce Gracie capturing the first two titles and grappling-trained fighters dominating the UFC ever since. For more on no-holds-barred fighting, see *Tournament Combat* (pp. 134-135) and *Mixed Martial Arts* (p. 189).

The Gracies – and their relatives, the Machado family – formed the core of BJJ. They later exported it to the U.S. and beyond. Other instructors have expanded the style, but at its heart it remains the ground fighting-heavy style of the Gracie family.

Brazilian Jiu-jitsu's philosophy is that most fights end up on the ground, so you might as well go there immediately and control the action once you hit the ground. BJJ stylists wait for an opening, and then "shoot" in and grapple (typically an Attack or Committed Attack). They follow up with a takedown and then an Arm Lock, Choke Hold, or Leg Lock to force a submission. In a life-or-death struggle, a BJJ fighter would use a quick choke or a broken limb or two to disable his assailant.

Some BJJ fighters like to set up submissions from the bottom, using the "guard" (lying face-up, with the adversary on top and usually between their legs). Others seek the "mount" (kneeling or crouching *on* an opponent who's prone or lying face-up), fighting from the top and passing their rival's guard. Stylists learn locks, chokes, and defenses for use in *either* situation. A few forms of BJJ add strikes, but it's more common for BJJ practitioners to cross-train in another style if they desire striking skills. BJJ stylists are famously patient, often pinning a foe and slowly working into position for a fight-winning lock.

## *Bartitsu*

**4 points**

Bartitsu was developed by E.W. Barton-Wright in the late 1890s. Barton-Wright based his style heavily on Jujutsu (pp. 166-168) but added moves from Boxing (pp. 152-153), no-holds-barred Wrestling (pp. 204-206), Victorian Singlestick (p. 157), and even fencing for good measure. The art became famous when Sir Arthur Conan Doyle revealed Sherlock Holmes to be a practitioner (and misnamed it "Baritsu").

Barton-Wright turned to public exhibitions to attract students, disgusting and driving off his Japanese partner in the dubious venture. His demonstrations were as much about showmanship and feats of strength as actual fighting methods. He made grandiose claims of Bartitsu's effectiveness against *all* opponents in *all* circumstances.

Some of Bartitsu's techniques were questionable and likely more dangerous to the user than to his opponent if done vigorously; the GM could add these as useless techniques (p. 95). Risky Committed and All-Out Attacks were common. Still, the core form was a combative Jujutsu style, and some of the added techniques *were* valuable to a pragmatic fighter. A stylist who can't distinguish the dangerous moves from the functional ones would qualify for a Delusion!

The components below assume a functional art. A harshly realistic take would replace all combat skills with Combat Sport skills. In our world, Bartitsu attracted few students, but in a cinematic Victorian setting it might be a thriving style with functional combat abilities and cinematic skills.

*Skills:* Brawling; Hobby Skill (Feats of Strength); Judo.

*Techniques:* Arm Lock; Head Butt; Head Lock; Knee Strike.

*Cinematic Skills:* Immovable Stance; Power Blow; Push.

*Perks:* Power Grappling.

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Fearlessness.

*Disadvantages:* Delusions; Overconfidence.

*Skills:* Boxing; Broadsword; Cloak; Lifting; Performance; Running; Smallsword; Stage Combat; Wrestling.

Brazilian Jiu-jitsu is a relatively new art without a mystical background. Nevertheless, some cinematic skills fit the more hyperbolic descriptions of its effectiveness!

*Skills:* Judo; Wrestling.

*Techniques:* Arm Lock; Breakfall; Choke Hold; Ground Fighting (Judo or Wrestling); Leg Grapple; Leg Lock; Leg Throw; Low Fighting (Judo or Wrestling); Lower-Body Arm Lock; Lower-Body Head Lock; Lower-Body Leg Lock; Scissors Hold; Triangle Choke; Trip.

*Cinematic Skills:* Blind Fighting; Pressure Points.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Roll with Blow.

*Perks:* Ground Guard; Power Grappling; Technique Adaptation (Ground Fighting); Technique Adaptation (Low Fighting).

### Optional Traits

*Secondary Characteristics:* Improved FP.

*Advantages:* Enhanced Dodge; Enhanced Parry (Bare Hands); Fit or Very Fit; Hard to Subdue; Language (Portuguese).

*Disadvantages:* Bully; Overconfidence; Reputation (Always goes for the takedown after a grapple).

*Skills:* Brawling; Karate; Savoir-Faire (Dojo).

## Kajukenbo

**3 points**

Kajukenbo is a "fusion" martial art, founded in Hawaii in 1947 by a mixed group of martial-arts instructors. They created a street-ready system to use in the bars and streets of the rough neighborhood in which they lived. The first classes didn't use padded floors or mats. Injuries were very common among early students! By 1950, Kajukenbo had a dozen schools and had spread to the mainland. Today, it's taught across America and Europe.

"Kajukenbo" is an acronym describing its constituent arts: "ka" for (Korean) Karate, "ju" for Judo and Jujutsu, "ken" for Kenpo, and "bo" for Boxing – both Chinese (Chu'an-fa kung fu) and American. Several other systems – including native Hawaiian arts and Escrima – inform the style as well. The founders' real-world experience in frequent street fights is also clearly visible in Kajukenbo's teachings.

Kajukenbo is truly a fusion of both techniques and traditions. It uses the high-line kicks of Korean martial arts, the throws and grapples of Judo and Jujutsu, and the hand strikes of Kenpo, Chu'an-fa, and Boxing. Its low-line kicks also come from kung fu. It mixes Japanese and Chinese ranking systems: students progress through *kyu* and *dan* ranks, but upper dans wear red belts, not black ones. Teachers are called *sifu*. Despite its tough nature, it's sometimes known as a Christian martial art, as its founders stressed the importance of family and faith, and opened practice sessions with prayer.

Kajukenbo is above all a streetfighting style. It uses Hammer Fist to prevent hand injury and low-line kicks to the legs and groin to avoid Leg Grapples. Deep stances are common, with the stylist planting his feet to avoid being moved out of position. Fighters practice freestyle follow-ups to finish a fallen adversary, including stomps and kicks to the vitals, head, kidneys, and spine of a foe curled up to ward off blows. They also learn to pile on attack after attack to finish an enemy who tries to flee.

Kajukenbo teaches a full range of attacks but emphasizes aggressive ones. The stylist resorts to All-Out Defense or Defensive Attack only if he can't find an opening, and once his enemy is injured or stunned, he rains down attacks using Committed Attack and All-Out Attack (often Double or Strong). Throws and locks follow parries, and aim to put the victim in a position for follow-up strikes; for instance, a grappled arm or leg immediately becomes the target of attacks intended to break it. Fighters use Exotic Hand Strike (in the form of clawed fingers) to gouge and rip foes after grabbing them.

Kajukenbo also stresses "clearing" an area – that is, checking for remaining hostiles. This became part of the system after one of the founders defeated a foe in front of him in a barroom brawl . . . and was stabbed in the kidney from behind. Practitioners are taught to sidestep away from a fallen enemy and then step back while turning around, checking in all directions for anyone who might want to backstab them. In game terms, Kajukenbo fighters should turn around and Wait after dispatching an adversary.

Like many modern arts, Kajukenbo has no body of legendary techniques. It *does* have a lineage of other martial arts with such legends. The cinematic skills below reflect these parent styles.

Several offshoot schools exist. Some are "softer" and rely more on parries followed by throws and locks. Others are hard styles. They're all close enough for the components below to cover them.

*Skills:* Judo; Karate.

*Techniques:* Arm Lock; Elbow Strike; Exotic Hand Strike; Hammer Fist; Kicking; Leg Grapple; Stamp Kick; Sweep (Karate).

*Cinematic Skills:* Immovable Stance; Power Blow.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Lethal Kick; Timed Defense.

*Perks:* Neck Control (Karate); Special Exercises (DR 1 with Tough Skin).

### Optional Traits

*Secondary Characteristics:* Improved Per.

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes; Danger Sense.

*Disadvantages:* Bloodlust; Sense of Duty (Kajukenbo schools).

*Skills:* Boxing; Brawling; Carousing; Observation; Savoir-Faire (Dojo); Streetwise; Wrestling.

## Kalaripayit

**14 points**

*Kalaripayit* – sometimes *Kalaripayattu* ("place of exercise training") – is a term for the traditional weapon-and-wrestling form of Kerala, India. The art as practiced today dates to the 9th century A.D., but India had similar forms of armed and unarmed combat long before that. Legend has it that the founder of the Kerala state also founded the first *kalari* (place) for teaching the fighting arts. It's more probable that Kalaripayit evolved from the weapon and wrestling practices of the warriors of the local villages. Many sub-styles of Kalaripayit exist. These resemble the style presented here in most respects.

Kalaripayit starts with weapons training and phases in unarmed combat for advanced students. Before the beginner learns *any* combat skills, though, he must prepare mentally and physically with meditation, massage, and yoga-like poses intended to build strength and clear the mind. Only then is he taught the staff, *muchan* (baton), and *otta* (curved club). After several years, he progresses to advanced weapons: knife, *gada* (two-handed mace), broadsword, shield, spear, and finally *urumi* (whip-sword). Before the advent of gunpowder, this list included the bow, too. Once the student masters these skills, he learns striking and grappling.

*Jutte*

Advanced fighters go on to study *marma* (see box): the art of using special strikes to particular vital points to kill enemies. Masters learn a series of *mantras* capable of affecting the world. When spoken, these words of power enhance the *guru*'s power, grant the abilities of totemic animals, heal, or smite foes. In a game where magic works, Kalaripayit masters are likely to be wizards who specialize in the Body Control and Healing colleges, and in the shapeshifting spells of the Animal College. Mantras are one of the style's deep secrets, taught to selected students; revealing them is said to weaken their power.

Kalaripayit teachings are closely tied to Hindu beliefs. In a historical campaign, only Hindu PCs are likely to receive training. Legend tells of several women who achieved great reputations as Kalaripayit instructors, so female stylists might well be historically accurate! In recent times, Indian expatriates have started teaching Kalaripayit in such places as the United Kingdom, making it available to anyone who cares to learn, Hindu or not.

*Skills:* Axe/Mace; Broadsword; Karate; Knife; Meditation; Shield; Shortsword; Spear; Staff; Theology (Hinduism); Two-Handed Axe/Mace; Whip; Wrestling.

*Techniques:* Arm Lock; Elbow Strike; Knee Strike; Low Fighting (Any).

*Cinematic Skills:* Body Control; Mental Strength; Pressure Points; Pressure Secrets.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Pressure-Point Strike; Roll with Blow.

*Perks:* Unusual Training (Pressure Points).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Magery.

*Disadvantages:* Duty (To instructor); Sense of Duty (India); Vow (Do not reveal the secret of the mantras).

*Skills:* Esoteric Medicine; Physiology; Savoir-Faire (Dojo); spells.

# Karate

The term "karate" and most of the styles it describes are 20th-century constructs. Regarded as the quintessential Japanese martial art, Karate is Okinawan in origin – Funakoshi Gichin (p. 23) brought it to Japan in the early 20th century. In 1933, Japan recognized *karate-do* as an official martial-arts *ryu* (school). Its precursor was an art called *Te,* or "hand." Te, in turn, owed much to the Chinese martial arts.

Originally, the *kanji* characters for "karate" were those for "Chinese" and "hand." In the 1920s, Funakoshi and his fellow *sensei* replaced the kanji for "Chinese" with that for "empty," both pronounced "kara." This changed "karate" from "Chinese hand" to "empty hand," emphasizing use over origin. These early masters also adapted many Karate terms from Okinawan to Japanese.

Karate – despite its practitioners' reputation in the popular mind – is a *-do* form. Its techniques are designed as much for safe sparring and *kata* as for combat utility. Karate *can* be effective in a fight, but it's primarily a sport. There are combat-oriented Karate schools that teach full-contact martial arts, but few dojos break free of the artistic kata and low-contact sparring which characterize the art.

Below is a small sampling of important Karate styles, both Japanese and Okinawan. This list is far from exhaustive – there are dozens of other styles, and the instructors of many styles have developed further variations. Major styles not discussed here include Chito Ryu, Shito Ryu, Shorin Ryu, Uechi Ryu, and Wado Ryu. The GM can safely use the styles described here as guidelines when expressing these other arts in game terms.

## *Te*

**3 points**

The various forms of *Te* – sometimes called *Di* – were Karate's Okinawan precursors, and included *Naha Te, Shuri Te,* and *Tomari Te.* Developed while weapons were banned, Te was strictly an unarmed art; for Okinawan weapons training, see *Kobujutsu* (p. 178). Te was brutal and combat-oriented. It was taught informally, had neither a ranking system nor a uniform, and made few distinctions between styles. The master taught techniques and *kata* at his discretion rather than in a set order.

## Marma

*Marma* is the Indian study of pressure points. It's a closely guarded secret, passed along only to the most advanced students of Kalaripayit (pp. 168-169). Marma's claims and methods are identical to those of other martial arts that use pressure points.

Marma is a subset of Kalaripayit, not studied alone. Only Kalaripayit stylists can learn Pressure Points from a marma master. Furthermore, because marma teaches how to both heal *and* kill, stylists who study Pressure Points *must* learn Esoteric Medicine and Physiology, too.

Some sources claim that marma techniques exist for tigers, elephants, and other animals. If the GM wishes, marma practitioners can avoid the penalties in *Physiology Modifiers* (p. B181) by buying a Style Perk for each animal they've studied. Veterinary is an appropriate optional skill for such characters.

Te stresses deflecting an incoming attack and then launching a strong counterattack. The goal is to finish the fight with a single blow – either a killing punch or kick, or an incapacitating pressure-point strike. Stylists use Aggressive Parry to ward off an enemy's attack, and then follow up with a disabling or lethal attack. Committed Attack (Strong) is common, and blows often target the vitals, neck, or skull.

Many Te masters went on to found Karate schools, but almost none passed on pure Te. Today, training in Te is nearly impossible to find – the GM could reasonably require a modern PC to have an Unusual Background if he wishes to know Te. This rarity makes Te an excellent "ultimate style" (see *Ultimate Styles,* p. 144).

*Skills:* Judo; Karate.

*Techniques:* Aggressive Parry; Back Kick; Counterattack (Karate); Elbow Strike; Exotic Hand Strike; Hammer Fist; Kicking; Knee Strike; Leg Grapple; Sweep (Karate); Targeted Attack (Karate Exotic Hand Strike/Vitals); Targeted Attack (Karate Kick/Vitals); Targeted Attack (Karate Punch/Neck).

*Cinematic Skills:* Breaking Blow; Immovable Stance; Kiai; Mental Strength; Power Blow; Pressure Points; Pressure Secrets.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Attack (Karate); Lethal Kick; Lethal Strike; Pressure-Point Strike; Targeted Attack (Lethal Kick/Vitals); Targeted Attack (Lethal Strike/Vitals).

*Perks:* Iron Body Parts (Any); Special Exercises (Striking ST +1); Unusual Training (Breaking Blow, Only vs. well-braced objects out of combat).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes; High Pain Threshold; Languages (Japanese, Okinawan).

*Disadvantages:* Reduced Appearance; Unnatural Features (Gnarled knuckles from iron-hand training).

*Skills:* Any weapon skill under *Kobujutsu* (p. 178); Parry Missile Weapons; Savoir-Faire (Dojo).

## *Shotokan*

**4 points**

Shotokan Ryu is the Karate school founded by Funakoshi Gichin (p. 23). It's named for the pseudonym he used when writing poetry: Shoto ("Pine Wave"). Funakoshi led the relocation of Karate to Japan, and today his school is one of the world's largest Karate organizations. Many Karate schools worldwide teach either Shotokan or a style based on it.

In Shotokan as in most traditional Karate styles, the *karateka* learns to defend and then counterattack, and launches each technique with the intention of disabling his adversary in a single blow. At the start of the fight, he uses Evaluate to size up his foe or All-Out Defense to ensure a successful defense. After stopping the initial attack, he hits back with a strong blow, typically a punch or a kick aimed at the head, neck, or torso. Attacks to the limbs are less frequent. Shotokan uses a lot of feints, and an alternating series of Feints and Attacks – plus the rare All-Out Attack (Feint) – is a common rhythm, with the fighter stringing together techniques until his opponent fails to defend.

Shotokan stresses *kata* and preset pattern drills. Freestyle sparring is uncommon. In competition, scoring is for techniques stopped just short of contact, and there are limits on the number of consecutive attacks that contenders can launch. However, the style retains much of its Te core. Students drill hard in its techniques, practicing them against *makiwara* (p. 233) and using them in *tameshiwari* (breaking). Thus, the art remains valid for self-defense.

Funakoshi didn't believe in chi powers and often debunked or refuted wilder claims about the martial arts. Nevertheless, after his death, some adherents attributed amazing capabilities to him. Cinematic Shotokan stylists might possess several chi abilities and be able to pull off such showy tricks as using tameshiwari against active, resisting foes.

Funakoshi placed great emphasis on the peaceful nature of *karate-do.* Even when he recounted using Karate in circumstances that most would deem justified self-defense, he felt that he had overreacted and used too much force. Karateka who emulate Funakoshi and adhere to his teachings might have Pacifism (Self-Defense Only).

*Skills:* Karate; Karate Art; Savoir-Faire (Dojo).

*Techniques:* Back Kick; Elbow Strike; Exotic Hand Strike; Feint (Karate); Hammer Fist; Jump Kick; Kicking; Knee Strike; Spinning Kick; Stamp Kick.

*Cinematic Skills:* Breaking Blow; Immovable Stance; Kiai; Mental Strength; Pressure Points; Pressure Secrets.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Lethal Kick; Lethal Strike; Pressure-Point Strike.

*Perks:* Clinch (Karate); Technique Adaptation (Feint); Unusual Training (Breaking Blow, Only vs. well-braced objects out of combat).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Language (Japanese); Reputation (Student of Funakoshi, from all karateka).

*Disadvantages:* Pacifism (Self-Defense Only).

*Skills:* Any weapon skill under *Kobujutsu* (p. 178); Games (Karate); Judo Sport; Karate Sport; Parry Missile Weapons.

## *Goju Ryu*

**5 points**

Chojun Miyagi founded Goju Ryu in the 1920s after studying under Higaonna Kanryu, a noted master of *Naha Te* and Chinese kung fu. Miyagi further pursued both Te and kung fu, and developed his own Karate style. He formally named it "goju," or "hard and soft," in 1927.

Goju Ryu's philosophical base is strongly linked to Chinese Taoism. Some of its *kata* originated with kung fu forms. The style heavily emphasizes deep-breathing techniques, slow kata done with surface muscle contraction, and strong stances.

Goju Ryu stylists usually fight from a strong, defensive stance. They avoid meeting force with force; instead, they attempt to avoid the enemy's attack and retaliate with a strong counter. Despite this, Goju Ryu's strong stances and training at absorbing blows without shifting from a stance make it an effective linear style. Many of its parries are

meant to injure the attacker as much as defend. Like all Karate styles, Goju Ryu seeks to defeat the enemy with a single, decisive blow. Fighters make extensive use of the Wait and All-Out Defense maneuvers, and then strike back with an Attack or Committed Attack (Strong) aimed at a vital location.

Today, Goju Ryu is widespread. However, many modern dojos – especially in the U.S. and Europe – have largely discarded its internal teachings and concentrate solely on its hard, external training. Schools often teach a variety of Okinawan weapons in addition to unarmed fighting.

*Skills:* Breath Control; Karate; Karate Art; Savoir-Faire (Dojo).

*Techniques:* Aggressive Parry; Back Kick; Elbow Strike; Exotic Hand Strike; Hammer Fist; Kicking; Knee Strike; Spinning Kick; Targeted Attack (Karate Exotic Hand Strike/Vitals); Targeted Attack (Karate Kick/Vitals).

*Cinematic Skills:* Body Control; Breaking Blow; Immovable Stance; Kiai; Power Blow; Pressure Points; Pressure Secrets.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Attack (Karate); Lethal Kick; Lethal Strike; Targeted Attack (Lethal Kick/Vitals); Targeted Attack (Lethal Strike/Vitals).

*Perks:* Clinch (Karate); Iron Hands; Special Exercises (DR 1 with Tough Skin); Unusual Training (Breaking Blow, Only vs. well-braced objects out of combat).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Language (Japanese); High Pain Threshold.

*Disadvantages:* Disciplines of Faith.

*Skills:* Any weapon skill under *Kobujutsu* (p. 178); Games (Karate); Parry Missile Weapons.

## *Isshinryu*

**4 points**

Shimabuku Tatsuo, an expert in Shorin Ryu and Goju Ryu, founded Isshinryu (meaning "one heart, one mind") in 1954. A student of Chojun Miyagi, Shimabuku broke from his parent styles and formed his own after his teacher's death. Many of the differences had to do with his personal philosophy, which he expected his students to learn and follow.

Isshinryu diverges from most other Karate styles in action as well. The most visible distinction is that while *karateka* generally corkscrew their fist into the horizontal when punching, Isshinryu fighters keep their knuckles vertical. They throw shorter strikes, too, "snapping" out punches and then retracting them quickly. Other differences include less stress on high-line kicks in favor of kicks that aren't as vulnerable to a Leg Grapple, and a preference for multiple, quick strikes over a single, disabling blow.

Isshinryu karateka fight in close, and favor punches and short-range kicks over showier, longer-ranged attacks. They often use Combinations, Rapid Strikes, and Dual-Weapon Attacks. When kicking, they prefer targets below the waist. All of these strikes are more likely to be Defensive Attacks or Attacks than Committed Attacks or All-Out Attacks. Stylists usually use punches to fight their way out of a standing grapple.

There are Isshinryu schools the world over. Finding an Isshinryu dojo in the U.S. isn't difficult.

*Skills:* Karate; Karate Art; Savoir-Faire (Dojo).

*Techniques:* Aggressive Parry; Back Kick; Elbow Strike; Exotic Hand Strike; Feint (Karate); Hammer Fist; Kicking; Knee Strike; Spinning Kick.

*Cinematic Skills:* Kiai; Mental Strength; Pressure Points; Pressure Secrets.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Attack (Karate); Pressure-Point Strike.

*Perks:* Clinch (Karate); Rapid Retraction (Punches); Unusual Training (Breaking Blow, Only vs. well-braced objects out of combat).

### Optional Traits

*Secondary Characteristics:* Improved Per.

*Advantages:* Language (Japanese); Peripheral Vision.

*Disadvantages:* Overconfidence.

*Skills:* Any weapon skill under *Kobujutsu* (p. 178); Games (Karate); Judo.

*Techniques:* Leg Grapple.

## *Kyokushin*

**4 points**

Mas Oyama (p. 24), a student of Funakoshi Gichin (p. 23), founded Kyokushin in the late 1950s. He greatly emphasized physical toughness and *hissatsu:* one shot, one kill. His style reflects this, and teaches a traditional "block hard, then counter" approach. Students learn to parry an incoming attack firmly and retaliate with a single strike capable of incapacitating the opponent. Alongside power they learn control. In training, they attack just short of their partner to avoid injury.

Kyokushin stylists often use Committed Attack to follow up a successful parry. They target the head, neck, groin, and other vital areas to end the fight in a single blow. Punches to the skull typically use Hammer Fist. Fighters rarely retreat to avoid attacks. Rather than give ground, they punish their opponent with an Aggressive Parry and then follow it with a finishing technique – often an All-Out or Committed Attack (Strong).

Kyokushin tournaments don't allow punches to the head (kicks *are* allowed), so athletes who practice this style sometimes leave their face poorly protected or don't bother to strike the head. Another weakness is minimal grappling training. The usual response to a grapple is to seize the assailant – using plain DX or the Clinch perk – and batter him into letting go.

Training in Kyokushin emphasizes *tameshiwari* (breaking), full-force attacks, and "toughening" exercises that involve breaking objects *over* the student. Even in a realistic game, students can purchase Style Perks that increase their ability to dish out and take damage. In a cinematic campaign, advanced fighters have access to the fantastic abilities attributed to Mas Oyama. They'll stand their ground in the face of any adversary (human or otherwise!) and smash down foes using a single strike – or merely shock them into submission with a well-timed kiai! Those interested in playing a PC like this need look no further than Mas Oyama's own life for roleplaying tips.

## *Belts and Grading*

In the popular imagination, a "black belt" is a martial-arts master. In reality, not all black belts are masters and not all arts use colored belts – or have *any* ranking system. Even in styles that use belts, the black belt doesn't mark the end of instruction: a black-belt student has mastered the basics and is ready for *true* apprenticeship. If his style is combative, he might be extremely tough. If his style is artistic, he might be less capable in a fight than the average brawler!

A widespread origin myth for the black belt suggests that a novice received a white belt. When he had learned enough to be deemed a master, the belt would be so dirty that it was black. This is at best unverifiable.

What *is* verifiable is that today's familiar colored-belt system was invented for Judo (p. 166) by founder Jigoro Kano. The rankings in that system were: white (6th through 4th kyu), brown (3rd through 1st kyu), black (1st through 5th dan), red-and-white (6th through 8th dan), and solid red (9th and 10th dan). Later, 10th dan was changed to white. The rankings didn't stop at 10th dan, but no one was ever promoted higher. In this system, one says the ranking's number first, then its name; for instance, 4th kyu is *yonkyu* and 4th dan is *yondan*. In English, "dan" becomes "degree"; e.g., a 10th dan is a "10th-degree black belt." Kyu rankings are usually known only by color.

When Te (pp. 169-170) came to Japan and became Karate, it adopted Judo's ranking system. Funakoshi Gichin created the first *karate-do* black belts in 1924. Today, Karate (pp. 169-172) and Tae Kwon Do (p. 200) use similar systems, but with 10 kyu ranks and 10 dan ranks; belt colors vary considerably. Kendo (p. 175) doesn't use belts, but has eight kyu and eight dan ranks. Chinese systems use sashes instead of belts, and the top color is red or gold. The only generalization one can make about other Asian styles is that the top and bottom ranks are black and white – usually. Outside Asia, sport styles typically have ranking systems based on belts or colored patches (e.g., Brazilian Jiu-jitsu and sport Sambo), fighting record (e.g., Boxing, Wrestling, and mixed martial arts), or a combination of the two (e.g., Savate).

Things were quite different before modern times. In the Japanese arts, instructors in each *ryu* issued teaching certificates, awarding grades that denoted how advanced and respected the teacher was. The chosen head of the ryu held the highest rank. Chinese martial arts used a similar system, with a letter from an instructor testifying to his student's skill. In historical Europe, the Masters of Defence (p. 17) had a grading system similar to that of trade guilds: "apprentice," "journeyman," and finally "master." A would-be master had to acquit himself with any combination of weapons in a public test by other masters.

A great many historical and modern arts have *no* formal ranking system. Each school ranks its students by seniority. Instructors either receive teaching permission from their peers on an ad hoc basis or are entirely self-proclaimed.

Kyokushin attracted many students at its inception and is still widely taught today. Its full-contact sparring and tournaments, emphasis on *tameshiwari* competitions, and strenuous belt tests are well-known in martial-arts circles. These things have made the style famous for producing tough, contest-hardened martial artists. Kyokushin schools are found worldwide.

*Skills:* Karate; Karate Sport; Savoir-Faire (Dojo).

*Techniques:* Aggressive Parry; Axe Kick; Back Kick; Elbow Strike; Exotic Hand Strike; Hammer Fist; Head Butt; Jump Kick; Kicking; Knee Strike; Spinning Kick; Stamp Kick.

*Cinematic Skills:* Breaking Blow; Immovable Stance; Kiai; Mental Strength; Power Blow; Pressure Points; Pressure Secrets.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Lethal Kick; Lethal Strike; Pressure-Point Strike.

*Perks:* Clinch (Karate); Iron Hands; Special Exercises (DR 1 with Tough Skin); Special Exercises (Striking ST +1); Unusual Training (Breaking Blow, Only vs. well-braced objects out of combat).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes; High Pain Threshold; Language (Japanese); Reputation (Kyokushin student, from all karateka).

*Disadvantages:* Overconfidence; Reputation (Throws punches to the body, kicks to the head).

*Skills:* Breath Control; Hobby Skill (Feats of Strength); Judo; Parry Missile Weapons.

# KEMPO

**7 points**

Kempo, sometimes spelled *Kenpo,* is a Japanese striking art with origins in China. In popular usage, "kempo" – like "karate" and "kung fu" – is occasionally a generic term for *all* Chinese and Japanese striking arts. Here it refers specifically to Shorinjikempo: the Shaolin Kung Fu-based style founded in 1947 by Doshin So.

Shorinjikempo teaches hard-style strikes similar to those of modern Karate (pp. 169-172) combined with soft-style grapples and throws akin to those of Aikijutsu (p. 149). It puts artistic *kata* on an equal footing with combat techniques and expects students to learn its underlying philosophy alongside its fighting methods. Doshin So founded Shorinjikempo to teach both martial arts *and* Buddhist philosophy, which he felt was lacking in postwar Japan. The goal of its training is to make the student a peaceful, better person in harmony with Buddhist principles.

Unlike *karateka,* who usually twist their fist into the horizontal plane when punching, Kempo stylists throw vertical punches. Kempo shares Karate's practice of aiming strikes at vital locations, however – indeed, cinematic masters often raise their Pressure Points skill to extraordinary levels. Kempo fighters train to parry their attacker and then counter with a punch, kick, or throw. A common follow-up to a grapple or a Judo parry is an Arm Lock, with the usual goal being not to injure the victim but to cause him pain and then exploit his shock by attempting an immediate throw or takedown. Practitioners integrate all of these responses seamlessly, flowing back and forth between striking and grappling as they counter their opponent's actions.

Shorinjikempo includes weapons training for very advanced students – although few actually receive it. Weapons include the staff, baton, and *yawara* (p. 226).

Until recently, Kempo's official symbol was the *omote manji:* a counterclockwise swastika traditionally used in Buddhism to denote the location of temples. Decades of difficulty in persuading outsiders that this swastika was in no way connected to Nazism eventually took its toll, however. In 2005, Kempo changed its symbol to a pair of interlinked circles set in a four-pointed badge.

Kempo schools vary greatly in their teachings. Some proffer kung fu variants modified to incorporate elements of Jujutsu (pp. 166-168) and Karate. Others teach Karate or kung fu forms that are only nominally Kempo. There are even *Christian* schools that offer a style very similar to Shorinjikempo but with Christian prayers replacing Buddhist rituals.

*Skills:* Breath Control; Judo; Karate; Karate Art; Philosophy (Buddhism); Savoir-Faire (Dojo).

*Techniques:* Arm Lock; Back Kick; Breakfall; Elbow Strike; Kicking; Knee Strike; Spinning Kick.

*Cinematic Skills:* Body Control; Immovable Stance; Mental Strength; Pressure Points; Pressure Secrets.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Pressure-Point Strike.

*Perks:* Special Setup (Karate Parry > Judo Throw).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Language (Japanese).

*Disadvantages:* Disciplines of Faith; Pacifism (Self-Defense Only).

*Skills:* Judo Art; Shortsword; Staff.

# Kenjutsu

**3 points**

Kenjutsu is the art of the Japanese longsword, or *katana.* The katana held a privileged place for the samurai class – it was said to house its owner's soul. Its manufacture was a mystical ritual that combined metallurgical skill with a strong sense of aesthetics. It and the fighting methods used with it have become legendary.

Samurai most often wielded the katana in two hands, and the style described here favors two-handed methods. The blade was balanced well enough for one-handed use, though, and there were schools that weighted one- and two-handed use more evenly. These would feature more Broadsword techniques.

Kenjutsu places much emphasis on the cut. Fighters learn to thrust but usually use their sword for deep slashes. Likewise, while Kenjutsu teaches a full range of parries, it isn't a defensive art. Stylists commonly make Committed and All-Out Attacks. The classic Kenjutsu tactic is to dash the opponent's blade out of line with a Beat (pp. 100-101) and then finish him with a cut. Ultimately, Kenjutsu is a highly aggressive style.

Kenjutsu training uses the *bokken* (wooden sword). This is safer than a bare blade, but severe injuries can – and did – occur during practice. Musashi Miyamoto (pp. 21-22) felt that the bokken was *deadlier* than the katana, and used it or improvised substitutes to fight lethal duels.

When it comes to legends about weapons and their wielders' abilities, the katana and Kenjutsu have few rivals. In a cinematic game, nearly any skill or technique that could conceivably work with a sword should be available to one *ryu* or another. A few schools reputedly taught how to *throw* either the katana or the *wakizashi* (shortsword) as a secret tactic of last resort!

Secret methods needn't be cinematic, however. Historically, Kenjutsu was only *part* of a particular ryu (see *Ryu,* p. 12). Warriors normally studied the katana alongside the other weapons in the samurai arsenal. Kenjutsu *ryuha* were unusually numerous, though – there were more than 700 during the Tokugawa era! The differences between them were typically minute and only distinguishable by advanced practitioners, but many schools were rivals that keenly guarded secret techniques from one another. Thus, a realistic ryu would probably teach only a subset of the techniques from the extremely complete list below – stressing some moves over others – while possibly adding optional ("secret") components.

Today, Kenjutsu schools are extremely rare. Would-be students must typically seek out instruction in Japan. Kendo (p. 175) is far more common.

Korean swordsmen use a weapon very similar to the katana, called the *jang gum.* Korean sword arts are nearly identical to Kenjutsu in game terms, and should use the components listed below. They're less likely to offer Fast-Draw or techniques for two-sword fighting, though, and practitioners make jumping attacks (treat as Committed or All-Out Attacks) more often.

*Skills:* Broadsword; Two-Handed Sword.

*Techniques:* Back Strike (Two-Handed Sword); Counterattack (Two-Handed Sword); Feint (Broadsword or Two-Handed Sword); Targeted Attack (Two-Handed Sword Swing/Arm); Targeted Attack (Two-Handed Sword Swing/Neck); Targeted Attack (Two-Handed Sword Swing/Skull); Targeted Attack (Two-Handed Sword Thrust/Neck); Targeted Attack (Two-Handed Sword Thrust/Vitals).

*Cinematic Skills:* Blind Fighting; Flying Leap; Immovable Stance; Kiai; Mental Strength; Power Blow.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Defense (Two-Handed Sword); Timed Defense (Two-Handed Sword); Whirlwind Attack (Two-Handed Sword).

*Perks:* Grip Mastery (Katana).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes; Language (Japanese); Weapon Master (Katana).

*Disadvantages:* Code of Honor (Bushido); Duty.

*Skills:* Armoury; Breath Control; Broadsword Art; Fast-Draw (Sword or Two-Handed Sword); Meditation; Philosophy (Zen Buddhism); Savoir-Faire (Dojo); Shortsword; Thrown Weapon (Sword); Two-Handed Sword Art.

*Techniques:* Counterattack (Broadsword); Low Fighting (Broadsword or Two-Handed Sword); Reverse Grip (Two-Handed Sword).

*Perks:* Weapon Bond.

## *Iaijutsu*

**5 points**

Iaijutsu is the Japanese art of drawing a weapon and striking or parrying with it in a single motion. It rose to prominence during a period when samurai were routinely armed but not typically in combat. (In battle, they'd ready their weapons *before* engaging the enemy!) It fell into disfavor after "crossroad cuttings" – practicing Iaijutsu skills on convenient passersby – became common. Swordsmen often studied Iaijutsu alongside Kenjutsu (above) or Nito Ryu (below).

*Iaijutsuka* (Iaijutsu stylists) focus on two sets of tactics. Defensively, they practice drawing the sword to fend off blows – especially surprise attacks. Offensively, they learn to draw and strike before their victim can react.

The iaijutsuka doesn't necessarily expect to win the fight with his initial strike. He remains poised to deliver second and later attacks should his foe survive the first one. After dispatching his enemy, he composes himself while remaining wary; treat this as a Wait maneuver. Once it's clear that no further threat remains, the iaijutsuka cleans his blade before sheathing it.

The motion used to clean blood from the blade is called *chiburi.* This automatically follows many Iaijutsu moves, whether or not the iaijutsuka plans to sheathe his weapon. It can consist of a broad, swinging motion, a wrist snap, or spinning the sword. Flicking the blood of a fallen enemy from the blade used to cut him down can impress onlookers and surviving foes – roll a free Intimidation attempt! In cinematic and fantasy games, chiburi is also useful for removing corrosive monster blood, incriminating poison, etc.

*Skills:* Broadsword; Broadsword Art; Fast-Draw (Sword); Two-Handed Sword.

*Techniques:* Back Strike (Broadsword or Two-Handed Sword); Low Fighting (Broadsword or Two-Handed Sword); Targeted Attack (Broadsword or Two-Handed Sword Swing/Arm); Targeted Attack (Broadsword or Two-Handed Sword Swing/Neck); Targeted Attack (Broadsword or Two-Handed Sword Swing/Skull); Targeted Attack (Broadsword or Two-Handed Sword Thrust/Neck); Targeted Attack (Broadsword or Two-Handed Sword Thrust/Vitals).

*Cinematic Skills:* Mental Strength; Precognitive Parry.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Springing Attack (Broadsword or Two-Handed Sword); Timed Defense (Broadsword or Two-Handed Sword).

*Perks:* Grip Mastery (Katana); Quick-Sheathe (Sword); Shtick (Chiburi).

### Optional Traits

*Secondary Characteristics:* Improved Basic Speed and Per.

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes; Danger Sense; Language (Japanese).

*Disadvantages:* Reputation (For crossroad cutting).

*Skills:* Meditation; Observation; Savoir-Faire (Dojo); Shortsword; Shortsword Art.

*Perks:* Weapon Bond.

*Gada*

## *Nito Ryu*

**3 points**

Nito Ryu ("two swords school") is a term used for *Hyoho Niten Ichi Ryu,* the Kenjutsu style founded by Musashi Miyamoto (pp. 21-22) in 17th-century Japan. Musashi felt that holding a sword in two hands restricted the wielder's movements, limited his defensive and offensive options, and was impossible on horseback or when carrying a second weapon (such as a spear or bow) for battle. He developed a style that used the katana in one hand, freeing the other to use the *wakizashi* (shortsword) simultaneously or to hold another weapon. Although heavily identified with the sword, Musashi also learned to use the *jitte* (p. 217) from his family's martial-arts training, and modern schools teach this to advanced students.

Nito Ryu can be very aggressive, attacking with both blades at once or using them alternately to rain down blows. Stylists wield their weapons forcefully, using Committed Attack or even All-Out Attack (Double) to overwhelm their foe. When armed with two swords, they favor Dual-Weapon Attack – often using one blade to feint (or to Beat; see pp. 100-101) and the other to attack. Nito Ryu makes regular use of both weapons to fend off single-weapon attacks (see *Cross Parry,* p. 121), followed by a Counterattack. Overall, it eschews defensive tactics in favor of overpowering the foe.

Musashi was known for his aggressiveness and his disdain for many of the trappings of the samurai. His impressive success record in mortal duels also gave him a reputation for bloodthirstiness. Nito Ryu stylists may choose to duplicate their style founder's less-praiseworthy traits as well as his skills.

*Skills:* Broadsword; Shortsword.

*Techniques:* Counterattack (Broadsword or Shortsword); Feint (Broadsword or Shortsword); Targeted Attack (Broadsword or Shortsword Swing/Arm); Targeted Attack (Broadsword or Shortsword Swing/Neck); Targeted Attack (Broadsword or Shortsword Swing/Skull); Targeted Attack (Broadsword or Shortsword Thrust/Neck); Targeted Attack (Broadsword or Shortsword Thrust/Vitals).

*Cinematic Skills:* Mental Strength; Power Blow.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Attack (Broadsword or Shortsword); Dual-Weapon Defense (Broadsword or Shortsword); Timed Defense (Broadsword or Shortsword); Whirlwind Attack (Broadsword or Shortsword).

*Perks:* Off-Hand Weapon Training (Shortsword); Unusual Training (Dual-Weapon Attack, Both attacks must target the same foe).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Ambidexterity; Combat Reflexes; Language (Japanese).

*Disadvantages:* Bloodlust; Obsession (Perfect sword skills); Odious Personal Habit (Bad manners); Reputation (User of unconventional strategies).

*Skills:* Breath Control; Broadsword Art; Fast-Draw (Sword); Jitte/Sai; Meditation; Philosophy (Zen Buddhism); Savoir-Faire (Dojo); Staff; Tactics; Two-Handed Sword.

# Knightly Mounted Combat

Medieval European knights studied the martial arts intensively. From an early age, they practiced mounted and foot combat, alone and in groups. Their fighting styles evolved over time to keep up with increasingly heavy armor and larger mounts, and the weapons that accompanied those developments.

## *Early Medieval*

**6 points**

Following the demise of the Roman Empire, mounted warriors gradually came to dominate European warfare. These early knights were armed with the spear and the broadsword (which was both a status symbol and their main weapon). Stirrups were common, but the saddles of the time didn't provide sufficient support for true "couched lance" techniques. Protection consisted of mail armor and a medium or large shield.

These early knights used the spear overhand – or, occasionally, couched under the right arm – to attack their enemies' vulnerable face, neck, and vitals. When wielding the broadsword, they generally dealt overhand slashing blows, although thrusting attacks weren't unknown. When using *either* weapon, they preferred to block with the shield rather than parry. Close in, they employed wrestling moves – both to prevent the enemy from using his weapons and to disable attackers when they were themselves disarmed.

Legends of knightly combat often mention fierce battle cries that terrified lesser foes – a Western version of Kiai. Legends also tell of knights cleaving foes in half, killing horses with a single blow, and other feats worthy of Power Blow.

## *Kendo*

**4 points**

Samurai disappointed with *kata*-only practice developed Kendo as a form of contact training less risky than sparring with bokken. Their efforts yielded specialized light armor, the *shinai* (split-bamboo sword), and rules intended to prevent injury while allowing contact.

Kendo is a sport, not a combat form. Limited targets, light weapons, and strong protection contribute to the participants' safety. Players may strike the protected face, neck, torso, and hands. In order to score, they must declare their target as they attack. They're allowed to shove, but only sword blows score. Many Kendo moves would get you killed in a real swordfight.

One Kendo variant – based on *Nito Ryu* (pp. 174-175) – uses *two* swords. Replace Two-Handed Sword Sport with Broadsword Sport and Shortsword Sport; change the techniques to match; add Dual-Weapon Attack (Broadsword Sport or Shortsword Sport) to cinematic techniques; and include Off-Hand Weapon Training (Shortsword Sport) and Unusual Training (Dual-Weapon Attack, Both attacks must target the same foe) as Style Perks. Style cost becomes 5 points. Players use Dual-Weapon Attack to feint and attack, since only one attack counts for scoring purposes. Striking twice can invalidate both scores!

Kendo was briefly banned during the Allied Occupation of Japan, but was restored in 1947. Since the 1960s, it has become an international sport. Today, it's widely popular in Japan, where it's a common sport in school. Korea's *Kumdo* is identical, but uses Korean etiquette and nomenclature.

*Skills:* Games (Kendo); Savoir-Faire (Dojo); Two-Handed Sword Sport.
*Techniques:* Feint (Two-Handed Sword Sport); Targeted Attack (Two-Handed Sword Sport Swing/Arm); Targeted Attack (Two-Handed Sword Sport Swing/Skull); Targeted Attack (Two-Handed Sword Sport Thrust/Neck).
*Cinematic Skills:* Kiai; Immovable Stance; Mental Strength; Power Blow.
*Cinematic Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Defense (Two-Handed Sword Sport); Whirlwind Attack (Two-Handed Sword Sport).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Enhanced Parry (Two-Handed Sword).
*Disadvantages:* Delusions.
*Skills:* Breath Control; Meditation; Philosophy (Zen Buddhism); Shortsword Art; Two-Handed Sword Art.

## *Iaido*

**5 points**

Iaido is the *-do* form of Iaijutsu (p. 174). Like Kendo, it started life as a way to cope with the loss of combat conditions under which to practice. Unlike Kendo, it focuses on *kata* and drill, not free sparring. Stylists often use an unsharpened sword.

*Skills:* Broadsword Art; Fast-Draw (Sword); Savoir-Faire (Dojo); Two-Handed Sword Art.
*Techniques:* Low Fighting (Broadsword Art or Two-Handed Sword Art).
*Cinematic Skills:* Mental Strength.
*Cinematic Techniques:* Springing Attack (Broadsword Art or Two-Handed Sword Art).
*Perks:* Grip Mastery (Katana); Quick-Sheathe (Sword); Shtick (Chiburi).

### Optional Traits

*Secondary Characteristics:* Improved Basic Speed and Per.
*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes.
*Disadvantages:* Delusions.
*Skills:* Meditation; Shortsword Art.

# Armed Styles

Many cultures have styles that consist largely – if not solely – of collections of weapon skills. For examples, see *Kobujutsu* (p. 178) and *Masters of Defence Weapon Training* (p. 182). The armed styles below are equally noteworthy, if less-famous. The GM can create similar styles for Dark Ages warriors, Aztec knights, ancient soldiery, and so on.

## *Banshay*

**7 points**

Banshay is the armed sub-style of *Thaing* (a blanket term for Burmese martial arts). It's usually learned in conjunction with Bando (pp. 151-152). It includes the use of fist loads, sticks, batons (*dhot*), staffs, clubs, spears, shields, knives, machetes, kukris, swords (short through broad), axes, bows, crossbows, ropes, chains, belts, whips, shoes, and even clothes. Ancient legends are plentiful, such as that of Prince Sawthi of Burma, who slew four giant monsters after being trained by a hermit archery master.

*Skills:* Broadsword; Knife; Shield; Shortsword; Spear; Staff.

*Techniques:* As *Kobujutsu* (p. 178), but for the above weapon skills.

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes; Heroic Archer; Language (Burmese).

*Skills:* Axe/Mace; Bow; Brawling; Crossbow; Kusari; Whip.

## *Krabi Krabong*

**8 points**

Krabi Krabong is a Thai combat style that dates back at least 400 years. Its earliest origins are unknown owing to the loss of written records in Thailand. However, it's clear that Thailand's royal bodyguards learned the art and that matches served as both spectator sport and training.

Krabi Krabong teaches the *daab song meu* (twin short swords), *krabi* (saber), *mae sun-sawk* (twin tonfa-like clubs), *ngao* (polearm), and *plong* (staff). It also includes unarmed strikes, grapples, and throws. Unarmed blows often parallel those of Muay Thai (pp. 185-186) but are frequently reinforced with weapons – e.g., elbow strikes while using the mae sun-sawk – and many fighters learn Muay Thai alongside Krabi Krabong.

Modern Krabi Krabong matches still involve real weapons. Competitors avoid hitting the opponent, however, and instead strike his weapons or halt just short of impact. Injuries do occur but an injured fighter can continue. The contenders' endurance and display of skill determines victory. Competitive fighters should learn Combat Sport *and* combat versions of the style's weapon skills – or *only* Combat Sport versions, if they're strictly athletes.

*Skills:* Judo; Karate; Polearm; Saber; Smallsword; Staff; Tonfa.

*Techniques:* Back Kick; Elbow Strike; Feint (Polearm, Saber, Smallsword, or Staff); Kicking; Knee Strike; Sweep (Staff); Uppercut.

*Cinematic Skills:* Power Blow.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Attack (Saber, Smallsword, or Tonfa).

*Perks:* Style Adaptation (Muay Thai); Unusual Training (Dual-Weapon Attack, Both attacks must target the same foe); Weapon Adaptation (Shortsword to Smallsword).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes; Language (Thai).

*Disadvantages:* Crippling injuries.

*Skills:* Games (Krabi Krabong); Shield.

This style is appropriate for knights during the years 600-1100. In later periods, it could represent the training of light cavalry from "backwater" or "tribal" provinces.

*Skills:* Broadsword; Riding (Horse); Shield; Spear; Wrestling.

*Techniques:* Cavalry Training (Broadsword or Spear); Combat Riding; Hands-Free Riding; Quick Mount; Retain Weapon (Spear); Staying Seated.

*Cinematic Skills:* Kiai; Power Blow.

*Perks:* Grip Mastery (Spear); Shield-Wall Training.

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes; Enhanced Block; Status; Wealth.

*Disadvantages:* Code of Honor (Chivalry); Duty (To liege).

*Skills:* Animal Handling; Axe/Mace; Bow; Brawling; Knife; Swimming; Thrown Weapon (Spear).

## *High Medieval*

**7 points**

Between the 12th and late 14th centuries, a different style of combat emerged. Knights of the High Middle Ages were still able foot combatants, but the emphasis shifted to horsemanship. The "couched" lance became the knight's trademark attack. Those who fought this way resembled the stereotypical knights of fiction: still clad in mail, but soon adopting plate armors of increasing complexity, greathelms, and bright heraldic colors.

High medieval knights led with the lance or sword hand rather than with the shield – which was medium, small, or totally absent. They avoided dismounted combat in favor of a charge with the couched lance. In addition to using the lance for shock action, they trained to use its head for a Tip Slash (p. 113).

While they favored the lance, knights of this period also learned to fight using the broadsword, axe, and mace. The sword was their primary sidearm, used to both cut

and thrust. The thrust was somewhat more common – and was often aimed at chinks in other knights' heavy armor. Knights sometimes wielded their swords two-handed, and used Committed Attack (Strong) to defeat their opponents' armor. Grappling skills were still standard training.

Myths of knightly prowess from this period always focus on the knights' strength and fortitude. Cinematic knights can deliver blows capable of shearing an armored man in half. They can fight through incredible punishment – even eventually fatal injury – and when they finally drop, they always take enemies with them. Use Fearlessness, Hard to Kill, High Pain Threshold, and improved HP to help model this. Their great battle-oaths may cause foes (especially heathens or pagans) to flee in terror.

Horsemanship was all-important for this style, and the necessary proficiency meant that training started at a young age. Wealth was also critically important. The weapons, armor, and mount that let the knight dominate the battlefield weren't cheap!

*Skills:* Axe/Mace; Broadsword; Lance; Riding (Horse); Shield; Wrestling.

*Techniques:* Cavalry Training (Axe/Mace or Broadsword); Combat Riding; Staying Seated; Targeted Attack (Broadsword Thrust/Vitals); Targeted Attack (Broadsword Thrust/Vitals Chinks).

*Cinematic Skills:* Kiai; Power Blow.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Timed Defense (Axe/Mace or Broadsword).

*Perks:* Technique Adaptation (Cavalry Training).

### Optional Traits

*Secondary Characteristics:* Improved HP and Will.

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes; Enhanced Parry (Broadsword); Fearlessness; Hard to Kill; High Pain Threshold; Status; Wealth.

*Disadvantages:* Code of Honor (Chivalry); Duty (To liege); Sense of Duty (To liege).

*Skills:* Animal Handling; Bow; Brawling; Crossbow; Polearm; Shield (Buckler); Spear; Two-Handed Sword.

*For what man shall be able long in fight to stand up, either to revenge, or defend himself, having the veins, muscles, sinews of his hand, arm, or leg clean cut asunder?*

*– George Silver,*
***Paradoxes of Defence***

## *Late Medieval*

**5 points**

Knightly combat in the late 14th through 15th centuries was drastically different from earlier styles. Highly developed armor and the relative uselessness of the lance against disciplined infantry forced knights to abandon their cherished heavy-cavalry role in favor of more versatile training in foot and mounted combat. They came to rely entirely on plate armor for protection, completely abandoning the shield in favor of two-handed, armor-piercing weapons.

Mounted, the main weapon remained the lance, although the sword saw use. On foot, the knight either faced his opponent squarely or led with the off hand. His primary weapons were the thrusting bastard sword and dueling halberd – with the mace and pick favored as backup weapons for their deadliness and effectiveness against heavy armor.

The knight normally held his sword or halberd in a Defensive Grip (pp. 109-111), but quickly shifted to a normal grip to attack a vulnerable foe. "Trick" attacks – such as the Deceptive Attack option and Spinning Strike technique – were common. A typical finishing move was either an Attack or a Committed Attack (Strong) aimed at a vulnerable location such as the neck or vitals. Unarmed knights used refined grappling, throwing, and choking techniques. In all cases, foot combat stressed agility and speed in heavy armor. The knight's survival depended on his ability to parry or dodge!

Advanced fighters sometimes rounded out their training with knife-fighting skills. A few learned an entire dagger-fighting style; see *Dagger Fighting* (p. 155). Some knights also trained specifically with the pollaxe, adding the methods of Pollaxe Fighting (p. 191) to this art.

After the 15th century, this style became increasingly uncommon.

*Skills:* Judo; Lance; Riding (Horse); and Polearm *or* Two-Handed Sword.

*Techniques:* Cavalry Training (Any); Choke Hold (Polearm or Two-Handed Sword); Combat Riding; Counterattack (Polearm or Two-Handed Sword); Hook (Polearm); Spinning Strike (Polearm or Two-Handed Sword); Staying Seated; Sweep (Polearm); Targeted Attack (Two-Handed Sword Swing/Neck); Targeted Attack (Two-Handed Sword Thrust/Neck); Targeted Attack (Two-Handed Sword Thrust/Vitals); Targeted Attack (Two-Handed Sword Thrust/Vitals Chinks).

*Cinematic Skills:* Kiai; Power Blow.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Timed Defense (Any).

*Perks:* Armor Familiarity (Judo); Grip Mastery (Polearm or Two-Handed Sword); Style Adaptation (Pollaxe Fighting).

### Optional Traits

*Secondary Characteristics:* Improved Basic Speed.

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes; Enhanced Parry (All); Status; Wealth.

*Disadvantages:* Code of Honor (Chivalry); Duty (To liege).

*Skills:* Animal Handling; Axe/Mace; Brawling; Broadsword; Knife; Savoir-Faire; Shield; Spear; Staff.

# Kobujutsu

**8 points**

"Kobujutsu" (or *Kobudo*) is a term for *all* Okinawan weapons training, military or civilian – although it occasionally describes ancient (pre-Meiji) martial arts in general. According to some accounts, a 15th-century Okinawan king banned all weapons but ceremonial ones among civilians. Okinawans responded by learning to fight with weaponized versions of day-to-day tools, as well as by honing their unarmed fighting arts (see *Te,* pp. 169-170). Later, Japanese invaders banned all weapons – ceremonial or otherwise – along with unarmed-combat training. All this did was drive the Okinawan martial arts underground and further encourage practitioners to disguise *kata* and weapon drills as dances.

Okinawan military weapons included the *bisento,* bow, broadsword, crossbow, *katana,* knife, *naginata,* shortsword, and *yari.* Even the musket and pistol eventually entered the fold. Post-ban civilian weapons were the *bo* (staff), *eku, jo, kama, kusarigama, nunchaku, rokushaku kama* (kama-staff combination), *sai,* spear, *tekko* (brass knuckles), *tonfa,* and *tuja,* and such hidden weapons as the fan, pipe, and umbrella. Traditional Kobujutsu also covered the *timbe,* a form of buckler used both to block and to strike. For weapon descriptions, see Chapter 6.

Given the number of weapons involved, it was rare for a school to offer training in *everything.* Most emphasized a few choice weapons. Thus, the style described here covers only the weapons most commonly associated with Kobujutsu. Traditionalists, Weapon Masters, instructors, and so on should still learn most or all of the listed weapon skills. The complete style would only be readily available in Okinawa, however!

Like Karate, Kobujutsu seeks to deflect an incoming attack and then retaliate with a single crushing blow. *Kobujutsuka* (Kobujutsu stylists) commonly take the Wait maneuver and attack the enemy when he steps into range, or parry his attack and then counter with a blow aimed to finish him. Many strikes are Deceptive Attacks, because while they're direct and linear, they're also quick and difficult to defend against. Stylists learn to fight against each weapon using any other.

Today, "kobujutsu" often refers to training in the civilian weapons developed under the weapons ban. Some masters do still offer the complete art, but this is rare. Modern schools tend to focus on the kama, nunchaku, sai, staff, and/or tonfa. In many cases, these weapons are taught as part of a Karate style.

*Skills:* Axe/Mace; Flail; Jitte/Sai; Savoir-Faire (Dojo); Staff; Tonfa; and at least *one* of Broadsword, Knife, Kusari, Polearm, Shield (Buckler), Shortsword, Spear, and Two-Handed Axe/Mace.

*Techniques:* Disarming (Jitte/Sai); Feint (Any weapon skill in style); Reverse Grip (Axe/Mace or Jitte/Sai).

*Cinematic Skills:* Power Blow.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Attack (Axe/Mace, Flail, Jitte/Sai, or Tonfa); Dual-Weapon Defense (Any weapon skill in style); Whirlwind Attack (Any weapon skill in style).

*Perks:* Grip Mastery (Staff); Off-Hand Weapon Training (Any one-handed weapon skill in style); Technique Adaptation (Feint); Technique Adaptation (Whirlwind Attack).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Ambidexterity; Combat Reflexes; Enhanced Parry (All).

*Disadvantages:* Obsession (Master all Okinawan weapons).

*Skills:* Bow; Combat Art form of any weapon skill in style; Crossbow; Guns; any weapon skill above not learned initially.

# Kuntao

**6 points**

"Kuntao" is an umbrella term for the martial arts of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia and Malaysia. The name comes from the Chinese term *chuan do* ("way of the fist") and describes Chinese kung fu that has been influenced by contact with Pentjak Silat (pp. 189-191) – Kuntao's traditional rival. Like Pentjak Silat, Kuntao isn't a style but a *range* of styles. The version given here is a "hard" variety. For softer forms, use the style components of Pa Kua Chuan (pp. 187-188) or T'ai Chi Chuan (pp. 200-201).

Kuntao stresses hard strikes and speedy counterattacks. The emphasis is on punching, but the style also includes low-line and spinning kicks for use against foes caught off-guard or on the ground. Stylists learn to retract their punches quickly to counter Pentjak Silat practitioners' attempts to grab incoming limbs, and study the Evade technique – and employ it often – to stay out of grappling range. They make frequent use of the Counterattack technique and the Riposte option (pp. 124-125) to exploit the openings that opponents leave in their defenses when attacking. On the defensive, Kuntao fighters often follow up parries with throws.

Like its ancestor styles and its close neighbor, Pentjak Silat, Kuntao teaches many weapons. These include the broadsword, butterfly swords (usually paired), chain, hook sword, *jian, lajatang, liangtjat* (sharpened stick), *sai, siangkam,* spear, staff, three-part staff, two-handed sword, whip, and various polearms. See Chapter 6 for descriptions of these weapons. Students eventually learn all weapons but commonly start out with only a few.

Historically, because of Kuntao's rivalry with Pentjak Silat, each school's teachers and students kept it secret from their non-Chinese neighbors and other Kuntao schools alike. At its most peaceful, this took the form of phony demonstrations intended to obscure the true art. There were also bloody clashes between Pentjak Silat and Kuntao schools, though – and even between rival Kuntao schools.

Today, finding a Kuntao instructor is difficult – in part because of the art's tradition of secrecy and in part because many masters believe modern students lack the focus needed to learn the art. Nevertheless, there are a few schools abroad. These sometimes combine Kuntao with other forms of kung fu, Karate, or even Pentjak Silat!

*Skills:* Broadsword; Judo; Karate; Shortsword; and at least *one* of Jitte/Sai, Knife, Kusari, Polearm, Smallsword, Spear, Staff, Two-Handed Flail, Two-Handed Sword, and Whip.

### *Berserk and the Martial Arts*

Many cultures have a special name for a killing rage. The best-known of these is *berserk*. This comes from the Old Norse *berserksgangr,* a word for the fierce, single-minded battle lust exhibited by warriors in Icelandic myth (and perhaps in reality). In Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines, the term is *amok*. People who "run amok" go on a rampage of random killing until they're themselves slain. In modern U.S. lingo, this would be "going postal" . . . but that can also refer to a more coldly planned killing spree. ***GURPS*** reserves "berserk" – and the Berserk disadvantage (p. B124) – for those who experience genuine battle frenzy!

Berserk fighters don't "forget" their training – they simply forsake any defense for a furious attack. In game terms, those who suffer the effects of Berserk can only take the All-Out Attack maneuver. They can still use skills and techniques, learned or at default, subject to a few special rules.

Berserkers *can* employ techniques that require a turn or more of Ready to set up – they just have to use All-Out Attack instead of Ready for the setup. The options are Determined, for +4 to DX-based rolls required by the setup, or Strong, for +2 to ST-based rolls . . . at the usual cost of no active defenses. The berserker must also use All-Out Attack for the technique itself on a later turn. He's free to select any option that suits his technique. This is most likely to be Determined or Strong, but could instead be Double, Long, or even Feint.

However, berserkers can't use techniques that are active defenses, including Aggressive Parry and Jam; techniques that rely on active defenses, such as Counterattack; or combat options that depend on taking an active defense, like Cross Parry (p. 121) and Riposte (pp. 124-125). This is true even if such a move would be the most effective tactic possible! Such is the cost of not defending.

*Techniques:* Arm Lock; Back Kick; Counterattack (Karate); Evade; Exotic Hand Strike; Hammer Fist; Head Lock; Spinning Kick.

*Cinematic Skills:* Blind Fighting; Body Control; Breaking Blow; Mental Strength; Power Blow; Pressure Points; Pressure Secrets; Throwing Art.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Attack (Shortsword); Pressure-Point Strike; Roll with Blow.

*Perks:* Off-Hand Weapon Training (Shortsword); Rapid Retraction (Punches).

#### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Language (Chinese).

*Disadvantages:* Social Stigma (Minority Group, Chinese in Indonesia).

*Skills:* Breath Control; any weapon skill above not learned initially.

## Kusarijutsu

**2 points**

Kusarijutsu is the Japanese art of the *kusari,* or weighted chain. Its developers were likely medieval samurai who sought a flexible backup weapon. Chain weapons may date back as far as the beginning of the Kamakura period (1192).

Practitioners learn to use the kusari to strike blows, entangle the foe's legs, and apply Choke Holds and Arm Locks (which involve entangling the arm and then twisting it into a painful or crippling position). Due to their weapon's excellent reach but poor defensive capabilities, they alternate aggression with caution. Stylists prefer to use Wait, Evaluate, or Feint to set up an opponent before dealing a disabling attack – possibly with Entangle or Back Strike. Until such a decisive attack is possible, they move to take advantage of reach and keep the enemy at bay. Once the adversary is vulnerable, though, a crushing finishing move with Committed Attack (Strong) or All-Out Attack (Strong) is likely.

Cinematic Kusarijutsu stylists can swing their weapon with enormous force. They can also bind adversaries with loops of chain in combat. Some train to strike a single target with both ends of their kusari at the same time – or to attack two adjacent foes, one with either end. These last two moves count as Dual-Weapon Attacks, and are only possible with a kusari held in two hands *and* readied at less-than-maximum reach.

Kusarijutsu is an excellent starting point for non-Japanese martial arts that use chain weapons, or for cinematic or fictional styles that use (often bizarre or impractical) chain- and rope-based weapons: rope darts, bladed chains, chains with saw-edged spiked balls, etc. For more on the kusari and its many variants, see Chapter 6. For the *kusarigama* and *its* variations, see *Kusarigamajutsu* (p. 180).

*Skills:* Kusari.

*Techniques:* Arm Lock (Kusari); Back Strike (Kusari); Choke Hold (Kusari); Entangle (Kusari); Return Strike (Kusari); Targeted Attack (Kusari Swing/Arm); Targeted Attack (Kusari Swing/Skull); Targeted Attack (Kusari Thrust/Face).

*Cinematic Skills:* Power Blow.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Binding; Dual-Weapon Attack (Kusari).

*Perks:* Special Setup (Kusari Parry > Arm Lock).

#### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Weapon Master (Kusari).

*Disadvantages:* Overconfidence.

*Skills:* Flail; Judo; Savoir-Faire (Dojo).

*Techniques:* Spinning Strike (Kusari).

*Perks:* Weapon Bond.

## Kyujutsu

**4 points**

Kyujutsu is the Japanese art of the bow, or *yumi* (typically the *dai-kyu,* or composite bow). It's primarily a combat style. For sport and art variants, and non-Japanese styles, see *Archery* (p. 181).

## *Kusarigamajutsu*

**3 points**

Warriors sometimes attach the *kusari* to another weapon (see *Combination Weapons,* p. 214). The *kusarigama* – a kusari fastened to a *kama* (sickle) – is the most famous combination. The chain is affixed to either the kama's head or the butt of its handle. This style covers both cases, but each variation demands its own tactics.

If the chain is attached to the handle, the user wields the kusarigama in two hands: his master hand holds the kama while his off hand controls the kusari. He can then "throw" the chain. The usual target of a throw is the opponent's face or hands – hopefully distracting or injuring him, creating an opening to move in and strike with the kama. This kind of quick attack with both parts of the weapon is a (realistic) Dual-Weapon Attack.

A related tactic with this kind of kusarigama is to swing just the kusari in an attempt to entangle or injure the foe. If the intent is to injure, the attacker aims for the skull or neck. If using the Entangle technique, he targets the arms, legs, or weapon. The turn *after* stunning or entangling his enemy, the wielder rushes in with the kama for a finishing blow. This is likely to be a Committed or All-Out Attack – especially if the kusari took the victim's weapon out of commission! The kusarigama user might pull his opponent off-balance prior to such an attack; treat this as a takedown or a Beat (pp. 100-101).

It's possible to hold onto the kusari and whirl the kama around on the end of the chain. This is potentially deadly, as it imparts greater speed to the kama. However, attacking commits the whole weapon – the kama isn't in the master hand, ready to strike and parry. On a hit, or on an enemy block or parry, the *entire weapon* becomes unready!

If the chain is attached at the head, the user can wield the weapon with one hand. The kusari swings freely and the wielder attacks with it (pulling his kama swings short of the target) *or* the kama. Often he'll use Entangle to snare the foe's weapon or pull him in (again, a takedown or a Beat), and then assault him with unarmed strikes or a secondary weapon.

Kusarigamajutsu is typically part of a larger *ryu* – frequently a secret or hidden element. Some Naginatajutsu (p. 186) schools teach the kusarigama as a backup weapon. For stylists using other kusari combinations, use this style but replace Axe/Mace with the appropriate skill: Jitte/Sai for the *kusarijutte,* Staff for the staff-chain, and so on. Tactics remain the same.

*Skills:* Axe/Mace; Kusari.

*Techniques:* Choke Hold (Kusari); Entangle (Kusari); Return Strike (Kusari); Targeted Attack (Axe/Mace Swing/Neck); Targeted Attack (Kusari Swing/Arm); Targeted Attack (Kusari Swing/Skull); Targeted Attack (Kusari Thrust/Face).

*Cinematic Skills:* Power Blow.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Attack (Axe/Mace or Kusari).

*Perks:* Grip Mastery (Kusarigama); Off-Hand Weapon Training (Kusari); Unusual Training (Dual-Weapon Attack, Both attacks must target the same foe).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Ambidexterity.

*Disadvantages:* Overconfidence.

*Skills:* Karate; Two-Handed Sword.

Since arrows weren't terribly effective against armor, samurai learned to aim for the face, which was only rarely protected by a mask. Samurai also practiced shooting at a full gallop. They used *inuomono,* or dog-shooting, to hone their skills. This involved chasing dogs across open fields and shooting at them – often with arrows equipped to whistle and warn the dog. This taught warriors to shoot at fast-moving, quick-dodging targets.

Legendary archers could hit targets at extreme range with great accuracy. They used their skills not only to kill but for "trick shots" – cutting standards from poles, knocking decorations off helmets, and so on – to intimidate the foe. Japanese bowmen employed several peculiar arrowheads specifically for the purpose (see *Special Arrows,* p. 232).

Kyujutsu represents the *minimum* training a samurai needs to fight from horseback using a bow. Most receive additional mounted-combat instruction; see *Bajutsu* (p. 151). Later samurai and *ashigaru* (conscript infantry) might train to fight on foot; see *Foot Archery* (p. 181).

*Skills:* Bow; Fast-Draw (Arrow); Riding (Horse).

*Techniques:* Combat Riding; Hands-Free Riding; Horse Archery; Targeted Attack (Bow Shot/Face).

*Cinematic Skills:* Mental Strength; Pressure Points (Bow); Zen Archery.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Pressure-Point Strike.

*Perks:* Strongbow; Technique Adaptation (Targeted Attack).

### Optional Traits

*Secondary Characteristics:* Improved Per.

*Advantages:* Acute Vision; Heroic Archer; Wealth; Weapon Master (Bow).

*Disadvantages:* Code of Honor (Bushido).

*Skills:* Animal Handling (Dog or Horse); Bow Art; Meditation; Savoir-Faire (Dojo).

*Perks:* Weapon Bond.

## Longsword Fighting

**5 points**

Longsword Fighting was popular in Central Europe from around 1350 until almost 1600. The longsword (p. 219) was ideally suited to two-handed tactics. Fighters regarded one-handed use as secondary, and didn't use a shield at all; they either kept two hands on their weapon or used one hand to grab the foe while driving in the sword with the other. Masters rounded out the training with punching, kicking, grappling, and knife fighting.

Swordsmen typically grasped the longsword in a Defensive Grip (pp. 109-111), holding the long ricasso and using the blade to ward off blows. They launched attacks from both this grip and the normal grip. Against plate-armored foes, they favored thrusts aimed at chinks in armor. Some attacks used an *inverted* sword: the fighter held his weapon by the blade and either bashed his opponent with the hilt as if it were a mace or used the Hook technique with the crosspiece.

Armored and unarmored warriors alike practiced Longsword Fighting. Those with armor would grapple, shove, slam, and Beat (pp. 100-101) extensively, closing with their foe and trying to put him at a disadvantage in order to finish him with a stab to a vital area. Unarmored fighters – less protected from cuts and stabs – circled and kept their distance. They used Evaluate, Wait, and Feint to spot or create an opening before moving in for the kill. Both circumstances called for a strong attack capable of punching through armor; in game terms, either Committed Attack (Strong) or All-Out Attack (Strong).

While the style's iconic weapon was the longsword, both the thrusting bastard sword and thrusting greatsword saw use. The latter was often known as the *zweihänder* in the hands of the *doppelsöldner,* who received twice the pay of other foot soldiers. To gain this coveted status, he had to produce a diploma from a recognized longsword master.

Medieval heroes who wish to learn this style shouldn't have trouble finding a master in 14th- through 16th-century Central Europe. The rapier rapidly replaced the longsword for civilians during the 16th century, but the longsword remained a common military weapon. Period art depicts Italian fencing masters with longswords as late as the 1580s. Modern recreationists have restored a version of this style based on the writings of German longsword masters.

# Archery

Kyujutsu (pp. 179-180) is hardly the only bow style. The horse archery of the Great Plains Indians, Huns, Mongols, Scythians, etc., would be similar but lack such specifically Japanese elements as Code of Honor (Bushido) and Animal Handling (Dog), and offer different Targeted Attacks. Military Rank and Status would join Wealth as optional traits, the mix varying by culture. Some styles differ more radically.

## *Foot Archery*

**3 points**

Historically, infantry as well as cavalry were archers. In the time a horse archer took to master a weapon *and* a mount, a foot archer could develop great arm strength, letting him draw heavier bows. Tactics relied more on ambush and massed fire than on aim, but bowmen shot targets for sport and practice – especially in England. Melee Weapon skills were important for close defense and to finish off foes.

Cinematic archers like Robin Hood might focus on aim, learning Targeted Attacks and special skills for engaging concealed or distant targets. Larger-than-life heroes could easily justify the Kiai skill, too. Archery served as much to demoralize as to kill, and bowmen were known for their battle cries!

Modern athletes should replace Bow with Games (Archery), and use Bow Sport for shooting.

*Skills:* Bow; Bow Sport.
*Techniques:* Close Combat (Bow); Retain Weapon (Bow).
*Cinematic Skills:* Blind Fighting; Kiai; Zen Archery.
*Cinematic Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Attack (Bow).
*Perks:* Special Exercises (Arm ST +1) up to three times, allowing Arm ST +3; Strongbow; Sure-Footed (Slippery).

### Optional Traits

*Secondary Characteristics:* Improved Per.
*Advantages:* As *Kyujutsu* (pp. 179-180), but remove Wealth and add Fit.
*Skills:* Armoury (Missile Weapons); Camouflage; Fast-Draw (Arrow); Hiking; Intimidation; Melee Weapon skills; Soldier; Stealth.
*Techniques:* Targeted Attack.

## *Kyudo*

**4 points**

With the rise of firearms on the Japanese battlefield in the 1570s, the bow fell into decline as a military weapon. Japanese society admired skilled archers, though, and desired to preserve Kyujutsu. Thus, it became one of the first *-jutsu* arts to develop a *-do* form.

Kyudo breaks down each shot into eight stages and expects the archer to move smoothly between them, performing each with equal deliberation. Training proceeds slowly and treats target shooting as a distraction until one has mastered posture, breathing, and the draw. The art is equally formal in competition.

Kyudo is practiced from both kneeling and standing postures.

*Skills:* Bow Art; Meditation; Savoir-Faire (Dojo).
*Techniques:* Low Fighting (Bow Art).
*Cinematic Skills:* As *Kyujutsu* (pp. 179-180).

### Optional Traits

*Secondary Characteristics:* Improved Per.
*Advantages:* As *Kyujutsu,* but remove Wealth.
*Skills:* Autohypnosis.

## *Yabusame*

**3 points**

Yabusame, used in Shinto ritual, is one of the only surviving examples of horse archery today. Practitioners use the same *yumi* as in Kyudo, but from horseback. Emphasis is on precision. The archer has but a small window of opportunity in which to aim and shoot while riding at a full gallop.

*Skills:* Bow Sport; Riding (Horse).
*Techniques:* Combat Riding; Hands-Free Riding; Horse Archery.
*Cinematic Skills:* Zen Archery.

### Optional Traits

*Secondary Characteristics:* Improved Per.
*Advantages:* As *Kyujutsu* (pp. 179-180), but remove Wealth.
*Disadvantages:* Disciplines of Faith.
*Skills:* Bow; Savoir-Faire (Dojo).

*Skills:* Brawling; Judo; Knife; Two-Handed Sword.

*Techniques:* Arm Lock (Judo); Armed Grapple (Two-Handed Sword); Bind Weapon (Two-Handed Sword); Choke Hold (Two-Handed Sword); Close Combat (Two-Handed Sword); Counterattack (Two-Handed Sword); Disarming (Judo or Two-Handed Sword); Ground Fighting (Knife); Kicking; Knee Strike; Retain Weapon (Two-Handed Sword); Targeted Attack (Two-Handed Sword Thrust/Face); Targeted Attack (Two-Handed Sword Thrust/Neck); Targeted Attack (Two-Handed Sword Thrust/Vitals Chinks); Trip.

*Cinematic Skills:* Mental Strength; Power Blow.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Defense (Two-Handed Sword); Timed Defense (Two-Handed Sword).

*Perks:* Armor Familiarity (Judo); Grip Mastery (Longsword); Skill Adaptation (Bind Weapon defaults to Two-Handed Sword); Sure-Footed (Uneven).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Enhanced Dodge; Enhanced Parry (Two-Handed Sword or All); Weapon Master (Two-Handed Sword).

*Disadvantages:* Obsession (Achieve certificate of mastery).

*Skills:* Broadsword; Fast-Draw (Knife); Two-Handed Axe/Mace; Wrestling.

*Techniques:* Hook (Two-Handed Axe/Mace).

*Perks:* Weapon Bond.

## Masters of Defence Weapon Training

**12 points**

The English and German "Masters of Defence" were men who prided themselves on their expertise with a wide variety of weapons, civilian *and* military. Their art seems to have originated in the 15th century. It lasted until the late 17th century across most of Europe. As time wore on, the Masters – and students willing to train with them – became increasingly less common and ultimately disappeared entirely.

To learn this style, a would-be student had to find an accredited master and become his apprentice. Next came a lengthy training period, followed by tests – first to become a journeyman and eventually to qualify as a master. These would be excellent goals for a PC in a historical game.

A master of this style was expected to know *all* of its many weapons and be able to fight them in any combination. Fighters also learned *unarmed* techniques – especially those useful for dealing with armed foes. Some masters taught a substantial number of throws and locks; their schools would teach Judo rather than Wrestling. Practitioners didn't regard such unarmed methods as "dirty." Anything that worked was acceptable. Indeed, many masters lost eyes or digits proving their skill during certification tests or in subsequent duels. The one-eyed English Master of Defence was a common stereotype!

Tactics varied greatly depending on the weapons used. When wielding *any* weapon, though, stylists would mix armed techniques with unarmed ones intended to disarm the foe. Masters regarded such methods as crucial when disarmed – and as valuable additional means of defeating an armed opponent even when armed.

In a cinematic game, Masters of Defence make excellent Weapon Masters. The sheer breadth of their training means that they're fearsome fighters with almost any available weapon. There are tales of Masters standing off several adversaries at once, casually defeating skilled opponents (*especially* fencers and other foreigners!), and shearing men in half with tremendous blows.

Masters of Defence were commoners, not members of the upper class. This often led to social difficulties when dealing with their rapier-instructor contemporaries, who could simply ignore their challenges owing to the difference in status. Despite this, it's possible that some Masters learned the rapier – either to better defend against it or because they recognized its growing importance as a street weapon.

*Skills:* Brawling; Broadsword; Knife; Polearm; Shield; Shield (Buckler); Shortsword; Spear; Staff; Two-Handed Sword; Wrestling.

*Techniques:* Arm Lock; Armed Grapple (Polearm, Spear, Staff, or Two-Handed Sword); Disarming (Any skill in style); Feint (Any weapon skill in style); Hook (Polearm); Sweep (Polearm, Spear, Staff, or Two-Handed Sword).

*Cinematic Skills:* Kiai; Power Blow.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Attack (Shortsword); Grand Disarm (Staff or Two-Handed Sword); Whirlwind Attack (Staff or Two-Handed Sword).

*Perks:* Form Mastery (Spear); Grip Mastery (Two-Handed Sword); Off-Hand Weapon Training (Shortsword).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Ambidexterity; Combat Reflexes; Fearlessness; Languages (English or German); Weapon Master.

*Disadvantages:* Low Status; Missing Digit; One Eye.

*Skills:* Judo; Rapier; any other weapon skill not listed above.

*Perks:* Style Familiarity (Italian School).

## Military Hand-to-Hand

Historically, many of the fighting arts in this chapter – particularly the armed ones – saw battlefield use. Their role diminished as firearms spread and became dependable, but veterans knew that ammunition could run out and that guns weren't always manageable in close quarters. Thus, hand-to-hand combat remained a part of almost every recruit's basic training. Some armies adapted traditional styles. Others invented new ones, like the relatively modern "scientific" or "synthetic" styles below.

### *Fairbairn Close Combat Training*

**5 points**

W.E. Fairbairn (pp. 23-24) – with some assistance from Rex Applegate and Eric Sykes – created the style of hand-to-hand fighting most widely taught to Allied commandos in World War II. Fairbairn and Sykes also designed a fighting knife for use with their style: the Sykes-Fairbairn "commando" knife (p. 225). Applegate developed close-quarters pistol techniques.

This style emphasizes killing and sentry removal. There's nothing gentlemanly about its methods or their execution; it's purely pragmatic. The training places relatively little

emphasis on traditional kicking and punching, because the practitioner is supposed to be taking out sentries or isolated enemy troops – not fighting in a stand-up brawl.

Training includes throws, locks, and strikes to vital areas. It also covers concealing weapons, tying up prisoners, and fighting with sticks and even chairs! Targeted Attack (Knife Thrust/Neck) is one of the style's most important techniques. It normally follows a grapple and is itself followed by a cut outward from the throat to ensure that the enemy bleeds out quickly. These moves can form the basis of a brutal but effective Combination (see *Combinations,* p. 80).

In a cinematic game, Fairbairn-trained commandos might be able to replicate some of the legendary feats of the ninja, such as silent, invisible movement. Fairbairn *was* trained in the Far East . . . perhaps he learned some secrets that he only passed along to the most elite soldiers.

*Skills:* Judo; Karate; Knife; Stealth.
*Techniques:* Choke Hold; Disarming (Judo); Head Butt; Knee Strike; Neck Snap; Targeted Attack (Knife Thrust/Neck).
*Cinematic Skills:* Invisibility Art; Light Walk.
*Cinematic Techniques:* Backbreaker; Binding.
*Perks:* Improvised Weapons (Karate).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes.
*Disadvantages:* Bloodlust; Overconfidence.
*Skills:* Garrote; Holdout; Knot-Tying; Shortsword.

## *Krav Maga*

**3 points**

Imi Sde-Or (born Imrich Lichtenfeld) grew up in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia. During the 1930s, rising anti-Semitic violence in the region moved Imi – an experienced circus wrestler and competitive grappler – to train his fellow Jews to combat attackers willing to use weapons and "dirty" tactics. When he immigrated to Palestine in 1942, Imi started training settlers in his fighting system, which he later named "Krav Maga" (Hebrew for "contact combat" or "contact fight"). Today, Krav Maga is the official martial art of the Israeli Defense Forces.

Krav Maga mixes strikes, takedowns, and both standing and floor grappling. Kicks are low-line and used to disable the legs for a quick victory. The style expects the fighter to be aggressive, eschewing Defensive Attack in favor of Attack and Committed Attack. The Krav Maga stylist typically opens with a strike intended to distract or injure the foe, followed by either a grapple and takedown or a Head Lock and throw. After downing his opponent, he'll end the fight with a pin or a Choke Hold.

The style also teaches disarms against guns and knives. Once the weapon is out of the opponent's grasp, the Krav Maga student learns to kick it away or otherwise ensure that his original assailant or a third party can't use it. Stylists even practice techniques to keep the enemy from detonating a grenade!

Krav Maga incorporates improvised-weapons training and stresses using anything available to win. Practitioners learn to throw objects at opponents to distract as well as to injure, and to stab with pens and pencils, hit with purses, reinforce punches with rocks, and so on. Survival is the only goal and training is done without ceremony. Instructors expect students to learn to spot dangerous situations and deal with them – by fighting or fleeing, as appropriate.

By design, Krav Maga is easy to learn, useful for people of any size or fitness level, and effective in real combat situations. Krav Maga has no sport version, although there's a civilian self-defense version that's somewhat different from the combat form presented here. Both versions use a colored-belt system nearly identical to that of Judo (p. 166).

Krav Maga has no body of legend, but several cinematic skills and techniques would follow logically from its realistic ones in a cinematic game.

*Skills:* Karate; Wrestling.
*Techniques:* Arm Lock; Breakfall; Choke Hold; Disarming (Wrestling); Elbow Strike; Eye-Rake; Ground Fighting (Wrestling); Hammer Fist; Head Lock; Knee Strike; Stamp Kick.
*Cinematic Skills:* Mental Strength; Power Blow; Pressure Points; Pressure Secrets.
*Cinematic Techniques:* Lethal Strike; Pressure-Point Strike; Roll with Blow.
*Perks:* Improvised Weapons (Karate).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes; Fit; Language (Hebrew).
*Disadvantages:* Bloodlust; Social Stigma (Minority Group, Jew).
*Skills:* Boxing; Brawling; Guns (Pistol, Rifle, or SMG); Savoir-Faire (Dojo); Knife; Spear.
*Techniques:* Retain Weapon (Pistol or Rifle).

## *MCMAP (U.S. Marine Corps Martial Arts Program)*

**3 points**

MCMAP (pronounced "mihk-map") is a direct, simple style taught to all U.S. Marine Corps personnel during Basic Training. It replaces the Linear Infighting Neural-override Engagement (LINE) system of the 1990s, which taught set responses to specific attacks. MCMAP emphasizes quick, violent attacks to stun or confuse the opponent, followed by a takedown or throw. It has a few submission techniques for less-than-lethal situations, but no sport form – its main purposes are to teach Marines basic self-defense skills and to encourage aggressiveness.

Training is accordingly direct – recruits pair off and practice against each other – and includes hands-on drills that involve multiple opponents, armed attackers, and "mob engagements." Students learn a small number of techniques chosen for their violence, effectiveness, and (relative) ease of use in fighting gear. Rounding out the instruction are simple lessons in disarming, weapon retention, and bayonet fighting, plus enough training in improvised weapons to inculcate in the Marine the idea that any item can be a weapon if necessary. Advanced schooling, typically conducted in the infantry schools or operating forces, progresses into grappling and ground-fighting tactics.

# The Purpose of Military Hand-to-Hand

Many traditional martial arts have a battlefield history and could justly claim to be "military." For game purposes, however, "military hand-to-hand" specifically describes the melee combat styles taught to TL6+ troops armed with firearms. That is, it refers to *modern* military styles.

The biggest difference here is that the arts practiced by pre-gunpowder warriors were primary skill sets, while those learned by modern soldiers are last resorts. A high-tech infantryman carries a rifle, grenades, and often a pistol. He enjoys the support of machine guns, mines, and mortars. He can radio for a fire mission. He'll use all of these tools before joining hand-to-hand combat, because they're all more efficient at killing the enemy. A samurai or a Roman legionary, on the other hand, *starts* with a spear or a sword!

This is important for soldier characters. Modern military training *doesn't* spend as much time on hand-to-hand combat as on firearms. Thus, a Marine PC shouldn't have many more points in MCMAP than in Guns skills. Elite troops who *are* highly trained at melee combat have different skills and techniques from their historical brothers, too. The GM who wants to design his own military styles should be aware of the goals of such arts.

## *Disarming and Weapon Retention*

Modern warfare is all about firearms. If you have a gun and the other guy doesn't – and he doesn't surrender before he gets close enough to be a threat – *shoot* him. In close-quarters battle, though, any tight corner could conceal an enemy close enough to grab your weapon. To counter this, military styles teach how to keep weapons away from unfriendly hands; that is, the Retain Weapon technique.

If the *other* guy has the gun, the correct response is to take away his weapon and shoot him with it – *not* to attack with a knife or a jump kick. Thus, military styles teach ways to gain control of an opponent's firearm, too. This is the Disarming technique.

This emphasis on keeping and taking away weapons explains why most military styles favor grappling skills over striking skills, with few exceptions.

## *Knife, Rifle Butt, and Entrenching Tool*

This doesn't mean that melee weapons are worthless. When you're out of ammo, you don't walk around empty-handed, hoping to take away an enemy's weapon. You use what you have. To kill the other guy before he kills you, a *long* weapon is best. Typical Melee Weapon skills taught by military styles – in order from longest to shortest reach – are Spear (for the fixed bayonet); Axe/Mace (for entrenching tools, or a rifle butt used as a club) or Shortsword (for a machete or unfixed sword bayonet); and Knife (for fighting knives and unfixed knife bayonets).

Military styles prioritize these skills in order of reach. Training for military police is sometimes an exception, as it might focus on Shortsword or Tonfa for use with a baton. If weapon techniques are taught, they're similar to those for unarmed combat – Disarming and Retain Weapon – possibly with the addition of Close Combat.

## *The Mk. I Boot*

Barehanded combat training is good for aggression and morale. Troops learn Brawling or Karate primarily for this reason. Military styles focus on techniques with the booted foot: Jam, Kicking, Stamp Kick, etc. Hand techniques involve brutal mauling, like Eye-Gouging and Neck Snap, not breaking fists on helmets.

Unarmed striking is truly the last resort. If you're fighting without a weapon – and can't take somebody else's – you're probably doomed. The most realistic use of unarmed strikes is as "finishing moves": stomping on the head or windpipe of a fallen foe.

## *Sentry Removal*

Silently neutralizing a sentry is the only situation where a melee weapon is preferable to a firearm. This arises less often in reality than in action movies, which is why ordinary troops don't carry silencers, glove pistols, and similar exotica. When necessary, a knife will do and the goal is to *kill,* not to fight. If you can't silence the target without a struggle, *shoot* him – a single shot is no less stealthy than a screaming brawl. The Knife skill is all that's needed here, but techniques such as TA (Knife Swing/Throat) and TA (Knife Thrust/Vitals) aren't unknown.

Some styles teach the Garrote skill, but a garrote is tricky to use on someone wearing bulky body armor and web gear. Thus, the skill is typically optional.

MCMAP practitioners engage the foe with a punch, kick, grapple, or grab, followed by a throw or takedown attempt. They usually finish a downed opponent with a double stomp to the head: two Stamp Kicks aimed at the face or skull. Treat this as an All-Out Attack (Double) or Rapid Strike.

While MCMAP is a specific training style for a particular military branch, it's a good example of the kind of unarmed training used to condition recruits. Other services have very similar styles. None of these offer cinematic skills – they completely lack legends of special abilities. Cinematic stylists should simply buy high skill, ST, DX, and HT.

Remember that however skilled a Marine gets at unarmed combat, he's expected to rely on his firearms and bayonet first. All recruits receive bayonet training similar to Jukenjutsu (p. 197) in addition to MCMAP. They also receive firearms training, of course – but this isn't part of MCMAP *or* topical for ***Martial Arts.***

*Skills:* Brawling; Judo.

*Techniques:* Disarming (Judo); Elbow Strike; Knee Strike; Stamp Kick; Targeted Attack (Stamp Kick/Face); Targeted Attack (Stamp Kick/Skull).

*Perks:* Improvised Weapons (Brawling).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes; Fit or Very Fit.

*Disadvantages:* Bloodlust; Overconfidence.

*Skills:* Karate; Spear; Staff.

*Techniques:* Ground Fighting (Brawling or Judo); Retain Weapon (Rifle).

## *Sambo*

**4 points**

Sambo is an acronym for the Russian ***sam****ozashchita* ***b****ez* ***o****ruzhiya* ("self-protection without weapons"). The style originated in the 1930s as an amalgamation of traditional wrestling styles – including Mongolian, Caucasian, Greco-Roman, and belt wrestling – and Judo. Its founders deliberately set out to design a unifying "Soviet" art that would replace all existing styles in the USSR.

Grappling comes first in Sambo. Strikes serve chiefly to distract or injure the enemy, "softening" him for an effective hold or lock. Stylists use a full range of maneuvers, but the style emphasizes aggression over reaction, making Wait and Evaluate less common than Attack and Committed Attack. Perhaps unusually, Sambo makes extensive use of Leg Locks. Many proponents claim that limb locks are more effective than chokes for defeating a foe.

While Sambo lacks a body of legendary techniques, it enjoys a mystique as a brutally effective art used by ruthless, physically powerful men. Cinematic samboists are likely to have high levels of ST and HT, and use Power Blow to shatter arms and snap legs. They might also know certain "strong man" techniques that, while not realistic for actual combat, feature prominently in the wilder claims made for the style.

The style presented here is military or "combat" Sambo, taught to special-operations forces and elite police units. There's also a sport version. To get this, add the Wrestling Sport skill and remove the Disarming and Choke Hold techniques – and since striking isn't allowed, eliminate Karate and its techniques, too.

*Skills:* Judo; Karate; Wrestling.

*Techniques:* Arm Lock; Choke Hold; Disarming (Judo); Elbow Strike; Ground Fighting (Wrestling); Head Lock; Leg Lock; Leg Throw; Lower-Body Arm Lock; Lower-Body Head Lock; Lower-Body Leg Lock; Stamp Kick; Triangle Choke; Wrench (Limb).

*Cinematic Skills:* Immovable Stance; Mental Strength; Power Blow.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Backbreaker; Piledriver.

*Perks:* Iron Legs; Power Grappling; Special Exercises (Striking ST +1); Technique Adaptation (Ground Fighting).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes; Fit; High Pain Threshold.

*Disadvantages:* Bloodlust.

*Skills:* Boxing; Brawling; Knife; Spear.

## Muay Thai

**3 points**

Muay Thai is Thailand's native kickboxing style. It's related to other Thai martial arts, such as Krabi Krabong (p. 176). Due to the burning of Siamese records in the 17th century, its origins are lost. As a form of full-contact tournament fighting, though, the style dates back *at least* that far. Muay Thai is practiced worldwide today.

Muay Thai is a pure striking style. Students learn three kicks, six punches, and use of the knees and elbows. Few targets are off-limits. Stylists learn no grapples or throws, but takedowns from a "clinch" sometimes occur when fighters get in close. Most contenders prefer to throw Knee Strikes in the clinch, however (see *Grab and Smash!*, p. 118).

Muay Thai fighters are famously aggressive. They favor Committed Attack and shun Defensive Attack. Most kicks use the shin as a striking surface, and the usual targets are the head and body (for the knockout) or the legs (to score a knockdown). Muay Thai has a distinctive guard style, with both hands held up and far forward of the body to help ward off elbows and high kicks. Against low kicks, the usual counter is a Jam.

Finishing moves tend to be spectacular – often Telegraphic Attacks (p. 113) – and too risky to attempt against a fresh, wary opponent. Examples include the jumping Knee Strike, which is an All-Out Attack (Strong), and a Spinning Punch that incorporates an Elbow Strike. Fighters save Spinning Kick for fight-ending shots, too. Even then, many consider this technique showy – and insulting to the victim!

Most Muay Thai fighters learn their art from professional teachers at training camps, sometimes under the control of promoters. Professional prizefighters train daily; their regimen includes cross-training, bag work, sparring, yoga, massage, and running. In the past, conditioning exercises included hitting the legs with sticks or kicking trees to toughen the shins, but modern practitioners use heavy bags. Muay Thai camps are full of prospective fighters hoping for a shot at the title – much like boxers in other countries. Few last long enough to make it far. Poverty and crippling injuries are more common than title shots.

In matches, competitors wear modern boxing gloves or hand wraps, mouth guards, and groin protectors. In historical times, they wore wraps dipped in glue and rolled in broken glass, the goal being identical to that of ancient Greek and Roman boxers who used the *myrmex* or *cestus*. A contender might fight one or more matches per month. Thanks to the full-contact nature of the "sport," fighters often have short careers; the hard training, dubious safety procedures, and frequent matches can result in career-ending injuries.

In Thailand, traditional rituals still surround matches: a ceremonial dance (*ram muay*) with respectful bows to teachers (*wai kru*) before a bout, music during it . . . and betting. No one bets until after the first round, which fighters use to demonstrate their toughness and skill. Contenders are often as young as 14 or 15, ferociously fighting for a chance at a living in the sport. Outside Thailand, Muay Thai has lost much of its ritual but retains its combative nature. Muay Thai mixed with grappling arts has been successful in mixed martial arts matches, and some Karate practitioners have made the leap to professional Muay Thai.

*Skills:* Games (Muay Thai); Karate.

*Techniques:* Counterattack (Karate); Elbow Strike; Jam; Kicking; Knee Strike; Leg Grapple (DX); Push Kick; Spinning Kick; Spinning Punch; Sweep (Karate); Targeted Attack (Karate Kick/Leg); Uppercut.

*Cinematic Skills:* Power Blow.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Roll with Blow.

*Perks:* Clinch (Karate); Iron Legs; Neck Control (Karate); Special Exercises (Striker, Crushing with Limb, Shin); Technique Mastery (Knee Strike).

### *Lethwei*

**4 points**

Lethwei (also known as *Lethay*) is a Burmese boxing system similar to Muay Thai (pp. 185-186). Unlike Muay Thai, however, Lethwei permits throws, head butts, and sweeps. It's even legal to strike a falling opponent once on the way down, if his head is at least 12 inches from the floor. Competitors rarely use substantial hand wrappings, let alone gloves.

Lethwei has no weight classes, although some tournaments group contenders by age and experience. A bout goes four rounds. The first three rounds end when there's bleeding from a head wound or an especially effective strike or takedown. The final round lasts until one participant is knocked out or gives in. Under traditional rules, a fighter *must* submit to end the match; unconscious contestants are revived and given the option to continue or submit.

*Skills:* As *Muay Thai,* but add Judo and change Games specialty to Lethwei.

*Techniques:* As *Muay Thai,* plus Head Butt.

*Perks:* As *Muay Thai,* plus Iron Hands.

#### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Hard to Subdue; High Pain Threshold.

#### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Fit or Very Fit; Hard to Subdue; High Pain Threshold.

*Disadvantages:* Social Stigma (Minor); low Wealth; crippling injuries galore.

*Skills:* Boxing; Boxing Sport; Dancing (Ram Muay); Savoir-Faire (Gym); Wrestling.

## Naginatajutsu

**3 points**

Naginatajutsu is a Japanese polearm-fighting style for use with the *naginata* (a sword blade mounted on a staff) or *nagamaki* (which has more equal blade-to-haft proportions). The naginata was a battlefield weapon, and schools dedicated to it have existed since at least the mid-12th century. Indeed, Benkei the monk – legendary companion of the great 12th-century hero Yoshitsune – was a Naginatajutsu master. The weapon itself is several centuries older than that, so the style might have even earlier origins. By 16th century, firearms had relegated the polearm to a largely ceremonial role. Naginatajutsu became a martial art practiced by noblewomen for home defense and to add physical training to a largely sedentary lifestyle.

Naginatajutsu is an offensive style. The weapon has a length advantage over most others and lends itself to swift, wheeling motions, so practitioners seek to eliminate the foe *quickly.* Stylists use feints to draw out the opponent and attacks to the legs and body to disable or kill him. Historically, the leg was such a popular target that warriors wore heavy shin armor specifically to counter naginata cuts! Full-extension lunges that exploit the naginata's length are very common; treat such an attack as an All-Out Attack (Long). Fighters also use long-range swings. Other training includes butt strikes, both to targets in front and behind; techniques for disarming foes and retaining the naginata in the face of similar disarms; and sweeps with the end of the pole.

Naginata schools teach staff forms as well as polearm skills, for use in the event that the naginata's blade breaks off. Some *ryuha* train using a naginata that has a sharp cap on the butt, which allows the weapon to serve as a spear *in extremis* or after a feint with the blade. Others teach the knife or shortsword as a backup weapon.

Naginatajutsu schools still exist today. In fact, there's a dedicated federation committed to spreading the art. Modern students usually learn a sport version (see *Naginatado,* p. 187).

*Skills:* Polearm; Staff.

*Techniques:* Back Strike (Staff); Disarming (Staff); Feint (Polearm or Staff); Retain Weapon (Polearm); Sweep (Polearm or Staff); Targeted Attack (Polearm Swing/Face); Targeted Attack (Polearm Swing/Leg).

*Cinematic Skills:* Kiai; Mental Strength; Power Blow.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Defense (Polearm or Staff); Whirlwind Attack (Polearm or Staff).

*Perks:* Form Mastery (Naginata); Grip Mastery (Naginata).

#### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes; Enhanced Parry (Polearm).

*Disadvantages:* Reputation (Always aims for the legs).

*Skills:* Knife; Parry Missile Weapons; Savoir-Faire (Dojo); Shortsword; Spear; Two-Handed Sword.

# Polearm Fighting

The world has seen a mind-boggling variety of polearms – more than a few of which have been the subject of multiple fighting styles. Historians often dismiss these weapons as suitable only for mass combat and ill-trained peasant infantry. Historical warriors, on the other hand, often regarded polearms as ideal for man-to-man combat. Indeed, some Masters of Defence held certain varieties of bills and glaives to be superior to *all* other weapons! Of course, most of these martial artists used polearms that were shorter, lighter, and far more agile than the full-length battlefield weapons that historians read about in chronicles of old wars.

The specifics of polearm-fighting styles vary as much as the weapons, but a few principles are nearly universal. Polearm fighters normally hold the shaft in a Defensive Grip (pp. 109-111) and parry with both the blade and the haft. Most attacks are Defensive Attacks with the tip (thrusts). The warrior saves swings for fallen or disarmed foes – but uses Committed Attack (Strong) when he *does* swing. The fight consists primarily of using Evaluate and Wait to circle and look for an opening, or Feint to create one. Most styles avoid close-in fighting and seek to keep enemies at bay, although some teach kicking.

Chinese polearm styles differ somewhat in that while they're pragmatic, they also contain extravagant flourishes to impresses friend and foe alike. Polearm Art is a common addition.

For more on the *weapons* used in polearm fighting, see Chapter 6.

## *Chinese Horse-Cutter Fighting*

**4 points**

This Chinese style uses the *pudao* or "horse-cutter," a weapon functionally similar to the European halberd. It's suitable for use with the halberd and the Okinawan *bisento* as well.

*Skills:* Polearm; Polearm Art; Staff.

*Techniques:* As *Naginatajutsu* (p. 186), plus Counterattack (Polearm) and Spinning Strike (Polearm).

*Perks:* Form Mastery (Horse-Cutter); Grip Mastery (Horse-Cutter).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes.

## *Glaive Fighting*

**4 points**

This Welsh polearm style uses the dueling glaive or the forest bill. Swiss halberd fighting would be almost identical – just change the Form Mastery specialty to Halberd.

*Skills:* Brawling; Polearm; Staff.

*Techniques:* Counterattack (Polearm); Disarming (Polearm); Feint (Polearm or Staff); Hook (Polearm); Kicking; Knee Strike; Spinning Strike (Polearm); Sweep (Polearm); Targeted Attack (Polearm Swing/Leg); Targeted Attack (Polearm Thrust/Vitals).

*Perks:* Form Mastery (Dueling Bill); Form Mastery (Dueling Glaive).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes.

## *Naginatado (or Atarashii Naginata)*

**4 points**

Naginatado is the sport form of Naginatajutsu (p. 186). Stylists use a wooden naginata for *kata* and solo drills – a practice dating back to the early 17th century – and a bamboo-bladed weapon and kendo armor when sparring. Valid targets in bouts are the head, neck, torso, and shins.

*Skills:* Polearm Sport; Savoir-Faire (Dojo); Staff Sport.

*Techniques and Perks:* As *Naginatajutsu*.

# Pa Kua Chuan

**5 points**

Pa Kua Chuan – also called *Pa Kua Chang, Bagua,* or *Baguazhang* – is one of the three major "internal" arts of Chinese kung fu, the others being Hsing I Chuan (pp. 162-163) and T'ai Chi Chuan (pp. 200-201). Legend places its origins as far back as the 14th century. Its verifiable history starts in 1796.

Pa Kua Chuan translates literally as "eight trigram palm," hinting at its basis in the *I Ching.* Practitioners walk in circles while making complex hand movements. The art is nonaggressive, and based on avoiding blows and redirecting the foe's attacks. It does include some strikes – especially with the open palm (treat as Hammer Fist). These are effective, although they *look* deceptively lazy and unskilled.

The Pa Kua Chuan practitioner normally chooses Wait, Defensive Attack, or All-Out Defense (Increased Parry). Only after his opponent commits to an attack does he respond – most often with a lock or a throw. Strikes are infrequent; stylists prefer evasion and redirection to taking the offensive. Move and Attack, Committed Attack, and All-Out Attack are all extremely rare for the same reason.

Developing and channeling chi is the ultimate goal of Pa Kua Chuan. The style can be effective in a realistic game . . . but it's *devastating* in a cinematic one. Masters avoid incoming blows with steady walking and sidestepping, and use Push, Pressure Points, and Power Blow to defeat attackers.

Legend tells of a friendship between a famous Hsing I Chuan master and a renowned Pa Kua Chuan master. Some sources say that they fought a three-day duel before the Hsing I Chuan master finally laid out the Pa Kua Chuan master with a strike! Each master was so impressed by the other's style that they shared their secrets, cementing the tradition of training one another's students. Whatever the truth, Pa Kua Chuan practitioners frequently learn Hsing I Chuan as well, students of one art are welcome at schools of the other, and the styles have borrowed from one other – some Pa Kua Chuan schools teach *linear* forms from Hsing I Chuan.

*Skills:* Judo; Karate; Meditation; Philosophy (Taoism).

*Techniques:* Arm Lock; Exotic Hand Strike; Hammer Fist.

*Cinematic Skills:* Hypnotic Hands; Immovable Stance; Mental Strength; Power Blow; Push; Pressure Points; Pressure Secrets.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Roll with Blow.

*Perks:* Style Adaptation (Hsing I Chuan).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Enhanced Dodge; Enhanced Parry (Bare Hands).

*Disadvantages:* Disciplines of Faith (Ritualism).

*Skills:* Judo Art; Karate Art; Savoir-Faire (Dojo).

# Pak Hok

**3 points**

Legend has it that an early 15th-century Tibetan monk developed Pak Hok kung fu after observing a struggle between a crane and an ape. As the story goes, the crane deftly avoided the ape's attacks and plucked out an eye, thereby winning the fight despite the mismatch in strength. Inspired, the monk created the style originally called "lion's roar" and later renamed *Pak Hok,* or "white crane." Other sources claim that the style predates Bodhidharma's arrival at the Shaolin Temple, which would date it to the 6th century or even earlier. Its verifiable history is traceable only to the 17th century, when it was first taught publicly to monks and non-monks alike in Canton.

Pak Hok works off four principles: *cham,* or remorseless and completely committed attack without thought of retreat; *sim,* or dodging strikes while leaving the hands free to counterattack; *cheung,* or assaulting the foe with a ceaseless barrage of blows; and *it,* or countering the enemy's attacks by being one step ahead. Stylists employ very distinctive footwork which mimic a crane's careful (but quick) steps.

The Pak Hok stylist prefers Wait and Evaluate at the start of a fight. When his foe attacks, he dodges or parries and then counters with a Committed or All-Out Attack – most often using the Counterattack technique. After landing a telling blow, he unleashes a torrent of strikes to finish his opponent, making extensive use of Rapid Strike and All-Out Attack (Double). Defensive Attack is rare, but a stylist facing multiple foes might use the Attack maneuver instead of Committed Attack or All-Out Attack.

The style's usual attacks are punches and beak-like Exotic Hand Strikes – although a Hammer Fist to the face sees use as well. Feints are most often Beats (pp. 100-101) intended to knock down the target's guard. Pak Hok considers kicks secondary to punches; stylists sometimes *use* Jump Kick but they only *train* extensively at Kicking and Sweep. This last technique features prominently in Pak Hok's signature combination: a parry followed immediately by a backhand punch to the neck and a foot sweep, thrown as a Counterattack. If using *Combinations* (p. 80), Combination (Karate Punch/Neck + Karate Sweep) should be common among stylists.

Pak Hok schools also teach a few Chinese weapons, including the *jian,* spear, staff, and chain whip. Some add Chin Na (p. 154) to the system to complement their strike-heavy art with locks and throws.

Pak Hok places little emphasis on chi, instead aiming for maximum speed and power. Despite this, several special abilities make sense for the cinematic practitioner. Think of these as focused skill and strength – not as exotic powers! Most famous is the lethality of the master's beaked hand, said to be capable of plucking out the foe's eye as the crane did in Pak Hok's legendary origin.

Before the 17th century, Pak Hok was a secret art – or at least an obscure one. Finding an instructor in the modern world isn't difficult, however.

*Skills:* Karate; Philosophy (Buddhism).

*Techniques:* Counterattack (Karate); Exotic Hand Strike; Feint (Karate); Hammer Fist; Kicking; Sweep (Karate); Targeted Attack (Karate Hammer Fist/Face); Uppercut.

*Cinematic Skills:* Power Blow; Pressure Points.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Eye-Pluck; Lethal Kick; Lethal Strike; Pressure-Point Strike.

*Perks:* Special Setup (No Hands > Karate Parry), allows parries with the body instead of the hands, with each replacing a hand parry; Technique Adaptation (Counterattack).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Enhanced Dodge; Enhanced Parry (Bare Hands); Fit; Striking Strength.

*Disadvantages:* Callous; Overconfidence.

*Skills:* Judo; Rapier; Spear; Staff; Whip.

# Pankration

**5 points**

Pankration was the ancient Greek style of all-in wrestling. Its name translates as "all powers" and refers to the fact that in competition, all holds and strikes were permitted. Matches were long and brutal, and could end in death or disfigurement. Pankrationists needed a great deal of endurance to last even a single bout. They trained to fight equally well on slick ground, loose sand, and soft earth.

Pankrationists generally took Evaluate or Wait maneuvers until they spotted a good opening, then rushed in to deliver strikes or to execute a grapple and takedown. They used all manner of attacks. Hand strikes included punches dealt with protruding knuckles or stiffened fingers, overhead chops using the edge of the hand, and blows with the heel of the palm. Finishing moves done as All-Out Attacks were crowd-pleasers. Fighters usually fought defensively, though; the most common end to a match was a decisive hold on the ground. Fatal damage from strikes, limb wrenches, or chokes wasn't uncommon.

Pankration had no weight classes, so champions tended to be strong men. However, the ancient Greeks admired the skilled contender who defeated his opponents through superior technique as much as the strong fighter who simply overpowered his foes with brute force. There were also those who felt that *all* pankrationists were bloody-handed, simple-minded fools who represented the worst in Greek culture, and whose skills were worthless to the *polis* during wartime.

There are modern versions of Pankration. These don't trace their heritage back to ancient Greece but do take inspiration from the original sport. Skills and techniques are similar but tend to deemphasize moves that would be illegal in sanctioned mixed martial arts events.

*Skills:* Games (Pankration); Judo; Karate; Wrestling.

*Techniques:* Arm Lock; Elbow Strike; Exotic Hand Strike; Ground Fighting (Judo or Wrestling); Hammer Fist; Kicking; Knee Strike; Leg Grapple; Low Fighting (Wrestling); Stamp Kick; Wrench (Limb).

*Cinematic Skills:* Immovable Stance; Power Blow.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Backbreaker; Lethal Strike; Roll with Blow.

*Perks:* Iron Hands; Neck Control (Karate); Sure-Footed (Slippery); Sure-Footed (Uneven).

### Optional Traits

*Secondary Characteristics:* Improved FP and HP.

*Advantages:* Fit or Very Fit; High Pain Threshold.

*Disadvantages:* Bloodlust; Overconfidence; Reputation (Bloody-handed, simple-minded fool).

*Skills:* Boxing; Games (Boxing); Hobby Skill (Feats of Strength).

## Pentjak Silat

Pentjak Silat (also *Pencak Silat*) is a term for the martial arts of Indonesia. There are scores of Silat styles. One count suggested more than 160 . . . and this was probably low, because many instructors regard their art as secret and conceal it from all but carefully selected students. Most forms come from Java, but Silat exists across Indonesia, and also in Malaysia and the Philippines (Filipino Silat fighters should blend one of the styles below with Escrima, pp. 155-156). Because Indonesia was a Dutch colony, Silat is found almost anyplace that received Indonesian-Dutch immigrants, too – including Europe. Attempts to unify Silat into a single entity have failed.

As a general rule, Silat stylists fight low to the ground, launching strikes and throws from crouching stances and using rapid sideways movement. They learn to strike hard in order to destroy the foe's means of attacking – and to retreat if faced with superior force. Students study weapons from the first days of training. All Silat variations teach the art's signature weapon, the *kris* (p. 219).

Like many Asian styles, Silat has legendary origins. For instance, one form of Silat claims that a woman from Sumatra saw a fight between a snake and a bird, and used their moves as inspiration for the style. In reality, Silat appears to be a mixture of native martial arts influenced by Indian and Chinese styles. During the Japanese invasion of Indonesia during World War II, Japanese arts were also an influence.

Pentjak Silat styles vary from soft to extremely hard. Some stress destructive striking techniques and brutal limb breaks. Others concern themselves with meditation, hypnotic hand rhythms, and even supernatural powers. Indeed, many Silat styles purport to grant magical abilities, with the kris serving as a focus (much like the Powerstone and Staff in ***GURPS Magic***). This makes Silat an ideal transplant to Yrth in a ***GURPS Banestorm*** campaign! Experts of such styles can reputedly kill at a distance and render themselves impervious to weapons.

Below are two of the many Pentjak Silat variations. The GM may wish to develop more if running a Silat-heavy game. "Art" and "sport" forms are rare, though. Silat *is* a kind of cultural expression – dance-like exhibitions accompanied by music are common at celebrations – but this aspect of the style is secondary to its combative side.

## Mixed Martial Arts

"Mixed martial arts" (MMA) is an emergent trend in modern martial arts. It isn't a style but an umbrella term for *any* style or combination of styles that includes both striking and grappling tactics for fighting limited-rules bouts. MMA events pit fighters from many different styles against one another, and are rapidly growing in popularity.

In early no-holds-barred bouts, pure striking stylists did poorly because they couldn't cope with elementary chokes and locks once a grappler took them to the ground. Dedicated grapplers did well until faced with opponents trained to strike and grapple, both standing and prone. The curriculum of MMA schools reflects the lessons learned from these matches. Such schools are pragmatic – gyms more than dojos, even in tradition-heavy Japan.

Mixed martial arts competitors learn to punch and kick until they can grapple their adversary and finish him with a choke, lock, or close-in strike. Each fighter has his strengths and weaknesses, but no serious contender can afford to be without training at both striking and grappling. While almost any style that offers effective, fight-tested techniques and full-contact sparring can be *part* of a MMA curriculum, a striking stylist must learn a grappling art – and vice versa – to be competitive.

Common MMA striking styles include Bando (pp. 151-152), Boxing (pp. 152-153), and Muay Thai (pp. 185-186). Nearly any grappling art makes an excellent basis for MMA training – including such sport forms as Judo (p. 166) and Greco-Roman Wrestling (p. 205), which sometimes show up in MMA bouts after a fighter learns locks and holds illegal in his original sport! A few arts are essentially MMA "as is," most famously Brazilian Jiu-jitsu (pp. 167-168), Sambo (p. 185), and modern Pankration (pp. 188-189). On the other hand, kick-heavy styles such as Tae Kwon Do and Savate, and "soft" arts like Aikido and T'ai Chi Chuan, play almost no role in MMA.

In game terms, a MMA fighter needs a style or a blend of styles that offers striking skills (usually Karate or Boxing) *and* grappling skills (Judo or Wrestling). Ideal choices are arts that teach techniques popular in MMA, notably Arm Lock, Choke Hold, Ground Fighting, and Low Fighting. The Clinch, Neck Control, and Style Adaptation perks – especially Style Adaptation (All) – are common among competitors. If using templates, *Contender* (p. 32) works best. Instructors might use *Instructor* (pp. 34-35) or be contenders with the Teaching skill and too many injuries to fight.

## *Kumango Silat*

**4 points**

The heartland of Kumango Silat is Bukittinggi (Fordekok), in the Menangkabau area of Sumatra. The style's origins are unknown, but it's believed to be a native Sumatran art. It's still practiced in the 21st century.

Kumango Silat is a soft, flexible Silat form. It emphasizes evasions and escapes from grapples. Stylists yield to an attacker's movements and then slip free. Fighters parry from outside to inside, usually sidestepping (see *Retreat Options,* pp. 123-124) to get to the enemy's flank. They favor the elbow parry – an Aggressive Parry – against incoming kicks and Knee Strikes. The usual counter to a high kick is a Leg Grapple followed by a throw or a takedown.

Feints are an important part of Kumango Silat, and often precede a Deceptive Attack. The attack itself might be a kick, a punch, or *both,* thrown as a Dual-Weapon Attack. Strikes focus on the foe's centerline, the primary targets being the groin, neck, and vitals. Stylists also grapple – a favorite target being the foe's parrying arm – and follow up with throws, locks, and (especially) strikes.

Kumango Silat stances are very low and incorporate thigh slaps and deep movements. Practitioners often fake these motions as part of a feint or Deceptive Attack. The hands cover the groin and body, or the back of the neck while turning. Stylists practice stances on sandy beaches in order to get used to shifting ground.

Kumango Silat is rare outside of Indonesia but a good model for other "soft" Silat styles. Like all forms of Silat, it includes weapons training from the start. At some schools, students learn Combat Art versions of its core skills instead of combat skills.

*Skills:* Judo; Karate; Knife.

*Techniques:* Aggressive Parry (Karate); Arm Lock; Counterattack (Karate or Knife); Elbow Strike; Evade; Exotic Hand Strike; Feint (Karate or Knife); Leg Grapple; Low Fighting (Judo, Karate, or Knife); Spinning Kick; Spinning Punch; Sweep (Judo or Karate); Targeted Attack (Karate Kick/Groin); Targeted Attack (Karate Punch/Neck); Targeted Attack (Karate Punch/Vitals); Targeted Attack (Knife Thrust/Vitals); Trip.

*Cinematic Skills:* Breaking Blow; Hypnotic Hands; Mental Strength; Power Blow; Pressure Points; Pressure Secrets.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Attack (Karate); Springing Attack (Karate).

*Perks:* Sure-Footed (Sand); Technique Adaptation (Low Fighting); Unusual Training (Dual-Weapon Attack, Both attacks must target the same foe).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Cultural Familiarity (Southeast Asia); Language (Indonesian).

*Disadvantages:* Delusion ("My kris has magical powers"); Vow (Uphold Islam and the traditions of the style).

*Skills:* Jitte/Sai; Judo Art; Karate Art; Knife Art; Kusari; Main-Gauche; Staff; Whip.

## *Tapak Sutji Pentjak Silat*

**6 points**

Ifan Badjam officially founded Tapak Sutji Pentjak Silat in 1963, at the age of 72, in Central Java. A long period of development and practice preceded this event, however, and the art's true origins stretch back to the 1920s and the founding of an earlier school with identical drills and teachings. Practitioners fought the Japanese during WWII, the Dutch in the late 1940s, and the Communists in the 1960s.

Like other Silat styles, Tapak Sutji stances are low to the ground. They aren't static – the practitioner keeps moving to gain an advantage over his foe. Traditionally, students practiced the style outdoors on uneven ground, on beaches, or in tangled undergrowth, and were expected to cope with (and learn to fall on!) the rough and varied natural terrain.

Tapak Sutji practitioners make extensive use of Judo Throw, Sweep, and Trip to put the opponent on the ground. Follow-ups are more likely to be strikes than grapples or locks. Attacks often follow feints, and are usually Deceptive Attacks. Stylists like to counter an enemy attack with a parry followed by either an immediate Counterattack or an Arm Lock and *then* a strike or throw. As usual for Silat, the aim is to destroy the foe's ability to continue the attack, so the limbs are common targets.

Tapak Sutji includes training in a vast array of traditional Indonesian weapons. It also adds a short, flexible metal truncheon called the *segu* (treat as a baton) and the Japanese katana. Stylists don't use the katana with Kenjutsu stances or tactics, but rather in the mobile, low-to-the-ground Silat style.

## Silat Traditions

Silat tradition regards the connection between master and disciple as a blood relationship. The bond is as much that of parent and child as it is that of student and teacher. This is very different from the more businesslike arrangements common in the West.

According to hoplologist Donn Draeger, the teacher traditionally expected the student to give him certain gifts before he would offer instruction:

- A chicken, the blood of which would be spread on the ground as a symbolic substitute for the student's blood.
- A roll of white cloth, for use as a burial shroud should the student be killed during training.
- A knife, to represent the sharpness expected of the student.
- Tobacco, for the teacher to smoke.
- Money, to replace the teacher's clothing torn during training.

The student also had to swear an oath on the Koran to uphold the style's traditions and the laws of Islam.

These practices aren't common in Silat schools in the modern West, but such academies often have charters and rules that are nearly as stringent. The GM could certainly have a teacher from the "old country" expect Western students to respect these traditions, or use them as inspiration for a fictional style. In a fantasy or space-opera setting, the gifts might be strange indeed . . .

Tapak Sutji Pentjak Silat is widely practiced. Finding a Tapak Sutji school in Indonesia, Europe, and many other parts of the world is relatively easy. Tapak Sutji students wear a red uniform with yellow bands on the neck and sleeves.

*Skills:* Judo; Karate; Knife; Shortsword; Two-Handed Sword.

*Techniques:* Arm Lock; Breakfall; Counterattack (Karate, Knife, or Shortsword); Exotic Hand Strike; Feint (Karate, Knife, Shortsword, or Two-Handed sword); Jump Kick; Kicking; Low Fighting (Judo, Karate, Knife, or Shortsword); Sweep (Judo or Karate); Targeted Attack (Karate Kick/Leg); Targeted Attack (Karate Punch/Arm); Trip.

*Cinematic Skills:* Breaking Blow; Hypnotic Hands; Mental Strength; Power Blow; Pressure Points; Pressure Secrets.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Springing Attack (Karate).

*Perks:* Sure-Footed (Uneven); Technique Adaptation (Low Fighting).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Cultural Familiarity (Southeast Asia); Weapon Master.

*Disadvantages:* Delusion ("My kris has magical powers."); Vow (Uphold Islam and the traditions of the style).

*Skills:* Jitte/Sai; Judo Art; Karate Art; Knife Art; Kusari; Main-Gauche; Shortsword Art; Staff; Two-Handed Sword Art; Whip.

## Pollaxe Fighting

**4 points**

The pollaxe was popular for knightly judicial duels in 15th- and early 16th-century Europe. This weapon *wasn't* the massive "axe-head-on-a-shaft" described on p. B272, which was primarily suited for use by ranked soldiers. Rather, it was a shorter "dueling halberd" (p. 216) – sometimes with a toothed hammer instead of an actual axe blade – designed specifically for personal combat.

Knights normally gripped the pollaxe two-handed, like a staff, spacing their hands far apart and holding the shaft diagonally across the body. In game terms, this would be a Defensive Grip (pp. 109-111). Fighting was close-in, and favored jabs with the point and *short* swings over wide, sweeping blows that – while powerful – would expose the attacker. Another popular tactic was hooking the beak, blade, or spike behind the opponent's weapon, leg, or neck. Feints and Defensive Attacks were common, but a fighter would use Committed Attack (Strong) or All-Out Attack (Feint) if his rival seemed vulnerable.

Some pollaxes concealed a hollow space in the head that was filled with an irritant "blinding powder." Launching this is a dirty trick (see *Dirty Tricks,* p. 76). The attacker can use Polearm skill instead of DX to throw the powder if knows the appropriate Style Perk. However, roll 1d after any *swinging* attack with the weapon. On 1-2, the powder spills prematurely (and harmlessly). Any critical miss means the powder affects the pollaxe's wielder, in addition to the results on the *Critical Miss Table!*

Despite its fearsome appearance, the pollaxe was more popular in tournaments than in wartime. Some scholars believe that this was because it wasn't especially effective at penetrating armor – even a full-force swing would knock down an armored man without inflicting much injury. This is more a commentary on the fighters' armor than their tactics, which were certainly earnest enough. Practitioners should definitely learn combat skills, not Combat Sport skills.

The pollaxe lost whatever military utility it might have had once warfare became an issue of massed pikes and halberds rather than individual warriors. Some commanders still carried a pollaxe while leading such troops, however.

*Skills:* Brawling; Games (Knightly Combat); Polearm.

*Techniques:* Disarming (Polearm); Feint (Polearm); Hook (Polearm); Knee Strike; Retain Weapon (Polearm); Stamp Kick; Sweep (Polearm).

*Cinematic Skills:* Power Blow.

*Perks:* Grip Mastery (Dueling Halberd); Unique Technique (Powder Spill).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Status; Wealth.

*Disadvantages:* Code of Honor (Chivalry).

*Skills:* Knife; Polearm Sport; Shortsword; Two-Handed Axe/Mace; Wrestling.

## Praying Mantis Kung Fu

**4 points**

Tradition has it that a 17th-century Shaolin monk observed a praying mantis hunting and – inspired by its deft use of its hooked forelimbs – adapted the insect's movements to his own style and added elements from other arts to create Praying Mantis Kung Fu. Like all legendary origins, this tale is impossible to verify. Still, several Chinese martial arts that emulate the mantis' methods survive today. The style described below is a type of *Northern* Praying Mantis. Southern Praying Mantis also exists but shares only a name – not techniques or history.

Mantis is noted for its narrow, low stances that mimic those of its namesake insect, with close-in elbows and both hands extended forward, often held open or claw-like. Its signature move is the "hook": the stylist grabs his enemy's arm in order to pull him off-balance, push his guard aside, apply an Arm Lock, throw him, or otherwise impede him. This is a grapple attempt – ideally, executed swiftly enough to be a Deceptive Attack. An attempt to pull the foe off-balance is a Beat (pp. 100-101) if the aim is to reduce his defenses, a takedown (p. B370) if the goal is to put him on the ground. Mantis fighters also use Judo Throw (preferably a *damaging* throw; see p. 75) to take down a victim and position him for a finishing move.

Stylists use Wait and Evaluate until their opponent commits. They seek to void their attacker's aggressive movements by stepping aside or parrying, and then counterattack with a cascade of precise strikes – often using a Rapid Strike to launch two attacks, or a feint and attack to overwhelm the foe quickly. Practitioners value placement and skill over brute strength. Mantis punches use the open hand, a vertical fist, and various Exotic Hand Strikes (details depend on the style variant, and might involve a single finger, a protruding knuckle, etc.).

## Staff Fighting

Staff fighting is as widespread as stickfighting (p. 157). In the age of spears and polearms, a warrior would train to use his pole weapon as a staff should its head come off in battle. In *any* era, the staff's simple construction and ease of use make it an extremely accessible weapon.

### *Bojutsu*

**2 points**

Japan and Okinawa had highly developed staff-fighting arts, called *Bojutsu.* Many *ryuha* taught Bojutsu forms, typically emphasizing the effective use of the *naginata* or *yari* should its head break off in battle. A *bo* (staff) might be up to 8' long, but the *rokushakubo,* or "six-foot staff," was most common.

*Skills, Techniques, Perks, and Optional Traits:* As *Quarterstaff* (p. 193).

### *Jojutsu*

**3 points**

Legend has it that Jojutsu's founder, Muso Gonnosuke, challenged Musashi Miyamoto, fought using Bojutsu, and lost. He decided that he needed more flexibility than the staff offered, shortened the *bo* to create the *jo,* and then used this weapon to fight Musashi to a standstill (or even defeat him). His school, *Shindo-Muso Ryu,* is the most common Jojutsu style. Jojutsu uses techniques similar to both Bojutsu (above) and Kenjutsu (pp. 173-175), and training involves the *bokken* as well as the jo.

*Skills:* Staff; Two-Handed Sword.
*Techniques:* Arm Lock (Staff); Disarming (Staff or Two-Handed Sword); Feint (Staff or Two-Handed Sword); Sweep (Staff).
*Cinematic Skills and Techniques:* As *Quarterstaff* (p. 193).
*Perks:* Form Mastery (Jo).

#### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Enhanced Parry (Staff).
*Skills:* Karate.

### *Sport Quarterstaff*

**2 points**

Quarterstaff fighting evolved into a popular sport in 19th-century England. Practitioners used bamboo staffs to avoid injury, and wore protective headgear and padding. The rules removed grappling and stressed less-damaging blows.

*Skills:* Staff Sport.
*Techniques:* Feint (Staff Sport).

#### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Enhanced Parry (Staff).

Cinematic Mantis uses chi to accelerate its already-rapid attacks. Its light and flexible stances allow practitioners to walk without leaving a trace, while its precision strikes can target vital points. Its claw-like hand movements and quick steps can even *hypnotize* the foe, leaving him open for a fight-ending blow.

Buddhist philosophy is a traditional part of Praying Mantis instruction. The skills below assume a modern campaign, but in a historical game – especially one where students must learn the style from monks – the GM should add Philosophy (Buddhism) and raise style cost to 5 points. Mantis schools sometimes teach weapons, including all manner of "Shaolin" weapons. Some stylists learn a core of Mantis tactics and then adapt other styles (nearly always Chinese) to the "Mantis" system; such martial artists should learn the art described here and buy Style Adaptation perks for these other styles.

*Skills:* Judo; Karate; Karate Art.
*Techniques:* Arm Lock; Counterattack (Karate); Ear Clap; Exotic Hand Strike; Eye-Poke; Hammer Fist; Kicking; Knee Strike; Targeted Attack (Judo Grapple/Arm).
*Cinematic Skills:* Hypnotic Hands; Light Walk; Power Blow; Pressure Points; Pressure Secrets; Sensitivity.
*Cinematic Techniques:* Lethal Eye-Poke; Lethal Strike; Pressure-Point Strike; Roll with Blow.
*Perks:* Chi Resistance (Hypnotic Hands); Iron Hands; Special Setup (Karate Parry > Arm Lock); Style Adaptation (Varies).

#### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes; Enhanced Parry (Bare Hands); Extra Attack; Forceful Chi.
*Disadvantages:* Disciplines of Faith.
*Skills:* Broadsword; Broadsword Art; Philosophy (Buddhism); Staff; Staff Art; Two-Handed Flail; Two-Handed Flail Art; Two-Handed Sword; Two-Handed Sword Art.

## Quarterstaff

**2 points**

Considered by many to be a quintessentially *English* weapon, the quarterstaff was and still is practiced the world over. Historically, some masters held it in low regard next to the sword. Others – such as George Silver (p. 22) – considered it the "perfect" weapon, and praised its tactical flexibility, ability to stand off enemies either singly or in groups, and striking power. One needn't look any further than the tales of Robin Hood to gain an appreciation of its legendary status!

Against a shorter weapon, the staff fighter takes advantage of his reach. He keeps his distance, using strikes and the Disarming and Sweep techniques to attack from afar. If his enemy's weapon is *longer,* though, he steps in close with an Attack or rushes in with a Move and Attack. Once inside his opponent's reach, he uses Armed Grapple or Sweep to put his adversary on the ground, and then finishes him with a thrust, swing, or Choke Hold. Not every instructor teaches all of these moves . . . but most teach the majority of them.

Historical staff fighters used weapons of many lengths – the half-staff, quarterstaff, pikestaff, and so forth – named for their dimensions, the wielder's grip, and/or the staff's origin; see Chapter 6. A true master knew how to use *all* of these weapons. The staff-fighting style given here assumes a fully developed "school" that teaches all lengths and techniques. It's nominally European, but Asian arts are very similar; see *Staff Fighting* (p. 192).

Some masters put a spike on one end of their staff. Others practiced staff tactics as a "backup" to pike fighting, for use in the event that the head broke off their weapon. Add the Spear skill and the Form Mastery (Spear) perk to reflect such a style.

*Skills:* Staff.
*Techniques:* Arm Lock (Staff); Armed Grapple (Staff); Back Strike (Staff); Choke Hold (Staff); Disarming (Staff); Feint (Staff); Sweep (Staff).
*Cinematic Skills:* Blind Fighting; Power Blow; Pressure Points; Push.
*Cinematic Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Defense (Staff); Grand Disarm (Staff); Pressure-Point Strike (Staff); Timed Defense (Staff); Whirlwind Attack (Staff).
*Perks:* Grip Mastery (Staff).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Enhanced Parry (Staff).
*Disadvantages:* Overconfidence.
*Skills:* Polearm; Spear; Staff Art; Wrestling.

## Savate

**3 points**

Savate is a kicking, punching, and grappling art native to the south of France. The earliest historical reference to "savate" is in an 18th-century poem. Its techniques are certainly much older, though, and probably saw use as far back as the 15th century. Sometime in the interim, Savate became the streetfighting style of choice for sailors, thugs, and toughs.

In 1877, Joseph Charlemont and his son opened a Savate school in Paris. Charlemont Academy took both male and female students, noble and common, and Savate become fashionable. Later in the 19th century, *savateurs* in contact with Japanese martial artists began to combine their art with Jujutsu, developing the system further while retaining its distinctive French style. After two World Wars, however, few savateurs remained (less than three dozen silver glove holders) and emphasis shifted to a sport form; see *La Boxe Française* (see above).

Savate is best known as a kicking art but includes a full range of hand strikes, head butts, and even hip and shoulder strikes. Its famous kicks are both high- and low-line – with low kicks being more common – and thrown jumping, spinning, and *main au sol* ("hand on the floor"). Treat a main au sol kick as either a Committed Attack or an All-Out Attack (Long). Stylists use grapples to avoid an attack or set up a strike, not for locking or immobilizing.

Savate frequently includes cane fighting for advanced students; serious cane fighters should learn *La Canne de Combat* (p. 157) as well. Certain schools also teach a full range of weapons, including knives, swords, straight razors, whips, and even guns. Some offer an improvised-weapons sub-style called *Panache* to silver-gloves students. This teaches how to use any object or item of clothing to distract or injure an antagonist.

There are two ways to handle cinematic savateurs. They *might* throw spectacular acrobatic kicks following handstands and cartwheels, their exaggerated stances, feints, and kicks retaining effectiveness even as they impress with their artistry. Alternatively, such fighters might be like the bare-knuckled, full-contact savateurs of old, in which case they should have the same "cinematic" traits as boxers (see *Boxing*, pp. 152-153).

Modern Savate is often a sport form that favors clean, elegant kicks and punches over pragmatic street techniques. It eliminates grappling and "dirty fighting," and doesn't include cane fighting or Panache. Students of this art learn La Boxe Française, *not* the style described here. Savate is most common in France but has an international federation. It's possible to find schools – albeit with some difficulty – worldwide.

### Savate Rankings

Colored patches customarily identified as "glove colors" signify Savate rankings (the gloves themselves don't change color). New students receive the blue glove after completing the introductory training. Further training leads to the green, red, white, and yellow glove, the silver glove for *technique* (first through third degree), and ultimately *professeur* (instructor) status. The red glove is the minimum rank for competition in sport Savate and sometimes called "Savate's black belt."

Several additional ranks can't be reached through training alone. The bronze glove and the silver glove for *competition* (first through fifth degree) are awarded in competition, on the basis of skill *and* success at full-contact matches. The gold glove is a title awarded on the basis of exceptional merit – as much for service in the name of the art as for technique and competitive victories.

Unlike most martial arts, Savate has separate student and teaching ranks. Starting at green, students can learn to teach. The future professeur receives specialized training in how to structure and instruct a class.

### *La Boxe Française*

**3 points**

La Boxe Française is a sport form of Savate that became popular after World War II. It lacks weapon arts and emphasizes ring-safe techniques over streetfighting ones. While the style retains some self-defense applicability, it isn't a complete armed and unarmed combat system like its forerunner.

*Skills:* Games (La Boxe Française); Karate Sport.
*Techniques:* Back Kick; Feint (Karate Sport); Jump Kick; Kicking.

#### Optional Traits

*Skills:* Acrobatics.

*Skills:* Karate; Wrestling.

*Techniques:* Back Kick; Drop Kick; Feint (Karate); Hammer Fist; Head Butt; Jump Kick; Kicking; Spinning Kick.

*Cinematic Skills:* Flying Leap; Power Blow.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Flying Jump Kick; Lethal Kick; Roll with Blow; Springing Attack (Karate).

*Perks:* Improvised Weapons (Karate); Technique Mastery (Kicking).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Language (French).

*Disadvantages:* Bloodlust.

*Skills:* Acrobatics; Broadsword; Guns; Karate Art; Knife; Savoir-Faire (Dojo); Shortsword; Smallsword; Whip.

*Techniques:* Acrobatic Stand.

*. . . regardless of how wonderful a technique is, if you are unable to apply it, you are in no better position than if you didn't know it at all. Each technique must be practiced with all your heart many hundreds, many thousands of times, until you master it to the point where you can apply it.*

*– Mas Oyama,* ***This Is Karate***

## Shaolin Kung Fu

**6 points**

Shaolin Kung Fu is the world-famous art of the Shaolin Temple monks. No martial-arts school is so steeped in myth as the Temple, and its kung fu inherited this legendary status. Separating fact from fiction is difficult . . . even in the face of rigorous research. What *is* verifiable is that there was more than one Temple and that their monks were as renowned for their skill with the staff and bare hands as for their piety. They were also well-known for their resistance to Manchu rule, and for sheltering rebels and refugees – both of which ultimately led to the Temple's destruction at the hands of the Manchu.

The main weapon of the Shaolin monks was the staff, which earned them fame for most of the past millennium. It was the ideal weapon: inexpensive, convenient to carry, and a symbol of priesthood in many Asian countries (although it's hard to say which came first: the symbol or its use as a weapon!). The monks trained to use the staff for attack and defense, and as the basis of some unarmed-combat moves – including their signature Pole-Vault Kick.

Shaolin monks also learned (or at least had access to training in) many other weapon skills. There are stories of monks using nearly every Chinese weapon – but especially the hook sword, *jian,* and three-part staff, and such exotica as the "deer antlers" and *qian kun ri yue dao.* See Chapter 6 for more about these weapons.

Cinematic Shaolin monks are capable of just about *every* amazing feat from martial-arts myth. This is in part due to the immense body of folk legend surrounding the Temple's monks and in part due to decades of martial-arts movies ascribing the incredible abilities of almost any martial artist to "Shaolin Temple training." The GM could fairly permit nearly any cinematic skill, technique, or perk!

In historical times, the only way to learn this style was to travel to the Shaolin Temple and become a monk. A monk's life was more about meditation and hard chores than martial arts – hundreds of kung fu movies notwithstanding. Those who wished to go on to become masters had to commit to *life* in a monastery. The GM might make exceptions in a cinematic game.

Finding a Shaolin Kung Fu instructor in the modern world isn't difficult – but many of these schools actually teach other kung fu styles, or Wushu (pp. 206-207), under the Shaolin name. A few schools *do* seem to be able to trace their lineage back to the Shaolin Temple, and teach a style much like the historical one described here. They usually teach Combat Art skills only, however, or save genuine combat skills for advanced students.

*Skills:* Judo; Karate; Meditation; Philosophy (Buddhism); Staff.

*Techniques:* Arm Lock (Judo or Staff); Armed Grapple (Staff); Back Kick; Choke Hold (Staff); Disarming (Staff); Elbow Strike; Exotic Hand Strike; Feint (Karate or Staff); Hammer Fist; Jump Kick; Kicking; Spinning Kick; Spinning Punch; Spinning Strike (Staff); Stamp Kick; Sweep (Judo or Karate).

*Cinematic Skills:* Blind Fighting; Body Control; Breaking Blow; Flying Leap; Hypnotic Hands; Immovable Stance; Kiai; Light Walk; Lizard Climb; Mental Strength; Power Blow; Pressure Points; Pressure Secrets; Push; Sensitivity.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Defense (Staff); Fighting While Seated (Karate); Flying Jump Kick; Grand Disarm (Judo or Staff); Lethal Eye-Poke; Lethal Kick; Lethal Strike; Pole-Vault Kick; Pressure-Point Strike; Roll with Blow; Timed Defense; Whirlwind Attack (Karate or Staff).

*Perks:* Chi Resistance (Any); Cotton Stomach; Drunken Fighting; Iron Body Parts (Any); Special Exercises (DR 1 with Tough Skin); Special Exercises (Striking ST +1); Style Adaptation (Any Chinese style); Technique Mastery (Any kicking technique).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes; Fit or Very Fit; Forceful Chi; High Pain Threshold; Inner Balance; Language (Chinese).

*Disadvantages:* Disciplines of Faith; Sense of Duty (Shaolin Monastery); Vows.

*Skills:* Acrobatics; Broadsword; Broadsword Art; Judo Art; Jumping; Karate Art; Knife; Knife Art; Polearm; Polearm Art; Shortsword; Shortsword Art; Staff Art; Two-Handed Flail; Two-Handed Flail Art; Whip; Whip Art.

# Shortsword Fighting

**4 points**

The shortsword was unpopular for much of the Middle Ages. Around 1250, however, it reappeared in the hands of foot soldiers. By the late 15th or early 16th century, it was the standard sidearm of the German *Landsknecht*. Commoners across Europe also used this light, handy, cheap sword. The law often played a role in this: it was quite common to restrict broadswords to the nobility. The shortsword – like the dagger – was legal on the street in some cities . . . and useful in tight corners.

Shortsword Fighting was a style for unarmored or lightly armored combatants relying on deft footwork and quick parries for protection. The razor-sharp swords were primarily cutting weapons, although most had a stabbing point. Swordsmen used Defensive Attack to "feel out" the enemy and Deceptive Attack to bypass his guard. Because most wore little or no armor, they avoided All-Out Attack, Committed Attack, and other tactics that opened them up to retaliation.

Stylists learned to fight in close combat with hand parries, grapples, kicks, and blows with the pommel. Some historical fighters preferred *two* swords – one to defend and the other to attack – to a single blade and an open hand. Cinematic warriors would use two weapons to attack or parry at the same time, of course!

The shortsword is likely to be a favorite weapon of urban thugs and ruffians wherever it's permitted on the streets. Fairly or not, then, stylists might gain a reputation for being scum themselves. Shortsword fighters seeking to expand their skills might learn Dagger Fighting (p. 155) and/or Combat Wrestling (pp. 204-205) as well. Shortsword Fighting was also a popular "backup" style for those schooled in Longsword Fighting (pp. 180-182).

*Skills:* Brawling; Judo; Shortsword.

*Techniques:* Arm Lock; Armed Grapple (Shortsword); Bind Weapon (Shortsword); Close Combat (Shortsword); Disarming (Judo); Eye-Gouging; Eye-Poke; Feint (Shortsword); Ground Fighting (Shortsword); Low Fighting (Shortsword); Targeted Attack (Shortsword Swing/Arm); Targeted Attack (Shortsword Swing/Neck); Targeted Attack (Shortsword Thrust/Vitals).

*Cinematic Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Attack (Shortsword); Fighting While Seated (Shortsword).

*Perks:* Grip Mastery (Shortsword); Off-Hand Weapon Training (Shortsword); Quick-Swap (Shortsword); Skill Adaptation (Bind Weapon defaults to Shortsword).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes; Enhanced Parry (Shortsword or All).

*Disadvantages:* Reputation (Ruffian).

*Skills:* Fast-Draw (Sword); Knife; Main-Gauche.

## Shaolin Traditions

The Shaolin Temple's visible traditions are its students' orange robes, shaved heads burned with a pattern of nine small dots, and physical fitness (imparted by years of martial-arts training). These things are familiar from TV, movies . . . and actual monks. The People's Republic of China reopened the long-closed Temple as a cultural center. It's a popular destination for visiting martial artists, who train there or with any of the many unaffiliated teachers who live nearby. In the past, of course, one had to *join* the Temple to train there.

Historically, entry into the order was fairly mundane. Impressing the resident monks with your seriousness about the vows, and taking those vows, would be the only requirements. This might still be difficult; it's said that Bodhidharma sat outside the Temple for years, seeking entrance, until his gaze burned a hole in the mountain. On the other hand, the Temple *did* have a reputation for taking in wanderers, political dissidents, and other refugees – often rebels against the ruling Manchu Dynasty – if they were willing to take vows. Some of these monks might be more concerned with the world outside than with meditation or prayer. This reputation and the presence of politicized monks (both refugees and long-time acolytes) led to many conflicts with the government.

Movies and TV shows prefer a more exotic "admission test." Typically, one must either fight some or *all* of the monks (usually in ascending order of skill), or take unrealistically severe vows of obedience. Most of these fictional treatments also require a "final exam" before one is considered a true monk.

The TV show *Kung Fu* had its own, now famous, version of the "final exam." After training for years, students had to pass an ordeal involving an oral test on Buddhist philosophy, a maze filled with "attack dummies" and traps sprung by surprise, and other tricks designed to trip up the unwary and unskilled. Finally, the candidate had to lift a red-hot cauldron weighing 500 lbs. and carry it a short distance. On the sides were raised markings that branded the carrier's arms with a dragon and a tiger, marking him as a Shaolin monk. This is Hollywood rather than reality – but it certainly suits *cinematic* Shaolin monks!

# Shurikenjutsu

**4 points**

This is the Japanese art of throwing and concealing the *shuriken* (throwing blade; see p. 223). Contrary to popular perception, shuriken weren't merely "ninja throwing stars." Samurai valued them as backup weapons, because they were easy to conceal and quick to deploy. Some shuriken (especially single-pointed spikes) functioned as fist loads, too, making them useful last-ditch melee weapons. Shurikenjutsu was usually a "hidden" or "secret" part of a *ryu,* because the shuriken was most effective when the enemy wasn't expecting it.

# Spear Fighting

Sojutsu (pp. 197-198) is but one of the world's many spear arts. The spear is a *very* simple weapon that has seen extensive use in warfare, hunting, and personal combat since before recorded history. It survives today as the bayonet, taught by modern armies as much to instill aggressiveness in recruits as for combat utility.

## *Chinese Spear Fighting*

**4 points**

Chinese Spear Fighting is *dramatic.* A move particular to Chinese styles, especially cinematic ones, is the full-extension thrust with one hand on the very end of the pole. This is an All-Out Attack (Long) that ends in a crouch, inflicting normal one-handed damage. Cinematic fighters should use the Flying Lunge technique and the Tip Slash option (p. 113) extensively, too.

Chinese spears are flexible, allowing arced thrusts. Treat these as Deceptive Attacks. A decorative horse-hair tassel – white or brightly colored – is knotted behind the head. This serves to distract enemies and prevent blood from running down the shaft (which could foul the wielder's grip).

*Skills:* Acrobatics; Spear; Staff.

*Techniques:* As *Sojutsu* (pp. 197-198), but add Feint (Staff) and Sweep (Staff).

*Cinematic Skills and Techniques:* As *Sojutsu,* but add Flying Lunge (Spear).

*Perks:* Form Mastery (Spear); Grip Mastery (Spear).

### Optional Traits

*Skills:* Spear Art.

## *Heroic Spear Fighting*

**4 points**

This style is based on the heroic stories of Homer's *Iliad.* Greek heroes carried two spears and a sword. They were ferried to battle on chariots but dismounted to fight. They usually threw one spear and saved the other for melee. The sword was a backup, used when both spears were lost or against especially difficult foes. Spear fighters should also learn Pankration (pp. 188-189) or some form of Wrestling (pp. 204-206) or Boxing (pp. 152-153).

Greek epics often demonstrated the enemy's ferocity and the danger posed by his weapons by having the hero narrowly avoid an attack that went on to kill his chariot driver. The GM could treat this as a limited Extra Life!

Legendary Celtic warriors fought similarly, and should use this style as well. They were famed for being able to run up volleys of arrows shot at them. See *Special Feats for Cinematic Skills* (pp. 129-130) for ideas on how to handle this.

*Skills:* Shield; Spear; Thrown Weapon (Spear).

*Techniques:* As *Sojutsu* (pp. 197-198), but remove Disarming (Spear) and Sweep (Spear).

*Cinematic Skills and Techniques:* As *Sojutsu,* but add Dual-Weapon Attack (Thrown Spear).

*Perks:* Naval Training; Off-Hand Weapon Training (Thrown Spear).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes; Fearlessness; High Pain Threshold. A fierce Reputation is *critical* – it's usually what the warrior is fighting to establish!

*Disadvantages:* Bad Temper; Bloodlust; Overconfidence.

*Skills:* Shortsword.

***Continued on next page . . .***

Shurikenjutsu stresses readying the shuriken quickly, without letting the opponent see it. Stylists typically conceal it in the palm or behind a sleeve. They toss the weapon with a sharp overhand or underhand motion, spin it sideways, or throw it while sweeping their hand through a sword-drawing motion – attacking the enemy by surprise even as they ready their sword. Treat such moves as either dirty tricks that use Holdout vs. Perception (see *Dirty Tricks,* p. 76) or one of the options under *Tricky Shooting* (p. 121). The GM should consider letting practitioners learn a Style Perk that gives them access to *Tricky Shooting* if the campaign doesn't generally use those rules.

Stylists hurl shuriken rapidly, ideally throwing at least one per second to deny the foe a lull that he could exploit to advance or attack. To do this, ready a shuriken in each hand (possibly using Fast-Draw), throw the one in your master hand, use the Quick-Swap perk to move the other to your throwing hand, and Fast-Draw a replacement with the off hand. Use *Rapid Strike with Thrown Weapons* (p. 120-121) to throw two or more blades! Fast-Draw and Quick-Swap let you keep a steady rain of shuriken heading toward your victim.

Cinematic Shurikenjutsu works somewhat differently. Rather than hurling a constant stream of shuriken, practitioners throw *multiple* blades from both hands simultaneously! They toss shuriken with such precision that they can break firearms, shatter chains, and split thick slabs of wood.

Shurikenjutsu still exists, its practices of concealment and quick throwing unchanged from its combative predecessor. Students use sharp shuriken to practice on targets, blunt ones to practice on partners in padded armor. Thanks to the shuriken's popularity during the 1980s "ninja craze" in the U.S., many regard it as a weapon of criminals or wannabe ninja and treat those who carry shuriken accordingly.

Shurikenjutsu schools sometimes teach how to throw knives, too – including the *kubizashi* (head-displaying knife) and such larger blades as the *tanto* (large knife). The GM can also adapt this style for other thrown weapons, such as the *chakram* (p. 214), although the name and Thrown Weapon skill would certainly change.

## Spear Fighting (Continued)

### *Iklwa Fighting*

**5 points**

History credits Shaka, the early 19th-century Zulu king, with turning the Zulus into a warrior nation. He forged war bands into disciplined regiments, or *impi,* and trained his troops to fight with the short-handled, long-bladed *iklwa* instead of the *assegai* (javelin). They also used the knobbed club. When not at war, Zulu warriors led a pastoral existence, and thus tended to be both fit and fleet of foot.

Iklwa Fighting is extremely direct. It uses the shield not only to deflect attacks but also to hook the enemy's shield and drag him off-balance. After pulling his foe off-guard, the warrior stabs his opponent in the vitals and disembowels him (to release his spirit in death). Committed Attack (Strong) is common.

*Skills:* Axe/Mace; Running; Shield; Spear.
*Techniques:* As *Sojutsu* (pp. 197-198), but replace Disarming (Spear) and Sweep (Spear) with Armed Grapple (Shield) and Feint (Shield).

**Optional Traits**

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes; Fit.
*Disadvantages:* Bloodlust; Callous.
*Skills:* Guns.

### *Jukenjutsu (Bayonet Fighting)*

**4 points**

Jukenjutsu is the Japanese art of bayonet fighting, but it works "as is" for the bayonet style of almost any military force in the world. Jukenjutsu has both sport and combat forms. Sport fighters use padding-tipped rifles and throat, chest, and face protection. Only these three targets are valid – and only thrusting is allowed. Purely military bayonet training omits Savoir-Faire (Dojo) and Spear Sport. Some soldiers also learn Knife.

*Skills:* Savoir-Faire (Dojo); Spear; Spear Sport.
*Techniques:* Feint (Spear); Retain Weapon (Rifle); Targeted Attack (Spear Thrust/Face); Targeted Attack (Spear Thrust/Neck); Targeted Attack (Spear Thrust/Vitals).

**Optional Traits**

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes.

### *Viking Spear Fighting*

**4 points**

Shields were relatively uncommon for foot troops in Asia but very common in Europe. This style is suitable for spear fighters from across Europe or anywhere warriors use the shield and hurled spear in battle. Its users included the Vikings, who especially admired heroic feats with the thrown spear.

*Skills:* Shield; Spear; Thrown Weapon (Spear).
*Techniques:* As *Sojutsu* (pp. 197-198).
*Cinematic Skills and Techniques:* As *Sojutsu,* but add Dual-Weapon Attack (Thrown Spear).
*Perks:* Naval Training; Off-Hand Weapon Training (Thrown Spear); Shield-Wall Training.

**Optional Traits**

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes; Enhanced Block.
*Disadvantages:* Berserk.
*Skills:* Axe/Mace; Broadsword; Parry Missile Weapons; Thrown Weapon (Axe/Mace); Two-Handed Axe/Mace.
*Techniques:* Hand-Catch (Parry Missile Weapons).

*Skills:* Fast-Draw (Shuriken); Holdout; Thrown Weapon (Shuriken).
*Techniques:* Targeted Attack (Shuriken Throw/Eyes); Targeted Attack (Shuriken Throw/Hand); Targeted Attack (Shuriken Throw/Leg); Targeted Attack (Shuriken Throw/Neck).
*Cinematic Skills:* Breaking Blow.
*Cinematic Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Attack (Thrown Shuriken).
*Perks:* Off-Hand Weapon Training (Fast-Draw or Thrown Shuriken); Quick-Swap (Shuriken); Unusual Training (Can use *Tricky Shooting* in a campaign that doesn't use those rules).

**Optional Traits**

*Advantages:* Ambidexterity; Weapon Master (Shuriken).
*Disadvantages:* Reputation ("Thug or criminal," in a modern game; "Signature move: carries and uses concealed shuriken," in a historical one).
*Skills:* Karate; Thrown Weapon (Knife).

## Sojutsu

**3 points**

Sojutsu, also known as *Yarijutsu,* is the Japanese art of spear fighting. While samurai are popularly associated with swords, many preferred the spear for warfare – mainly because of its reach advantage and effectiveness against mounted foes. Historically, the spear played a very important battlefield role.

Sojutsu deals primarily with using the spear for stabbing. It includes some training at wielding the spear as a staff, but warriors who wish to make extensive use of such tactics should consider studying Bojutsu (p. 192) as well. Sojutsu schools hardly ever teach spear throwing: few *bushi* carry multiple spears, and throwing away one's primary weapon is foolhardy at best!

*Sojutsuka* (Sojutsu fighters) use their spear's length to keep the enemy at bay, holding their weapon two-handed and usually at maximum reach. Stylists circle, using Wait and Evaluate to look for an opening to exploit, or Feint to create one. When they strike, they go for a lethal thrust to the vitals, neck, or (especially against an armored foe) face. They often use Committed Attack (Strong) to penetrate armor and ensure an incapacitating hit.

Cinematic Sojutsuka are known for their fierce battle cries and armor-cracking strikes. They can even launch a Whirlwind Attack, attacking multiple adversaries with a Tip Slash (p. 113). This tends to be a last resort, since Tip Slash isn't especially damaging.

Some Japanese spears had hooks or even L-shaped spearheads designed for hooking and grabbing. Practitioners who use such weapons might learn Armed Grapple (Spear) and/or Hook (Spear).

*Skills:* Spear; Staff.

*Techniques:* Disarming (Spear); Feint (Spear); Retain Weapon (Spear); Sweep (Spear); Targeted Attack (Spear Thrust/Face); Targeted Attack (Spear Thrust/Neck); Targeted Attack (Spear Thrust/Vitals).

*Cinematic Skills:* Kiai; Mental Strength; Power Blow.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Defense (Spear); Whirlwind Attack (Spear).

*Perks:* Form Mastery (Spear); Grip Mastery (Spear); Off-Hand Weapon Training (Spear).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes.

*Disadvantages:* Code of Honor (Bushido).

*Skills:* Savoir-Faire (Dojo); Thrown Weapon (Spear).

*Techniques:* Armed Grapple (Spear); Hook (Spear).

## Sumo

**4 points**

Sumo is a form of traditional Japanese combat. Closely tied to the Shinto religion, it's as much a ceremony as a sporting event. It's also Japan's earliest unarmed martial art. It originally included all manner of hand strikes and kicks, and deaths occurred in the ring, but killing techniques were banned in the early 8th century. The sportive form originated in the Sengoku Jidai Era, and the *dohyo* (wrestling ring) came into use in 1578. Today, there are six *basho* (tournaments) each year, with one bout a day for 15 days.

Before Sumo became a ring-based sport, stylists – also known as *sumotori* or *rikishi* ("strong gentlemen") – trained samurai, acted as bodyguards, and fought in fairly brutal matches. Few techniques were barred. Victory was by submission.

In modern Sumo, matches are short and explosive. Sumotori square off in the ring and begin the match by mutual decision. Common tactics include throws (typically over the leg, a variation on Sweep), shoves, and slams. Feints are extremely important, and include fakes, simple ploys such as the *nekodamashi* ("cat confuser," a clap in the opponent's face), powerful slaps, and shifts of weight to trick one's rival into opening himself to fight-winning shoves. Contenders frequently use Committed Attack (Strong) or All-Out Attack (Strong) for a full-force shove – often after a Feint. The first fighter to touch the ground with anything other than the soles of his feet, or to contact the ground outside the ring, is the loser.

Sumotori train at "stables," where the daily routine consists of chores, Sumo practice, and eating gigantic amounts of high-protein, high-fat foods to gain weight. Great bulk isn't a requirement – young children, male and female, engage in the sport – but because Sumo has no weight classes, sheer size tends to influence a fighter's career. Simply put, a large man is harder to lift and shove. Strong sumotori *have* won bouts "simply" by lifting a smaller opponent and dropping him outside the ring!

Cinematic sumotori are like realistic ones, but more so – in every sense. They're even larger, stronger, and harder to move. Their massive bulk enhances their combat ability.

Sumo is most widely taught in Japan. It's easy to learn the basics and almost anyone can try to join a stable, but training is grueling and designed to weed out non-contenders. Schools do exist outside Japan – especially in Eastern Europe, Hawaii, and Mongolia – but those who want to "make it" must join a

### Sumo Traditions

Almost every aspect of Sumo contains elements of both ritual and sport. All fighters wear a uniform – a long, wrapped loincloth called a *mawashi* (sometimes decorated with tassels) – and variations aren't allowed. They must style their hair in a samurai's topknot, or *chonmage*. Low-ranking sumotori do each other's hair or that of their seniors; high-ranking ones sometimes have a professional stylist on their staff.

Before the fight begins, each contestant grabs a handful of salt and throws it to ritually purify the ring. Then they square off. When both feel prepared, they start the match. The fighters typically attempt to "psyche out" their rival first, and may return to their corners three or four times before they clash. It can take up to four minutes for high-ranking sumotori to begin a bout! (Low-ranking ones are expected to get on with it quickly . . .) Matches have no time limit, and range from seconds to minutes in length.

Sumo rankings depend on victories. Successful rikishi are voted up and down through five ranks. The top two ranks – *ozeki* and *yokozuna* (grand champion) – are most important. Ozeki who seek to become yokozuna must win at least two *basho* to merit consideration. Only those who show proper "spirit," dignity, and good technique receive the rank. Yokozuna is a status, not merely a title. Once a sumotori becomes yokozuna, he can't lose that rank! A fading yokozuna is expected to honorably and voluntarily retire to avoid bringing shame to the rank.

Japanese stable. Ranked competitors *must* be able to speak polite Japanese. All participants, including foreigners, use Japanese ring names that feature the first *kanji* of their trainer's name.

Sumo is purely a sport; no "self-defense" schools exist. However, the style favors size and strength, and its practice and tournaments are full-contact. These factors make Sumo *potentially* useful outside the ring if the stylist learns its optional skills and techniques.

*Skills:* Games (Sumo); Savoir-Faire (Dojo); Sumo Wrestling.

*Techniques:* Feint (Sumo Wrestling); Sweep (Sumo Wrestling); Trip.

*Cinematic Skills:* Immovable Stance; Power Blow.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Springing Attack (Sumo Wrestling).

*Perks:* Power Grappling; Special Exercises (DR 1 with Partial, Skull and Tough Skin); Special Exercises (HP can exceed ST by 100%).

### Optional Traits

*Secondary Characteristics:* Improved HP.

*Advantages:* Language (Japanese); Reputation (From fans).

*Disadvantages:* Fat or Very Fat; Gluttony.

*Skills:* Brawling; Intimidation; Judo; Karate.

*Techniques:* Hammer Fist; Low-Line Defense (Sumo Wrestling).

## Sword-and-Buckler Play

**5 points**

Sword-and-Buckler Play was a popular means of self-defense among the European nobility and bourgeoisie from about 1250 until the 16th century. It might have originated even earlier – Germanic and Viking warriors were known to wield the iron boss of a wooden shield like a buckler when the shield was hacked apart. The style seems to have been particularly fashionable with the urban upper classes, students, and clerics. Infantry, missile troops especially, studied it for protection when their formations were broken.

Sword-and-Buckler Play involved the broadsword, buckler, and unarmed strikes and grapples, and emphasized speed and mobility. Stylists faced their foe squarely with both sword and buckler, to keep him at arm's length. They used the sword aggressively to cut and thrust, the buckler to ward off blows and make shield bashes. Bucklers occasionally had sharp edges for *slashing,* too; see Chapter 6 for more on sharpened shield rims. A warrior who couldn't bring his sword and buckler into play would attempt kicks, punches, grapples, and takedowns. Sword-and-buckler fighters tended to fight defensively, using the Defensive Attack and Attack maneuvers until the enemy was at a disadvantage, then moving in with strong armed or unarmed attacks.

Few legends surround sword-and-buckler fighters. However, larger-than-life stylists could certainly exist in a cinematic campaign! Likely techniques are those that enhance fighting with two weapons at once.

While primarily a combative art, Sword-and-Buckler Play also had a sportive side. Fighters would sometimes put on public displays or engage in friendly competition. The style remained common across Europe until the 16th century, when fencing became more fashionable. Fencing with the buckler and rapier would continue for another century or so.

*Skills:* Brawling; Broadsword; Shield (Buckler); Wrestling.

*Techniques:* Arm Lock; Armed Grapple (Buckler); Bind Weapon (Broadsword); Counterattack (Broadsword); Disarming (Broadsword); Feint (Broadsword or Buckler); Kicking; Retain Weapon (Broadsword or Buckler); Trip.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Attack (Broadsword or Buckler); Dual-Weapon Defense (Broadsword or Buckler).

*Perks:* Skill Adaptation (Bind Weapon defaults to Broadsword); Special Setup (Brawling Parry > Arm Lock); Sure-footed (Uneven).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Enhanced Block.

*Disadvantages:* Overconfidence.

*Skills:* Fast-Draw (Sword); Knife; Rapier; Shield.

*Perks:* Weapon Bond.

## Sword-and-Shield Fighting

**4 points**

Sword-and-Shield Fighting was the art of using the broadsword and shield in combat. It likely originated in the Dark Ages, although conclusive evidence is scanty. Its heyday was the early Middle Ages, but it survived – even thrived – well into the Renaissance. The Spanish used sword-and-shield troops until the 16th century, and the style vanished from the battlefield only after the spread of firearms rendered the shield obsolete.

Unlike bucklers, shields were distinctly military in character. Civilians rarely carried them. After 1350, the shield was primarily a tool of the infantry in Europe. Fighters used shields of all sizes – from small to large – made of metal, wood, and leather. Some even sported sharp spikes!

Sword-and-Shield Fighting required lots of room. It stressed footwork, darting strikes, and fighting at arm's length. Stylists held the shield forward to repulse enemies, and used more blocks than parries. They learned some wrestling moves but largely avoided close combat (unlike practitioners of Sword-and-Buckler Play).

The sword-and-shield fighter circled his foe and used Wait and Evaluate to seek an opening, or a Beat (pp. 100-101) with his shield to create one. He often attacked by rushing in, striking, and pulling back quickly. Treat this as a Committed Attack (Determined) with two steps – one in, one out. He might instead launch a Defensive Attack in the form of a jabbing thrust to a vulnerable location. If his attacker left himself open on the offensive, the stylist punished him with the Counterattack technique. If his enemy pressed the attack, the sword-and-shield man responded with All-Out Defense (Increased Block), and used retreats to open the gap. When things got *too* close, he made aggressive use of his shield – both to shove his opponent back to arm's length and to bash him.

### *Tae Kwon Do Ranks*

Tae Kwon Do (see below) denotes rank using a series of colored belts, just like the Japanese arts from which it took its ranking system. It uses 10 *gup* ranks and 10 *dan* ranks. Belt colors are: white (10th gup), yellow (8th gup), green (6th gup), blue (4th gup), red (2nd gup), and black (1st through 10th dan). Odd-numbered gup ranks use a belt of the previous rank's color with a stripe of the next rank's color; e.g., a 7th gup wears a yellow belt with a green stripe.

Not all schools use this traditional ranking system. Many have adopted a wide variety of belt colors to denote different ranks, adding solid colors such as purple and orange to denote odd-numbered gups. Some add more intermediate stripes between belts to allow for steady progress through small promotions.

There are no tales of "cinematic" sword-and-shield fighters. The GM should certainly allow them, though, and a few techniques are very appropriate for the style.

Modern reenactors – in particular the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA) – have worked hard to recreate this style. Use the style as written, replacing combat skills with Combat Sport skills. For live-steel reenactors, even this change is unnecessary.

*Skills:* Broadsword; Shield; Wrestling.
*Techniques:* Counterattack (Broadsword); Feint (Broadsword or Shield).
*Cinematic Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Attack (Broadsword or Shield); Dual-Weapon Defense (Broadsword or Shield); Flying Lunge (Broadsword).
*Perks:* Shield-Wall Training; Sure-Footed (Uneven).

**Optional Traits**

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes; Enhanced Block; Enhanced Dodge.
*Disadvantages:* Duty.
*Skills:* Acrobatics; Brawling; Knife.

## Tae Kwon Do

**5 points**

Tae Kwon Do (Korean for "hand-foot way") traces its lineage through several Korean martial arts back to 500 A.D. – or earlier, by some accounts. Its official founding was in 1955, however. While it's descended from combative arts, it's largely a sport form, like modern Karate. Indeed, it borrowed some *kata* (later removed and replaced with native forms) and the use of colored belts from that art. There are schools that teach Tae Kwon Do for self-defense rather than for competition, though; these feature full-contact matches (with padded armor) and intense training.

Tae Kwon Do emphasizes striking, especially the power, speed, and utility of *kicking.* Stylists use all manners of kicks – particularly high kicks aimed at the head, since these score the most in competition. They even practice a kick thrown after a 540° spin; treat this as the All-Out Attack version of Spinning Kick (pp. 79-80). Tae Kwon Do also teaches punches – including spear-hand and ridge-hand strikes – but considers them secondary. Schools that teach self-defense versions of the art put punches on a more equal footing with kicks.

In competitive Tae Kwon Do, punches score only if they strike the chest. Kicks must hit the opponent at waist level or higher. Spectacular high kicks rack up the most points and offer the possibility of a knockout victory. Stylists also show off breaking techniques to demonstrate strength. Instructors and judges expect advanced practitioners to be able to break boards or concrete with *all* punching and kicking techniques.

Tae Kwon Do is widespread – particularly in the U.S., where it was introduced a year after it was founded – and it's easy to find a teacher. Many "karate" schools actually teach a form of Tae Kwon Do! Tae Kwon Do was a featured demonstration sport at the 1988 Olympic Games and became a full-fledged Olympic sport at the 2000 Games.

*Skills:* Jumping; Karate; Karate Sport; Savoir-Faire (Dojo).
*Techniques:* Axe Kick; Back Kick; Elbow Strike; Exotic Hand Strike; Jump Kick; Kicking; Spinning Kick; Spinning Punch; Sweep (Karate).
*Cinematic Skills:* Breaking Blow; Flying Leap; Power Blow.
*Cinematic Techniques:* Flying Jump Kick.
*Perks:* Rapid Retraction (Kicks); Technique Mastery (Any kicking technique); Unusual Training (Breaking Blow, Only vs. well-braced objects out of combat).

**Optional Traits**

*Advantages:* Fit.
*Disadvantages:* Overconfidence; Reputation (Aims kicks high).
*Skills:* Acrobatics; Games (Tae Kwon Do).

## T'ai Chi Chuan

**6 points**

T'ai Chi Chuan – literally "supreme ultimate fist," but in fact named after the famous yin/yang diagram – is an art intended for combat and self-defense. It seems to have originated in 17th-century China, but it's based on much older principles. The GM could reasonably include T'ai Chi Chuan in a historical game set centuries or even *millennia* before the 17th century. Modern gamers should know that while this style is the ancestor of the T'ai Chi system practiced for health and spiritual reasons today, the two *aren't* identical; see *T'ai Chi* (p. 201).

T'ai Chi Chuan is an internal art based on *qigong* breathing techniques, chi flow, and balance. The practitioner creates a "root," or point of balance, and uses this to launch and resist attacks. Punches often employ the palm or a loose fist; stylists use the Hammer Fist technique extensively. Kicks are generally low-line and regularly accompanied by a fake strike to distract – a Deceptive Attack.

The primary basis of T'ai Chi Chuan practice is a single form that contains *all* of the art's techniques, done slowly and with relaxation. In combat, the martial artist uses the same methods at full force. T'ai Chi Chuan includes "push-hands" practice. Practitioners stand face-to-face and try to push over their opponent or draw him into pushing against a sudden

lack of resistance, thereby throwing or tripping him. This helps train stylists at balance and at knocking over foes with a shove.

In combat, the T'ai Chi Chuan fighter normally takes Wait maneuvers, lets his foe attack first, and makes good use of Stop Hit (p. 108) and Riposte (pp. 124-125). He wards off his assailant with parries, then grabs him and applies a lock. Typical follow-ups to locks are throws, takedowns, and strikes. The stylist might instead use a shove to take down an off-balance opponent or to set up an adversary for a low-line kick, punch, or throw. All-Out and Committed Attacks are rare.

Cinematic T'ai Chi Chuan is especially powerful. This is mainly due to its emphasis on chi abilities. The GM should allow cinematic stylists to replace Sumo Wrestling with Push on the style's skill list.

Traditional T'ai Chi Chuan includes weapon forms for the *dao, jian,* spear, and staff. Some schools add the combat fan and slashing wheel. Like the art's unarmed forms, its weapon techniques are smooth, flowing, and deceptively relaxed. Most modern schools teach Combat Art versions of weapon skills, when they offer them at all.

*Skills:* Breath Control; Judo; Judo Art; Karate; Sumo Wrestling.
*Techniques:* Arm Lock; Hammer Fist; Sweep (Judo, Karate, or Sumo Wrestling).
*Cinematic Skills:* Immovable Stance; Mental Strength; Pressure Points; Pressure Secrets; Push.
*Cinematic Techniques:* Pressure-Point Strike; Roll with Blow.
*Perks:* Unusual Training (Push, May not step or move while doing so).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Forceful Chi; Inner Balance; Perfect Balance.
*Skills:* Autohypnosis; Broadsword; Broadsword Art; Knife; Knife Art; Meditation; Savoir-Faire (Dojo); Spear; Spear Art; Staff; Staff Art.
*Techniques:* Push Kick.

## *T'ai Chi*

**2 points**

T'ai Chi is a meditative version of T'ai Chi Chuan (pp. 200-201). T'ai Chi practitioners – unlike T'ai Chi Chuan stylists – throw all strikes completely without force and rarely if ever practice against an opponent. Such training imparts no effective striking ability. Few schools offer push-hands practice. Weapons training, if any, teaches Combat Art skills exclusively.

*Skills:* Judo Art.
*Cinematic Skills:* Immovable Stance; Push.
*Cinematic Techniques:* Roll with Blow.

### Optional Traits

*Skills:* Autohypnosis; Breath Control; Broadsword Art; Knife Art; Meditation; Savoir-Faire (Dojo); Spear Art; Staff Art.

# Taihojutsu

**6 points**

Japan's Tokugawa period was an era of growing state control. Police were called on to rein in unruly ronin and samurai, who were often armed and sometimes dangerous. In the capital, Edo, this led to a larger police force trained in refined tactics for capturing criminals. Foremost among their methods was *Taihojutsu,* a martial art aimed at quickly disarming a resisting adversary and rendering him helpless without causing permanent injury or death.

Taihojutsu's signature weapon was the *jutte,* which was capable of parrying swords, disarming, and striking without inflicting bloody cuts like a sword would. The jutte was so closely identified with Taihojutsu that it became as much a symbol of authority as a weapon. Other Taihojutsu weapons included the *kusarijutte, sasumata,* and *sodegarami* ("sleeve catcher"). Chain- and truncheon-type weapons were popular because they were difficult if not impossible for a sword to break, and could disarm a sword-wielding foe. For more on these weapons, see Chapter 6.

The goal of Taihojutsu was to disable or capture the opponent *without* causing serious harm. Almost anything that accomplished this was acceptable. For instance, Taihojutsu-trained officers occasionally carried *metsubushi* (p. 220) and used them to blow blinding powder in the target's face to make him easier to apprehend. Training also emphasized group tactics – officers worked in pairs or in small teams to surround a suspect, rapidly disarm him, and tie him up. Because of this emphasis on capture, Defensive Attacks and such techniques as Disarming and Targeted Attacks on limbs were common. Grapples tended to be a prelude to a takedown or an Arm Lock.

Taihojutsu included *Hojojutsu:* the art of tying up suspects with rope (frequently using elaborate knots). This usually followed a pin or an Arm Lock that prevented the detainee from resisting effectively. Cinematic practitioners can use the Binding technique to truss opponents in combat *without* restraining them first!

Taihojutsu was unique to Tokugawa-era Japan. The style is extinct today, although some of its component weapon skills remain. See *Styles for Cops* (p. 145) for notes on *modern* police styles.

*Skills:* Jitte/Sai; Judo; Knot-Tying; Kusari; Staff.
*Techniques:* Bind Weapon (Jitte/Sai); Disarming (Jitte/Sai or Kusari); Entangle (Kusari); Hook (Staff); Targeted Attack (Jitte/Sai Swing/Arm); Targeted Attack (Kusari Swing/Arm).
*Cinematic Skills:* Mental Strength; Pressure Points.
*Cinematic Techniques:* Binding; Pressure-Point Strike; Snap Weapon (Jitte/Sai).
*Perks:* Form Mastery (Kusarijutte); Style Adaptation (Kusarijutsu); Teamwork (Taihojutsu); Technique Adaptation (Disarming).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Enhanced Parry (Jitte/Sai).
*Disadvantages:* Duty; Sense of Duty (Innocent Civilians).
*Skills:* Blowpipe; Polearm.
*Perks:* Weapon Bond, usually to a jutte.

## Ninja and Ninjutsu

The Japanese characters that form the word "ninja" mean "one who endures." An alternative reading is "the art of invisibility." In some times and places, ninja were also known as *shinobi.*

*Ninjutsu* (occasionally spelled *Ninjitsu*) is a term for the entire collection of arts practiced by ninja. Among other things, these include disguise, climbing, evasion, spying, and armed and unarmed combat. *Taijutsu* (see right) describes a particular set of combat skills.

### *Ninja Weapons*

Few of the weapons popularly associated with ninja were uniquely "ninja weapons." For instance, Tokugawa-era police used the *metsubushi* (a kind of blowpipe) to distract suspects; samurai carried the *kusarigama* and *shuriken* as backup weapons; and the *tonfa, sai,* and *nunchaku* belonged to the Okinawan art of Kobujutsu (p. 178). Ninja generally favored the weapons of the samurai. This isn't surprising – these weapons were readily available and would make it easier to blend in while disguised, and the ninja would be schooled in their use, because many (perhaps most or all) ninja were in fact members of samurai clans.

Ninja might have used more hidden and combination weapons than most people, though, as backup weapons or surprise tactics. An "unarmed" spy could conceal several deadly (or at least distracting) secrets! The poisoned weapons frequently suggested for ninja are unlikely, however – such things tend to be as dangerous to the user as to the victim. Like modern assassins, ninja probably knew that food was the best vehicle for poison.

### *Ninja Characters*

Every ninja ought to know Taijutsu (see above). A historical ninja will practice one or more Japanese weapon styles as well; e.g., Kenjutsu (pp. 173-175), Kusarijutsu (p. 179), Kusarigamajutsu (p. 180), or Shurikenjutsu (pp. 195-197). Cinematic ninja should further add Kobujutsu (p. 178) – to use so-called "ninja weapons" from Okinawa! For suitable ninja templates, see *Assassin* (pp. 31-32) and *Spy* (p. 38).

Realistic ninja should equip themselves as described above. Cinematic ones might wear a "ninja suit" (the infamous hooded black outfit, which *isn't* historical; see *The Ninja,* p. 13) or other martial-arts costume. Some might include firearms in their arsenal – especially comic-book super-ninja.

### *Ninja vs. Ninjas*

In ***Martial Arts,*** we follow accepted English usage and use "ninja" for both the singular and the plural. However, many people prefer "ninjas" for the plural – and this seems somehow more appropriate for a cinematic game. When playing fast and loose with equipment and fighting styles, why fret over the English word for a Japanese concept? The true master of deception knows there's power in names and *wants* people to get such things wrong!

## Taijutsu

**6 points**

Taijutsu ("body combat art") is the striking and grappling art of the ninja. This term *isn't* synonymous with *Ninjutsu.* "Ninjutsu" encompasses all of the ninja's skills – not just Taijutsu but also training at stealth, subterfuge, and deception, and a number of other armed and unarmed styles. These additional elements have nothing to do with Taijutsu!

Taijutsu has three main components, taught together and given equal emphasis:

1. Falling, tumbling, and acrobatics.
2. Striking, kicking, and breaking.
3. Grappling and joint locking.

Stylists use speed, flexibility, and quick movement to defend themselves and defeat their opponents. They remain mobile and seek to avoid a static fight. To accomplish this, the ninja makes regular use of Evade to skirt foes and Acrobatic Dodge to avoid attacks.

Taijutsu punches use both closed fists and Exotic Hand Strikes (finger strike, spear-hand, *shuto,* etc.). Kicks primarily connect with the heel, the ball of the foot, or the top of the foot. Preferred targets for all types of strikes are the groin, vitals, neck, and eyes, as Taijutsu aims to disable the enemy quickly. Deceptive Attacks that rely on sheer speed or changes of target are common. Conversely, Telegraphic Attacks (p. 113) are rare.

After weakening his opponent with strikes, the Taijutsu practitioner either piles on *more* blows or moves in with a grapple followed by a throw or a takedown. Once his foe is down, he may deliver a finishing strike, apply an Arm Lock to achieve submission, or follow his victim to the ground for a pin. Advanced students sometimes learn further ground techniques, but the art is primarily stand-up.

Modern Taijutsu schools teach a large number of weapons that would be part of other jutsu in historical times. Such training typically starts within the first few belts, although some schools reserve weapons for black belts. Weapons include the *hanbo, jo, katana,* knife, *kusari, naginata, ninja-to, shuriken,* spear, staff, and even the *tessen* (combat fan); see Chapter 6 for details. All of these skills are optional, but it's unusual to learn Taijutsu without learning weapons. Some even say that the entire goal of Taijutsu is to learn to use anything as a weapon – whether it's built for the purpose or improvised. Stylists use the footwork, tactics, and hand motions of unarmed Taijutsu when armed, and learn to regard a weapon as an enhancement to the body's natural weapons, not a replacement for them.

Cinematic Taijutsu stylists are ninja in the grand folkloric tradition. They have access to a huge body of cinematic abilities. They can move without being seen, control bodily functions, walk without sound, and fight blindfolded. Their strikes are lethal, silent, and almost unstoppable. Tales of the ninja credit them with virtually every feat in martial-arts myth. Hollywood-style ninja frequently master Kobujutsu weapons, too – indeed, skill with the *nunchaku, sai,* and *tonfa* is practically required!

Modern Taijutsu schools do exist, and practitioners are called "ninja." Some teach a reinvented form of Ninjutsu – complete with stealth training, costumes, and nunchaku. Others focus almost exclusively on Taijutsu. Currently, there's only one certified Grand Master of Taijutsu, who heads three schools of *Ninpo* (Ninjutsu) and six other martial-arts schools amalgamated into a single *budo ryu.* These schools use the standard 10 *kyu* and 10 *dan* ranks, although a few have 15 dan ranks. Students do partner drills, perform *kata* (sometimes modified by broken rhythms and improvised techniques), and wear *gi.*

Historical ninja would learn a combat style nearly identical to this. As noted above, they would acquire their weapon skills separately. They should study styles for primary weapons (such as the katana, *wakizashi,* and spear) and backup weapons (such as the shuriken and kusari). For more about ninja, see *Ninja and Ninjutsu* (p. 202).

*Skills:* Acrobatics; Judo; Karate; Karate Art; Savoir-Faire (Dojo).

*Techniques:* Acrobatic Stand; Arm Lock; Breakfall (Acrobatics or Judo); Choke Hold; Ear Clap; Elbow Strike; Evade (Acrobatics or Judo); Exotic Hand Strike; Eye-Poke; Feint (Karate); Kicking; Knee Strike; Targeted Attack (Karate Exotic Hand Strike/Neck); Targeted Attack (Karate Kick/Groin); Targeted Attack (Karate Punch/Neck).

*Cinematic Skills:* Blind Fighting; Body Control; Breaking Blow; Flying Leap; Hypnotic Hands; Invisibility Art; Light Walk; Lizard Climb; Mental Strength; Power Blow; Pressure Points; Pressure Secrets; Sensitivity; Throwing Art.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Eye-Pluck; Hand-Clap Parry; Lethal Eye-Poke; Lethal Kick; Lethal Strike; Pressure-Point Strike; Roll with Blow; Timed Defense.

*Perks:* Acrobatic Feints; Improvised Weapons (Any); Style Adaptation (Any Japanese armed style); Technique Adaptation (Feint); Unusual Training (Sensitivity, Only while at least one hand is in physical contact with the opponent).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Enhanced Dodge; Language (Japanese).

*Disadvantages:* Delusions; Overconfidence; Reputation (Silly ninja wannabe).

*Skills:* Jumping; Knife; Kusari; Polearm; Shortsword; Shuriken; Spear; Staff; Two-Handed Sword; any weapon skill under *Kobujutsu* (p. 178).

*Techniques:* Ground Fighting (Judo).

## Wing Chun

**4 points**

Wing Chun is a combative martial art native to southern China. According to legend, it was founded in the early 18th century. After the destruction of the Shaolin Temple, a nun named Ng Mui fled south. She met Yim Wing Chun, a shopkeeper's daughter, and taught her Shaolin boxing. Yim added techniques and went on to teach her style to her husband, who named it after her. Variations on this story have Yim learning the style to defeat a bullying general who wished to take her as his concubine.

Wing Chun's actual origins seem to be more prosaic. The style appears to have coalesced out of fighting techniques used in southern China – particularly by boatmen. References to fighters using forms and technique names unique to Wing Chun suggest that its history extends back more than a century before its legendary founding.

There are several schools of Wing Chun. The most common variation today is that of the Yip family, who have taught Wing Chun for centuries. The art's most famous student, Bruce Lee (pp. 24-25), was a student of Yip Man.

Wing Chun is notably short on ceremony and ritual. It traditionally lacks ranks and bowing, and has only three forms. The style focuses on a small set of widely applicable tools and stresses practicing these until they come naturally in combat. The emphasis is on close-range fighting – short punches, low-line defensive kicks, soft parries, and standing locks. Its characteristic stance is slightly backward-leaning, with the feet set side-by-side. Wing Chun includes two weapons: the butterfly sword, used in pairs, and the staff, used like a two-handed sword to make wide swinging attacks.

Fundamental to Wing Chun are the concepts of the centerline, an imaginary line drawn down the center of the practitioner's body, and the six "gates" (high, middle, and low, on either side of the centerline), which are openings to attack from or through. Stylists learn to keep their centerline pointed at the foe while staying off his, minimizing his ability to strike while maximizing their own effectiveness. Another key aspect of the art is *chi sao,* or "sticking hands": feeling an opponent's shifts of balance or focus in order to respond with a parry and counterattack, or to trap his limbs. Students sometimes practice chi sao blindfolded to increase sensitivity.

Wing Chun expects the practitioner to seize the initiative and steamroll his adversary with rapid attacks. The Wing Chun fighter uses "chain punches" – strings of Defensive Attacks, often thrown as Rapid Strikes – to keep the foe off-balance. Kicks frequently target the legs and tend to be Defensive Attacks as well. The stylist meets the *enemy's* kicks with a Jam. If using Combinations (p. 80), Combination (Karate Punch/Torso + Karate Kick/Leg) is common among stylists. This sometimes follows a parry that drags down the opponent's guard to open him up for the combo; model this as a Counterattack. The fighter continues to attack like this until he stuns or weakens his victim, then uses strikes – likely in combination with a lock – to finish him.

Cinematic Wing Chun stylists are extremely powerful. They can sense enemy attacks using Sensitivity and use their chi to root themselves in place. Their unarmed strikes are especially lethal, aimed at pressure points or vital locations to paralyze or kill.

Wing Chun is widespread. Finding a teacher isn't difficult. Some schools use a formal ranking system of colored sashes; others have no ranking system at all.

*Skills:* Karate; Shortsword; Wrestling.

*Techniques:* Arm Lock; Close Combat (Shortsword); Counterattack (Karate or Shortsword); Elbow Strike; Feint (Karate or Shortsword); Jam; Knee Strike; Stamp Kick; Targeted Attack (Karate Kick/Leg).

*Cinematic Skills:* Blind Fighting; Immovable Stance; Mental Strength; Power Blow; Pressure Points; Pressure Secrets; Sensitivity.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Attack (Shortsword); Dual-Weapon Defense (Karate or Shortsword); Lethal Eye-Poke; Lethal Strike; Pressure-Point Strike.

*Perks:* Off-Hand Weapon Training (Shortsword); Special Setup (Karate Parry > Arm Lock); Technique Adaptation (Counterattack); Unusual Training (Sensitivity, Only while at least one hand is in physical contact with the opponent).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Ambidexterity; Enhanced Parry (Bare Hands or All); Inner Balance; Language (Cantonese).

*Disadvantages:* Overconfidence.

*Skills:* Knife; Savoir-Faire (Dojo); Staff; Two-Handed Sword.

*Techniques:* Leg Grapple.

*Perks:* Off-Hand Weapon Training (Knife).

# Wrestling

Wrestling, in one form or another, is the world's oldest martial art. Humans (and their ancestors) have wrestled since long before recorded history. Almost every culture – not just those known for their martial arts – has *some* form of wrestling, whether for sport or for combat. This includes Asian countries renowned today for their striking styles, such as China. Below is a *tiny* sampling of important wrestling styles, selected for their utility in ***GURPS*** campaigns in general and ***Martial Arts*** games in particular.

## *Combat Wrestling*

**4 points**

Combat Wrestling – sometimes known as "all-in fighting" – was a pragmatic combat art. Knights, fencers, and other professional armsmen routinely learned it to supplement their armed skills. It had neither rules nor a sense of fair play. All holds were "legal," and any tactic that could damage, dismay, or disable the enemy was considered good.

Combat Wrestling was common at least as far back as the Middle Ages. It continued well into the Renaissance; indeed, many fencing masters felt obliged to include a section on wrestling techniques in their manuals to demonstrate that their knowledge of fighting was complete. Many such manuals survive today. Their depiction of fighters armed with swords and fencing weapons choking, punching, and tripping one another puts the lie to the modern ideal of the "gentlemanly" fencer.

Stylists learned to reach cautiously and wait for their opponent to make a mistake. They used Wait and Evaluate extensively. Attacks took the form of grapples and strikes calculated to disable the foe quickly: standing grappling techniques such as Arm Lock and Finger Lock; limb wrenches; and incapacitating blows aimed at the eyes, groin, jaw, nose, and neck. Most Combat Wrestling styles assumed a battlefield or a street brawl as the setting, so ground-fighting tactics were rare. The first priority of a fighter on the ground was to *get up!*

The masters emphasized the importance of strength to wrestling, but they also knew that muscle alone wasn't always enough to win a grappling contest. They taught counters against armed assailants and expected students to be able to fight both armed and unarmed. A few even taught techniques for kicking weapons (especially knives) out of an attacker's hand.

Combat Wrestling assumed an armed and often armored adversary, so it emphasized grapples and throws over strikes. Thus, striking techniques weren't as a rule especially advanced. Some masters were dangerous and notable exceptions, however.

Cinematic wrestlers should be strong, although there are period illustrations that show a wrinkled old man cheerfully demolishing his strapping young opponent. Fighters learned the body's vital areas and strikes to target them, which could justify the Pressure Points skill. Many other cinematic feats fit the style. One manual even showed how to parry weapon attacks while seated!

This style, with slight variations, works for no-holds-barred wrestling worldwide – be it in China, the Caucasus, the Middle East, or Sub-Saharan Africa. Historical heroes should have no trouble finding a master in almost *any* place or period.

*Skills:* Brawling; Judo; Wrestling.
*Techniques:* Arm Lock; Breakfall; Choke Hold; Disarming (Brawling, Judo, or Wrestling); Elbow Strike; Eye-Gouging; Eye-Rake; Finger Lock; Hammer Fist; Head Lock; Knee Drop; Knee Strike; Neck Snap; Sweep (Judo); Targeted Attack (Brawling Kick/Groin); Targeted Attack (Brawling Punch/Face); Wrench (Limb); Wrench Spine.
*Cinematic Skills:* Immovable Stance; Mental Strength; Pressure Points.
*Cinematic Techniques:* Backbreaker; Fighting While Seated (Judo); Pressure-Point Strike.
*Perks:* Special Exercises (Lifting ST +1).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes; Fit or Very Fit.
*Disadvantages:* Bloodlust; Bully; Overconfidence.
*Skills:* Karate.
*Techniques:* Elbow Drop; Ground Fighting (Judo or Wrestling); Kicking; Stamp Kick.

## *Greco-Roman Wrestling*

**3 points**

The sport wrestling we know today traces its origins to the ancient Olympic Games. Modern Greco-Roman Wrestling is a safer, less-extreme version of those early matches. The sport still demands great skill, fortitude, and fitness of its competitors, however.

The rules of sport wrestling put the athletes' safety first, and replace techniques liable to cause actual injury with safer moves. For instance, they allow head locks – but only if the attacker loops one of the defender's arms into the lock, too. This reduces the odds of the lock inflicting neck injury . . . and renders it less effective in combat or a no-holds-barred match. Despite this, collegiate wrestlers *have* successfully made the leap to mixed martial arts and more combative forms of wrestling. In game terms, they simply improve Wrestling from their Wrestling Sport default and add the striking skills necessary to compete.

Greco-Roman wrestlers are highly mobile. If one technique fails, they quickly switch to another. They respond to their rival's movement and reactions, exploiting any opening to go for a pin, lock, or reversal (breaking free of a hold and applying one of their own). Wrestlers use Beats (pp. 100-101) to physically overpower their opponent's guard, and feints – such as weight shifts and fakes – to create offensive opportunities. The art prizes skill over strength, but strong wrestlers have a definite advantage. In a match, competitors receive points for successful techniques, even if they don't force a submission. Bouts are timed, and point totals determine the winner when the time runs out.

Greco-Roman Wrestling is an Olympic sport, practiced worldwide. In the U.S., almost every high school or college has a wrestling team. Thus, it's exceptionally easy to find training. Wrestlers train hard and coaches expect them to be fit and strong. The GM may *require* competitive wrestlers to take the Fit advantage. High ST is also common.

*Skills:* Games (Wrestling); Wrestling Sport.
*Techniques:* Arm Lock; Feint (Wrestling Sport); Low Fighting (Wrestling Sport).
*Perks:* Power Grappling; Special Exercises (Lifting ST +1).

### Optional Traits

*Secondary Characteristics:* Improved FP.
*Advantages:* Fit or Very Fit.
*Disadvantages:* Obsession (Make and maintain weight).
*Skills:* Lifting; Savoir-Faire (Gym); Wrestling.

## *Submission Wrestling*

**3 points**

Submission Wrestling is a form of modern wrestling similar in character to mixed martial arts, but without striking. The goal is to force the opponent to submit using locks or chokes. Wrestlers score points for throws, positions, and holds. Matches that last the allotted time without a submission are decided on points. A major championship held annually by the Abu Dhabi Combat Club attracts competitive wrestlers worldwide.

*Skills:* Games (Submission Wrestling); Wrestling.
*Techniques:* Arm Lock; Choke Hold; Ground Fighting (Wrestling); Leg Lock; Low Fighting (Wrestling); Lower-Body Arm Lock; Lower-Body Leg Lock; Triangle Choke; Trip.
*Perks:* Power Grappling; Special Exercises (Lifting ST +1); Technique Adaptation (Ground Fighting).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Fit or Very Fit; Hard to Subdue.

## *Indian Wrestling*

**4 points**

India has a long tradition of wrestling. According to myth, the gods taught the art to a mortal so that he could defeat a demon. Its actual origins are untraceable, as they date to prehistory. Wrestling was common in India from the time of the earliest written records, though, and is still popular today.

Indian wrestlers strive for massive size. The ideal is solid slabs of muscle – not the sheer weight favored by Japan's *sumotori*. The sport depends on submissions and pins, which limits the value of mass for its own sake.

Wrestlers rise as early as 3 a.m. to exercise, and do *dands* ("cat stretch" pushups) and *baithaks* (deep knee bends) to build endurance and strength. They always do these exercises in a 1:2 ratio, and each exercise has its own routine. They spend the whole day alternately wrestling, exercising, and undergoing massages to prepare their muscles for more work. Medieval wrestlers ate meat; modern ones eat great quantities of almonds, milk, and *ghee* (clarified butter) to fuel their activities. Wrestlers are expected to be celibate, patriotic, and stoic.

Like other sport wrestling, Indian Wrestling emphasizes pins and holds. Its trademark tactic is the steady, patient application of technique and pressure to force the opponent to submit. Otherwise, it largely resembles Greco-Roman Wrestling (p. 205) in execution.

Wrestlers traditionally work out with the *gada,* or two-handed mace. They often pose for pictures holding it but rarely learn to fight with it. In a historical or cinematic game, it might see more use as a weapon.

Cinematic Indian wrestlers should be incredibly strong. Like Hindu *yogi,* they might be capable of feats of body control. Their self-denial in terms of sex, food, and luxuries is seen as instrumental in developing internal energy to project during bouts.

*Skills:* Savoir-Faire (Dojo); Wrestling; Wrestling Sport.

*Techniques:* Arm Lock; Ground Fighting (Wrestling); Low Fighting (Wrestling).

*Cinematic Skills:* Body Control; Immovable Stance; Light Walk; Mental Strength; Pressure Points.

*Perks:* Special Exercises (FP can exceed HT by 50%); Special Exercises (Lifting ST +1).

### Optional Traits

*Secondary Characteristics:* Improved FP.

*Advantages:* Cultural Familiarity (India); Fit or Very Fit; Inner Balance.

*Disadvantages:* Overconfidence; Sense of Duty (India); Vows (Celibacy, Vegetarianism).

*Skills:* Two-Handed Axe/Mace; Two-Handed Axe/Mace Art.

## *Professional Wrestling*

**4 points**

Professional Wrestling, or "entertainment wrestling," has a worldwide following – from the U.S. to Japan, from Europe to South America. It encompasses everything from amateur "backyard" wrestling to the show-biz world of the professional federations. It's the style of television wrestlers, masked Mexican *luchadors* . . . and super-powered bricks.

Professional Wrestling revolves around spectacular or painful-*looking* techniques. It's an aggressive style, with competitors using grapples, takedowns, and hard strikes to send their opponent to the floor. Committed Attack (Strong) and All-Out Attack (Strong) are exceedingly common for strikes and takedowns!

There's some debate about the real-world effectiveness of Professional Wrestling. It *is* a performance, but many competitors are fit and *strong.* The techniques they exhibit – if performed "for real" – could do tremendous damage. However, "rivals" in the ring are really more like skilled accomplices who practice going along with each other's moves in order to increase the performance value and reduce the odds of injury. It's safe to assume that if a wrestler successfully pulled off one of these techniques in earnest, it would hurt – a lot.

Cinematic wrestlers can perform the art's many stunts *outside* the ring, on unwilling and uncooperative opponents. They're terrifically strong and capable of absorbing massive punishment without flinching (but not without dramatic superficial bleeding!). They should have high ST and HT, and advantages such as Hard to Subdue. Special skills – notably Power Blow, used for massive roundhouse punches and hoisting foes for Backbreakers and Piledrivers – rely not on chi but on "adrenaline surges" or theatrical effort. A high FP score is useful for fueling these skills and for extra effort. Cinematic techniques often *look* quite different from the way they do in other arts; for instance, Springing Attack involves leaning back against the cage or ropes enclosing the ring.

Would-be career wrestlers attend schools that cater to aspiring pros. Some of these gyms also teach actual combat skills, but the potential pro studies the *artistic* techniques necessary for crowd-pleasing wrestling. In addition to the skills required below, wrestlers often learn Stage Combat and Performance to look better in *and* out of the ring.

The GM decides how "realistic" Professional Wrestling is in his campaign. If he wants wrestlers to be more martial artists than performers, he should replace Combat Art skills with combat skills. The techniques below are also merely suggestions.

Pros – cinematic or otherwise – often have named signature moves. These range from useless techniques (p. 95) to everyday ones, even basic kicks and punches, with colorful names. The GM may allow Skill Adaptation perks that let *any* technique default to Wrestling Art; e.g., a "suplex" would be Skill Adaptation (Sacrifice Throw defaults to Wrestling Art). Each move requires its own perk, and because the default is to Wrestling Art, combat use is at -3. Most wrestlers use these as fight-ending "finishing moves."

*Skills:* Brawling Art; Wrestling Art; Wrestling Sport.

*Techniques:* Breakfall; Choke Hold; Drop Kick; Elbow Drop; Head Butt; Stamp Kick; Wrench (Limb).

*Cinematic Skills:* Breaking Blow; Power Blow.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Backbreaker; Hand Catch; Piledriver; Roll with Blow; Springing Attack (Brawling Art).

*Perks:* Shtick (Varies); Skill Adaptation (Varies); Special Exercises (DR 1 with Tough Skin); Unusual Training (Roll with Blow, Only on the spring-loaded ring floor or against the ropes).

### Optional Traits

*Secondary Characteristics:* Improved FP and HP.

*Advantages:* Ally (Tag-team partner); Charisma; Hard to Subdue; High Pain Threshold; Patron (Wrestling organization); Reputation (Good Guy, from fans).

*Disadvantages:* Fat; Gigantism; Reputation (Bad Guy, from fans); Reputation (Signature move).

*Skills:* Acrobatics; Brawling; Games (Professional Wrestling); Hobby Skill (Feats of Strength); Performance; Stage Combat; Two-Handed Axe/Mace (for chairs!); Wrestling.

*Techniques:* Arm Lock; Exotic Hand Strike; Hammer Fist; Head Lock; Neck Snap.

# Wushu

**6 points**

Wushu is the state-sponsored martial art of the People's Republic of China (PRC). In the 1950s, the PRC officially adopted the term "wushu" in place of "kung fu" to refer to *all* armed and unarmed fighting arts. These notes describe a specific style – *also* called "Wushu" – which the central sports committee created from Northern ("long") kung fu, Southern kung fu, T'ai Chi, and weapons training.

The Communist government saw traditional martial arts as reactionary and subversive – they couldn't forget the traditional links between anti-government secret societies and kung fu. The authorities also felt that the martial arts were worthless for modern combat but useful for cultural expression and encouraging fitness. Thus, when the central sports commission created its style, it replaced many combat-useful techniques with attractive moves that had no combat value. "Internal" techniques were eliminated as well, on the basis that they were superstitious and backward-looking.

After the Cultural Revolution ended in 1976, internal techniques started to reappear. At the end of the 1990s, full-contact matches known as *san shou* became increasingly common, giving rise to more combat-useful applications. Although Wushu training still produces mainly athletes and movie stars, some of its practitioners have been genuine fighters.

Wushu favors deep stances, long punches, and high kicks. It borrows some short strikes and tight stances from Southern styles, but they're less common. The art is both acrobatic and attractive, and stresses showy techniques and athleticism over practical applications. Weapons training typically involves blunt weapons and "thunder blades" designed to flash, bend, and make loud noises during demonstrations. Such training is extremely common in Wushu schools, but not required. Most Wushu-trained martial artists *should* learn at least one of the optional weapon skills listed for the style.

Wushu fighters typically use high kicks and multiple strikes. Single-strike techniques are less common than flurries of blows; thus, Rapid Strike and All-Out Attack (Double) are common. Wushu is also *aggressive,* thanks to its emphasis on flashy moves. Stylists routinely throw Jump Kicks and other Committed and All-Out Attacks. They use spinning strikes of all kinds, both when armed and when unarmed.

By design, Wushu eschews martial-arts myth. Nevertheless, thanks to exhibitions of showy techniques – and movies featuring Wushu-trained actors doing *wuxia* and wire stunts – many old legends remain and the style has even acquired a number of *new* ones. Cinematic Wushu practitioners should be able to perform most of the moves seen in kung fu movies, even those claiming to be about Wing Chun, the Shaolin Temple, T'ai Chi, or other arts. Many of the stars of these movies are Wushu stylists, not Shaolin monks or Wing Chun students! Thus, Wushu is ideal for high-powered *wuxia* campaigns.

Wushu is commonly available in the PRC. Schools are less common elsewhere, but a student should be able to find one if he looks hard enough. Some schools that claim to teach another form of kung fu – often Shaolin – teach strongly Wushu-derived styles.

*Skills:* Acrobatics; Jumping; Karate; Karate Art; Savoir-Faire (Dojo).

*Techniques:* Acrobatic Stand; Axe Kick; Back Kick; Evade; Exotic Hand Strike; Feint (Karate); Jump Kick; Kicking; Spinning Kick; Spinning Punch; Sweep (Karate).

*Cinematic Skills:* Breaking Blow; Flying Leap; Mental Strength; Power Blow; Pressure Points; Pressure Secrets.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Attack (Karate); Dual-Weapon Defense (Karate); Fighting While Seated (Karate); Flying Jump Kick; Lethal Kick; Lethal Strike; Pole-Vault Kick; Pressure-Point Strike; Roll with Blow; Springing Attack (Karate); Timed Defense.

*Perks:* Acrobatic Feints; Technique Adaptation (Spinning Attack); Technique Mastery (Any Spinning Attack); Unusual Training ("Split Kick": Dual-Weapon Attack, Only to kick two adjacent foes).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Cultural Familiarity (China); Fit or Very Fit; Flexibility; Language (Mandarin).

*Disadvantages:* Delusions; Obsession (Perfect my art).

*Skills:* Broadsword Art; Judo; Judo Art; Performance; Philosophy (Communism); Shortsword Art; Spear Art; Staff Art; Stage Combat; Two-Handed Flail Art; Whip Art.

*Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Attack (Shortsword Art); Flying Lunge (Any weapon Art); Sweep (Spear Art, Staff Art, or Two-Handed Flail Art); Whirlwind Attack (Any weapon Art).

# Fictional Styles

Fiction is full of imaginary martial arts. Some of these are similar to historical ones, even inspired by them. Others are radically different. In particular, if a world has magic, nonhuman races, or different physical laws, its fighting styles will reflect this. Below are a few examples. For additional notes, see *Designing Techniques for Nonhumans* (p. 95).

## Death Fist

**11 points**

Death Fist is the creation of a secretive guild of master Body Control wizards. It has since spread beyond their hidden mountain stronghold . . . but this hasn't diminished its fearsome reputation for destructive power!

Death Fist assumes that the wizard is fighting multiple and/or armed and armored opponents while unarmed. Some stylists also practice the staff as a means of extending their reach or countering armed foes. Such training is optional, however. The style's core techniques are meant to be effective when the mage lacks or is unable to use his staff.

Against armed foes, the style teaches its practitioners to avoid striking hard armor or having a hand parried by a weapon. Stylists prefer to cast a Melee spell and hold it ready while they Wait or Evaluate. They seek to lure the enemy into striking first so they can retaliate using the Arm Lock or Counterattack technique – plus their charged spell. They learn to commit fully and disguise their line of attack, and often combine Committed Attack (Determined) with Deceptive Attack. They rarely use Defensive Attack, however; they consider it a mark of trepidation and misplaced caution.

Against multiple opponents, stylists learn to grapple one foe and either use him as a shield against the rest or throw him to the ground to even the odds temporarily. Against a single adversary, they use similar tactics but usually favor a throw after unleashing their spell. This buys the time to cast another Melee spell without interruption!

Cinematic Death Fist stylists combine magic and chi abilities in a single, devastating package. They often learn many spells besides the few the style requires. Great Haste and Dexterity are particularly common, as they enhance the wizard's close-combat abilities and make it safer to charge in and use Deathtouch while unarmed.

Death Fist is extremely rare. The only way to get instruction is to join the guild in its secret fortress. The path is heavily trapped and guarded by strange beasts, and stylists roam the approaches looking for interlopers on whom to test their skills. Those who successfully evade these dangers must pass a magical and physical test. Failure means death. The GMs may wish to require an Unusual Background to reflect all of this.

*Skills:* Judo; Karate; and the spells Clumsiness, Deathtouch, Itch, Pain, Paralyze Limb, Resist Pain, Spasm, and Wither Limb.

*Techniques:* Arm Lock; Counterattack (Judo or Karate); Jump Kick; Targeted Attack (Judo Grapple/Arm); Targeted Attack (Judo Grapple/Leg).

*Cinematic Skills:* Body Control; Mental Strength; Pressure Points; Pressure Secrets; Sensitivity.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Roll with Blow.

*Perks:* Style Adaptation (Quarterstaff); Technique Adaptation (Counterattack).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes. Magery 2 is *required* to learn the spells and hence the style; additional Magery is common.

*Disadvantages:* Bloodlust; Overconfidence; Reputation (Member of a strange cult).

*Skills:* Acrobatics; Jumping; Staff; Thaumatology.

## Dragon-Man Kung Fu

**10 points**

Dragon-Man Kung Fu is the martial art of a secret order of heroes founded thousands of years ago to fight the Oni. These warriors bested the Oni in a terrible battle, but this merely forced the Oni to turn to stealth and disguise. The Oni use their magical powers to hide among men while they work their evil, their goal being to make the world more like their own by seeding disorder and chaos. To stop them, the acolytes of the Dragon Temple teach heroes their art . . . including the secret of breathing fire! Only flame can destroy an Oni permanently.

In unarmed combat, Dragon-Man Kung Fu disdains ground fighting and wrestling in favor of stylish kicks, hard punches, and stunning throws. Stylists prefer to fight armed, however. The most common weapon of the Green Dragon acolyte (novice) is the sword – usually the *jian* but occasionally the broadsword, *katana,* longsword, or paired butterfly swords. The staff and spear are popular, too. Attacks are often acrobatic and make good use of feints and Deceptive Attack. Against stunned or surprised opponents, practitioners like to shout a loud *kiai* or the name of their technique and launch an All-Out or Committed Attack, typically as a Telegraphic Attack (p. 113). No matter what the situation, Dragon-Man fighters make extensive use of *Acrobatic Movement* (pp. 105-107).

Dragon-Men are noted for twirling their weapon full-circle in a bloody overhead flourish after defeating a foe. Not all acolytes do this – especially if there's immediate danger from another enemy – but it's a signature move of the order. This can be extremely intimidating, especially when accompanied by a loud kiai!

To join the Dragon Temple, a would-be initiate must first find its secret location in the mountains. Next comes a lengthy apprenticeship spent both exercising and studying the order's philosophy and history. Candidates must demonstrate the highest standards of heroism and goodness – although there are rumors of a fallen acolyte who cooperates with (some say *leads*) the Oni.

Dragon-Men advance in rank as they hone their skills and demonstrate their heroism. The Temple has 10 ranks: Third through First Order Green Dragon, Third through First Order Red Dragon, Third through First Order Golden Dragon, and finally Grandmaster of Dragons, reserved for the eldest and wisest of the templars. Acolytes receive ritual tattoos indicating their standing. These start out small and simple, but get progressively more complex at higher ranks.

Stylists can emulate their totem beast in one important respect – they can channel their chi to *breathe fire.* This is a melee attack using the Innate Attack (Breath) skill. See "Breath of Dragon" under *Innate Attack* (p. 45) for details. Damage and point cost depend on rank:

*Green Dragon:* Burning Attack 1d (Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Melee Attack, Reach 1-4, Cannot Parry, -20%) [4]. *4 points.*

*Red Dragon:* As above, but with Burning Attack 2d. *8 points.*

*Golden Dragon:* As above, but with Burning Attack 4d. *15 points.*

The GM might also want to let high-ranking acolytes purchase other chi abilities that are uniquely tailored to them.

Dragon-Man Kung Fu is ideal for an anime-inspired fantasy campaign. It *might* suit a secret order in some modern "hidden magic" games, but it works best if the heroes have big eyes, small mouths, and gigantically oversized weapons. Trained by a Master and Code of Honor (Xia) are *required* to learn Dragon-Man Kung Fu. There is *no* realistic version!

*Skills:* Acrobatics; Breath Control; Innate Attack (Breath); Judo; Karate; Meditation; Philosophy (Dragon Temple); Rapier; and at least *one* of Smallsword, Spear, Staff, or Two-Handed Sword.

*Techniques:* Acrobatic Stand; Arm Lock; Axe Kick; Back Kick; Jump Kick; Kicking; Spinning Kick; Spinning Punch; Spinning Strike (Any).

*Cinematic Skills:* Breaking Blow; Flying Leap; Hypnotic Hands; Kiai; Lizard Climb; Mental Strength; Power Blow; Pressure Points; Pressure Secrets.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Attack (Any); Dual-Weapon Defense (Any); Flying Jump Kick; Flying Lunge (Any); Roll with Blow; Timed Defense.

*Perks:* Acrobatic Feints; Chi Resistance (Any); Form Mastery (Spear); Grip Mastery (Any); Shtick ("Dragon-Man Flourish": +4 to Intimidation on the turn after knocking down or killing a foe); Weapon Adaptation (Broadsword to Rapier); Weapon Adaptation (Shortsword to Smallsword).

### Optional Traits

*Secondary Characteristics:* Improved Basic Speed and FP.

*Advantages:* Detect (Oni); Enhanced Parry (All); Extra Attack (with Multi-Strike); Fit; Forceful Chi; Higher Purpose (Slay Oni); Reputation (Do-gooder); Weapon Master.

*Disadvantages:* Distinctive Features (Dragon-Man tattoo); Fanaticism; No Sense of Humor.

*Skills:* Esoteric Medicine; History (Dragon Temple); Jumping; Stealth; any weapon skills not mentioned above.

## Force-Swordsmanship

**5 points**

Force-Swordsmanship is the art of the superscience force sword (p. B272). In some game worlds, the force sword is the sidearm of the nobility; indeed, tradition or the law might *restrict* it to individuals with Status 2+. Young nobles swagger about with ornate weapons at their hips. They practice with low-powered training blades . . . but the real thing is fashionable for dueling (legal or not). This gives Force-Swordsmanship the character of fencing in 17th- and 18th-century Europe.

In other settings, anybody can *carry* a force sword but few truly know how to use it. Locating an instructor requires the sort of quest found in legends about the traditional martial arts. Unlocking the weapon's secrets takes a lifetime, and the few who master it command respect for their skill, dedication, and power. This imbues the art with a flavor closer that of cinematic kung fu.

The force-swordsman practices both aggressive attacks and careful defenses, for use in two different situations. If his foe lacks a force sword, he attacks strongly, exploiting his weapon's ability to destroy lesser arms when parrying or parried. Against a similar weapon, though, the stylist fights more defensively. He uses parries to stop force-sword strikes (and Parry Missile Weapons and Precognitive Parry to deflect beams and projectiles!) and dodges – especially Acrobatic Dodge – to get out of harm's way and into a better position from which to attack. In either circumstance, the standard grip is two-handed, although practitioners learn to fight one-handed and some wield *two* force swords simultaneously.

Force-swordsmen often attack their enemy's weapon. This is because most ordinary weapons can't resist their blade! This tactic carries over to force sword vs. force sword duels in the form of a Beat (pp. 100-101).

The most advanced students learn grappling techniques, but rarely use them except to counter another fighter's wrestling moves. Against a similarly armed foe, the force sword makes close combat far too dangerous. Against an adversary *without* a force sword, the sword itself is the best option for attack.

Cinematic masters can channel their chi to stun foes with a word, resist great mental pressure, make prodigious leaps, and deflect beam-weapon attacks. Damage from the force sword isn't ST-based, but the GM might let Power Blow double (or even triple!) the weapon's damage. This is usually only possible for force-swordsmen who craft their own force sword in tune with their chi; the GM should probably require Weapon Bond. Damage bonuses for Weapon Master also apply, with the same caveats. Psi powers (pp. B254-257) accompany all of this in some settings, but with power modifiers similar to those in *Chi Powers for Martial Artists* (p. 46).

> *Luke Skywalker: All right, I'll give it a try.*
>
> *Master Yoda: No. Try not. Do or do not. There is no try.*
>
> ***– The Empire Strikes Back***

This style mainly suits space-opera campaigns with lots of superscience. It works best in cinematic games – because to most players, Force-Swordsmanship *without* the ability to parry blaster fire and demolish foes while wearing a helmet with the blast shield down simply isn't Force-Swordsmanship. Similar styles may exist for other "force weapons," such as the force whip.

*Skills:* Acrobatics; Force Sword; Force Sword Art; Parry Missile Weapons.

*Techniques:* Feint (Force Sword); Targeted Attack (Force Sword Swing/Arm); Targeted Attack (Force Sword Swing/Leg); Targeted Attack (Force Sword Swing/Neck).

*Cinematic Skills:* Blind Fighting; Body Control; Flying Leap; Kiai; Mental Strength; Power Blow; Precognitive Parry.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Attack (Force Sword); Dual-Weapon Defense (Force Sword); Whirlwind Attack (Force Sword).

*Perks:* Acrobatic Feints; Chi Resistance (Any); Grip Mastery (Force Sword); Off-Hand Weapon Training (Force Sword); Special Setup (Power Blow works with Force Sword); Sure-Footed (Slippery); Sure-Footed (Uneven).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Enhanced Dodge; Enhanced Parry (Force Sword); Fit; Forceful Chi; psi Talents; Weapon Master (Force Sword).

*Disadvantages:* Code of Honor; Sense of Duty (Close friends and companions).

*Skills:* Armoury (Force Swords); Fast-Draw (Force Sword); Jumping; Karate; Savoir-Faire (Dojo); Wrestling.

*Perks:* Weapon Bond.

# Freefighting

**5 points**

Freefighting is a martial art for low- and zero-gravity situations. It became popular with long-term space-dwellers during the mid-21st century. It emphasizes taking away weapons (especially those dangerous to sensitive spaceship components) and tying up the opponent quickly with the goal of subduing him. It also includes basic punching and kicking techniques. Stylists often work strikes into combinations with grappling moves, the intent being to stun the target for long enough to get a solid hold.

Freefighting has *many* variations. Some fighters train with knives. Others learn the baton, focusing more on simple strikes than on advanced stickfighting methods. There are also "freefighting" forms of several major martial arts – Bando, Escrima, and Jujutsu being especially popular – and numerous fusion styles.

The style isn't old enough to have much of a body of legend. Popular entertainment frequently depicts its practitioners pulling off spectacular moves, however. Most fiction shows the fighter dodging and weaving with incredible ease – often using showy low-g acrobatics – while tying up the foe with handy cable or cable ties, all the while never losing contact with him.

Truth is often stranger than fiction. The specific style of Freefighting described here has among its students a small, skillful group who live permanently in microgravity and who've replaced their legs with a second pair of arms. These martial artists replace Knee Strike with Elbow Strike.

*Skills:* Brawling; Free Fall; Judo; Vacc Suit.
*Techniques:* Arm Lock; Disarming (Judo); Knee Strike.
*Cinematic Skills:* Blind Fighting; Sensitivity.
*Cinematic Techniques:* Binding; Roll with Blow.
*Perks:* Suit Familiarity (Vacc Suit).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* 3D Spatial Sense; Enhanced Dodge; Perfect Balance.
*Skills:* Acrobatics; Climbing; Fast-Draw (Knife or Sword); Jumping; Karate; Knife; Shortsword.

# Smasha

**4 points**

Smasha is an orcish martial art with unknown origins. All of its practitioners show a degree of refined brutality that's disturbing at best. Some can even perform vicious feats beyond the capabilities of any ordinary orc. Fortunately, few orcs have the dedication to take their studies that far; most practitioners are mundane fighters. Only truly remarkable orcs master the full intricacies of Smasha, but almost every tribe includes a few brawler-wrestlers with more skill than the average orc.

Smasha is a *highly* aggressive style. Practitioners always attempt to seize and hold the initiative, and Defensive Attack is unheard of. The few "defensive" moves the style does teach start with Aggressive Parry and follow up with attacks on the injured limb. Stylists use every dirty trick to disorient, damage, and destroy the enemy, and target the eyes, skull, neck, groin, and vitals in preference to all other locations. A fallen victim invites a Stamp Kick or five – the orc using All-Out Attack (Strong) or (Determined) if his prey has no allies nearby!

Cinematic Smasha practitioners are even *more* brutal. They can stun foes with their battle-cries and deliver tremendous blows to vulnerable spots with pinpoint accuracy.

*Skills:* Boxing; Brawling; Wrestling.
*Techniques:* Aggressive Parry (Brawling); Arm Lock; Choke Hold; Eye-Gouging; Eye-Poke; Eye-Rake; Head Butt; Kicking; Neck Snap; Stamp Kick; Targeted Attack (Boxing Punch/Neck); Targeted Attack (Boxing Punch/Skull); Targeted Attack (Brawling Kick/Groin); Targeted Attack (Brawling Stamp Kick/Neck); Targeted Attack (Brawling Two-Handed Punch/Neck); Two-Handed Punch.
*Cinematic Skills:* Kiai; Power Blow; Pressure Points; Pressure Secrets.
*Cinematic Techniques:* Eye-Pluck; Pressure-Point Strike; Roll with Blow.
*Perks:* Clinch (Boxing or Brawling); Iron Hands; Neck Control (Boxing or Brawling); Special Exercises (DR 1 with Tough Skin); Special Exercises (Striking ST +1); Technique Adaptation (Aggressive Parry).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes; High Pain Threshold.
*Disadvantages:* Bloodlust; Bully; Callous; Overconfidence.
*Skills:* Acrobatics; Garrote; Holdout; Jumping; Knife; Poisons; Stealth; any other weapon skills.
*Techniques:* Dual-Weapon Attack (Knife).

# Chapter Six

# Weapons and Equipment

*Adrian bolted the heavy oaken door behind her. She could already hear the sound of her pursuers' hatchets hacking away at it. She glanced at the remains of her longsword. It could be reforged – **would** be, it was her father's – but it wouldn't help her now.*

*As her eyes adjusted to the gloom, she looked around the room: no other doors and the window was a tiny grille. Then she spotted the weapons – aha, a guardroom! Her luck hadn't run out completely.*

*The dagger would be too light to handle hatchets and falchions. The rusty shortsword was crumbling. And the halberd was far too long for such close quarters. Standing in the corner, though, was a nastily hooked bill, not much taller than Adrian. That would do nicely!*

*Grasping the weapon across her body, Adrian turned toward the door, glad that she hadn't spent **all** her time studying swordplay.*

Purely unarmed fighting styles exist, but most traditional martial arts evolved for use in battles or duels involving weapons. Many were intended for *armored* warriors facing similarly clad opponents. These basic realities remain for today's combat styles, but art and sport forms often replace lethal weapons – or *all* weapons – with nonlethal ones, and armor is typically either nonexistent or designed specifically as training equipment.

Traditional or modern, lethal or nonlethal, the hardware used by the practitioners of many styles can be as complex as their tactics. Tomorrow's gear will probably be even *more* elaborate. See ***GURPS Ultra-Tech*** for futuristic equivalents to many items found in this chapter.

## Cross-Cultural Encounters

Weapons don't evolve in a vacuum. They're optimized to meet the needs of a particular place and time. A fighter normally trains to use his culture's weapons to confront *probable* threats – meaning armaments common in his region and in nearby areas, especially those favored by enemy cultures. He'll rarely have experience wielding or facing weapons from distant lands and other times, much less those from far-off planets and crosstime! The GM decides how to handle this.

The simplest option is to assume that Melee Weapon skills include the ability to adapt quickly to new tools and threats. Those who know such a skill can use all of the weapons listed for it the ***Basic Set*** and ***Martial Arts*** – even completely alien ones – at no penalty. In armed clashes, the statistics and footnotes on the tables completely parameterize each weapon. To settle unlikely duels (bill vs. three-part staff, katana vs. rapier, etc.), follow the rules as written and ignore the weapons' provenance. For instance, in an affray between a gladius-wielding Roman legionary and a 16th-century rapierist, neither is penalized for lack of knowledge of the other's weapon. Moreover, if our legionary has a large Indian katar (wielded with Shortsword) and our rapierist has a Chinese jian (used with Rapier), neither suffers a penalty for unfamiliarity with his *own* weapon, either.

On the other hand, the detail-oriented GM is free to rule that fighting with an unfamiliar melee weapon gives -2 to skill. See *Familiarity* (p. B169) for details.

If this is true, then it follows that fighting *against* an unusual weapon should also be challenging. This gives -2 to skill whenever a fighter directly engages a weapon that he has neither seen before nor trained against. This penalty doesn't affect attack rolls, but it does penalize Quick Contests (to disarm, feint, etc.) and give -1 to parry the unusual weapon. In most cases, *both* fighters will suffer these penalties, in which case it's best to ignore the effect on Quick Contests (it cancels out) and keep only the -1 to parry.

When using penalties for unfamiliarity, the GM decides which weapons are "familiar" and "unfamiliar" to fighters. He might use Cultural Familiarity (p. B23), boundaries on a map, or fiat. In some worlds, military and civilian weapons, the arms of different social classes, etc., might be mutually unfamiliar. Remember that this is a two-way street! You can declare that you're from an obscure culture so that everybody has -1 to parry your cool ethnic weapons . . . but *you* will have -1 to parry almost everybody else's weapons.

This isn't the same thing as familiarity with your opponent's *fighting style.* For that, see *Style Familiarity* (p. 49).

# Weapons

Most martial arts are designed around their home culture's traditional weapons, which evolve as tactics, technology, and threats spur each other on. New armaments that prove to be better than existing ones are eventually adopted, and warriors adapt old techniques to them and invent new fighting styles to exploit their strengths. Of course, martial artists have also been known to employ truly *bizarre* weapons for aesthetic or superstitious reasons. Modern schools frequently teach the strangest of these alongside the most practical of traditional weapons, other cultures' weapons, and modern weapons, leading to hybrids that aren't "traditional" anywhere but at that school!

*Balisong*

Below is a glossary of melee and muscle-powered melee weapons – traditional and modern, common and unusual, generic and culturally specific. It favors weapons used by martial-arts styles in this book and definitely *isn't* exhaustive. An entry in Small Caps indicates a weapon that appears on the weapon tables on pp. B271-276 or pp. 226-232. The rest are functionally similar enough to one of these weapons that they can use the same statistics, even if they differ radically in appearance. For details, read the entry.

**Ahlspiess –** *Germany*. A pole weapon that's roughly equal proportions handle and long metal spike, with a rondel (round handguard) where the halves meet. Used primarily for dueling – usually in a Defensive Grip (pp. 109-111). Treat as a Spear (p. B273), but it can't be thrown and is considered a solid-metal (DR 6) sword for breakage; see pp. B483-485.

**Arit –** *Indonesia*. A Sickle (p. 226).

**Atlatl** (p. B276) **–** *Aztec*. A stick used to launch javelins. The name is Nahuatl (Aztec), but many similar weapons exist worldwide. The user fits the javelin into a notch and then launches it with a one-handed swing of the stick.

**Axe** (p. B271) **–** *Universal.* A wedge-shaped blade on a wooden handle, for use in one hand and not balanced for throwing. It comes in many shapes and sizes, such as the Small Axe (p. 226), which is only slightly larger than a Hatchet (p. B271).

**Backsword** (pp. 226-227) **–** *England*. A single-edged Thrusting Broadsword (p. B271) with a basket hilt.

**Bagh-Nakh** (illustration, p. 102) – *India*. Also known as "tiger claws," this claw-like weapon is worn on the hand and held with rings for the pinky and thumb. Treat as a Bladed Hand (p. 226).

**Balisong** (p. 228; illustration, p. 212) – *Philippines*. A tangless folding knife with a pair of hollow handles that pivot forward to sheathe the blade or back to serve as a grip. A modern balisong has metal bearings that let the user flick it open and shut theatrically; see *Fast-Draw* (pp. 56-57). Sometimes called a "butterfly knife."

**Bastard Sword** (pp. B271, B274) – *Europe*. A sword manageable enough to wield one-handed but with a grip long enough for two hands. A sharp point was standard – use the Thrusting Bastard Sword (pp. B271, B274) in a historical campaign. Often called a "hand-and-a-half sword" after TL4.

*Eku*

**Baton** (p. B273) – *Universal.* A short, balanced club, usually wooden or metal. The police version, often in hard plastic, is also called a "nightstick." Some batons are only knife-sized; use the Short Baton (pp. 228, 229) statistics for these.

**Bill** (p. 229) – *England*. A bladed polearm with a hook on the back that lets the wielder use the Hook technique (p. 74), typically to unseat a horseman. Initially a battlefield weapon, it was sometimes given a shorter haft for individual combat, resulting in the Dueling Bill (pp. 229, 230).

**Bisento** – *Japan, Okinawa*. A larger, heavier Naginata (pp. B272-274) copied from a Chinese polearm. Use the statistics for a Heavy Horse-Cutter (p. 229).

**Blackjack** (p. B271) – *Universal.* A small, weighted truncheon made of cloth, rubber, or soft leather, designed to deliver a beating without obvious bruising (Diagnosis-2 to notice the injury on a casual examination). Every culture has its own name: "cosh," "sap," etc.

**Bladed Hand** (p. 226) – *Exotic.* A set of joined, nearly parallel blades – of close to equal length – worn on the hand and used to claw like an animal. Some are short and knife-like; others are long and rake-like.

**Blowpipe** (p. B275) – *Universal.* A long, narrow tube that lets the user launch breath-propelled darts. The projectiles are too tiny to be effective against large animals or humans without poison. Also useful for blowing powders into an opponent's face.

**Bo** – *Japan*. A Quarterstaff (pp. B273-274).

**Bokken** (pp. 227, 230) – *Japan*. A wooden sword. Usually has a handguard: rubber-and-plastic today, but wood or leather – or absent – on older versions. Also called a "bokuto."

**Bola Perdida** (pp. 227, 231) – *Argentina.* A rock (or other weight) fastened to a thong. The name is from Argentina but the weapon is universal. Used for throwing – like a one-shot sling that tosses both sling *and* stone – and as a flail. Sometimes called a "bola loca."

**Bolas** (p. 227, B275) – *Universal*. Two or more weights attached to cords and knotted together. Used by hunters to entangle the legs of animals, but also a serviceable flail. Often called a "boleadora."

**Bolo** – *Philippines*. A wide-bladed machete. Treat as a Falchion (p. 229).

**Boomerang** (p. 231) – *Australia*. An angled, more aerodynamic Throwing Stick (p. 225) designed for hunting. Doesn't return; returning versions are unsuitable as weapons and in any event wouldn't return if they hit. The GM may make an exception for martial artists with Throwing Art! Treat as a Baton (p. B273) if used as a club.

**Bow** (p. B275) – *Universal.* A flexible stave, bent and kept under tension by fastening a string between its ends. This creates a spring that enables the user to shoot arrows by placing them against the string and drawing and releasing it. The Short Bow might be made of little more than a handy bough, although strong ones aren't, and is typical of the earliest bows. The Regular Bow is longer and more powerful. The Longbow – made famous in Wales – is the pinnacle of single-material ("self") bow technology, and at least 6' long. The Composite Bow is made of layers of different materials glued together. This improves strength and compression resistance, giving a regular-sized bow more power than a longbow. The finest longbows, however, are made of yew, the natural properties of which yield a weapon similar to a composite bow; the GM may rule that fine-quality longbows are effectively composite bows.

**Bowie Knife** – *USA*. A broad, heavy-bladed knife, favored by Savate practitioners. Treat as a Large Knife (pp. B272, B276) or a Long Knife (pp. 228-229), depending on size.

**Brass Knuckles** (p. B271) – *Universal.* A fist load that covers the knuckles. As likely to be horn, iron, steel, or lead-reinforced leather as brass. The wearer ignores *Hurting Yourself* (p. B379) when punching and gets +1 to punching damage, but also suffers from Bad Grip 3 (p. B123).

**Broadsword** (p. B271) – *Europe.* A term for what medieval warriors called an "arming sword," coined by 17th-century writers to distinguish robust military swords from narrow-bladed civilian ones. Typically 30" to 40" long. Traditionally *pointed;* use the Thrusting Broadsword (p. B271) statistics.

**Butterfly Sword** – *China*. A short, wide-bladed chopping sword with a knuckle guard. Treat as a Small Falchion (p. 229).

*"And thou pratest like a coward," answered the stranger, "for thou standest there with a good yew bow to shoot at my heart, while I have nought in my hand but a plain blackthorn staff wherewith to meet thee."*

*– Little John to Robin Hood,* ***The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood***

**Cane –** *Universal.* The walking stick is an accessory of gentlemen worldwide. Treat as a Light Club (p. B271). Many are topped with a crook (adds no cost or weight), which enables the Hook technique (p. 74).

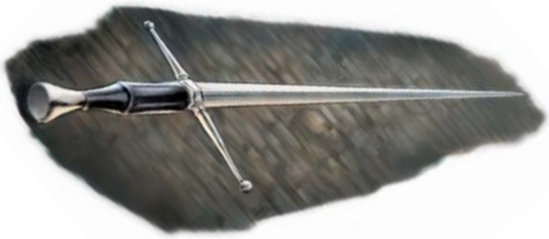
**Cavalry Saber** (p. B271) **–** *Europe, USA.* A curved sword optimized for one-handed use from horseback. Resembles the fencer's Saber (p. B273) in profile, but is heavier and wielded more like Broadsword (p. B271).

**Cestus** (p. 226) **–** *Ancient Rome*. A studded or spiked leather hand covering; treat as a gauntlet (DR 4). Elbow-length versions were common: 2× cost and 4× weight. They provide DR 4 to the arm on 1-3 on 1d, and their +1 damage extends to Elbow Strike (p. 71).

**Cha –** *China.* A Trident (p. 229). See also *Southern-Tiger Fork* (p. 225).

**Chain Whip** (p. 228; illustration, p. 4) **–** *China*. A whip made of chain or short metal bars (usually seven or nine of them) joined by chain. Used to lash foes and to entangle like a Kusari (p. B272).

**Chakram** (p. 231; illustration, p. 42) **–** *India*. A metal ring, edged on the outside, that's spun around the finger on the inside rim and thrown.



*Estoc*

**Chiang –** *China*. A Spear (pp. B273, B276).

**Chigoridani –** *Japan*. An odd combination weapon consisting of a chain with a flanged weight on one end and a tasseled cord tied to the other, the chain passing through an iron pipe that serves as a sliding handle. Used two-handed, it's effectively a Kusari (p. B272) that gives -2 to skill but permits a parry with the pipe, improving its Parry from -2U to 0U. Add $20 and 1 lb. to kusari cost and weight. A similar weapon, the *konpei,* has projecting wings on a shorter handle.

**Chukonu –** *China*. A Repeating Crossbow (p. 231). Also transliterated "zhuge nu."

## Combination Weapons

A warrior might want to enjoy the tactical benefits of several specialized melee weapons at once. The obvious solution is to carry a different weapon in each hand, but this isn't practical when using a shield or a two-handed weapon. A workaround is to stick the useful part of one weapon onto another, creating a "combination weapon."

To design a combination weapon, start with a basic melee weapon – commonly a hafted one (one with a pole, like an axe or a staff) – and add the cost and weight of the desired features below. These options add extra attack modes for the wielder to choose from, in addition to the standard choices for his weapon. Such attacks use the weapon's usual skill, except as noted.

*Hammer:* Any swung, hafted cutting or impaling weapon can have a hammer head behind its striking head. Damage is that of its usual swinging attack, but *crushing. $25; 0.5 lb.*

*Hook:* Any swung weapon, even a sword, can have a small hook to permit use of the Hook technique (p. 74). Hooking inflicts thrust-2 cutting for a one-handed weapon, thrust-1 for a two-handed one. A hook can be blunt in order to snag victims without causing damage, but this is no cheaper. *$25; neg. weight.*

*Kusari, Two-Yard:* Any reach 1+ weapon can have a short kusari (weighted chain) attached. Use the statistics on p. B272, except that reach is only 1, 2*. It goes on the head or butt of an impact or pole weapon, or on the pommel of a club or sword (to put it *inside* a metallic baton, jutte, etc., see *Hidden Weapons,* p. 218). The wielder may use his weapon normally *or* swing the chain using the Kusari skill. The weapon becomes two-handed, if it wasn't already; one hand controls the chain at all times. *$40; 2.5 lbs.*

*Kusari, Four-Yard:* As above, but the kusari is full-sized, with reach 1-4*. *$80; 5 lbs.*

*Pick:* Any swung, hafted weapon that deals crushing or cutting damage can have a hardened spike at right angles to its haft. Damage is that of its usual swinging attack, but at -1 and *impaling.* Like any pick, it can get stuck; see p. B405. The weapon also gains the benefits of a hook. *$50; 0.5 lb.*

*Sickle:* Any swung, hafted weapon can have a small sickle head. Damage is equivalent to that of its usual swinging attack, but at -1 and *cutting* or -2 and *impaling.* The weapon also gains the benefits of a hook. *$30; 0.5 lb.*

*Spear:* Any hafted weapon can add a spearhead that does thrust+2 impaling damage one-handed, thrust+3 impaling two-handed. Thrusting doesn't unready the weapon – even if swinging normally does. *$30; 0.5 lb.*

Apply +1 to the weapon's ST statistic per 1 lb. or fraction thereof added to a one-handed weapon, or per 2 lbs. or fraction thereof added to a two-handed one. Adding a kusari makes the weapon two-handed automatically. For more on ST and weapons, see p. B270.

*Example 1:* A sickle (p. 223) costs $40, weighs 2 lbs., and requires ST 8. A *kusarigama* is a sickle with a short kusari on its head or butt. A two-yard kusari adds $40 and 2.5 lbs., making final cost and weight $80 and 4.5 lbs. It also turns the combination weapon into a two-handed weapon. Adding 2.5 lbs. of weight to a two-handed weapon results in +2 to ST, making it 10.

*Example 2:* A scythe (p. B274) costs $15, weighs 5 lbs., and requires ST 11. An *okusarigama* is a scythe with a long kusari attached. A four-yard kusari adds $80 and 5 lbs., raising cost to $95 and weight to 10 lbs. Adding 5 lbs. of weight to a two-handed weapon gives +3 to ST, making it 14.

**Chung Bong –** *Korea*. A Baton (p. B273) or Short Staff (p. B273).

**Cloak** (pp. B275, B287) **–** *Europe*. A fighter may wrap part of his cloak around his arm and use it defensively (to block) or offensively (to feint or grapple; see p. B404). The main difference between a Heavy Cloak and a Light Cloak is that the former gives a higher DB and takes a few seconds longer to cut to shreds.

**Combat Fan** (p. 226) **–** *China, Japan, Korea.* A metal version of the folding fan carried by men and women alike. Folds partially or not at all. Used as a backup weapon and symbol of authority. Called a "tessen" ("iron fan") in Japan.

**Crossbow** (p. 231, B276) **–** *Asia, Europe.* A bow attached to a grooved stock and fitted with a trigger, used to shoot short, thick arrows called "bolts." Endless varieties exist! For instance, the Composite Crossbow (p. 231) uses a Composite Bow (p. B275), while the Pistol Crossbow (p. B276) is small enough to wield one-handed. The Chinese were fascinated with *concealed* crossbows. Full-sized models were worn on the back and triggered by bowing, while pistol-sized ones were hidden in stirrups and sleeves; see *Hidden Weapons* (p. 218). Related weapons include the Prodd (p. B276) and Repeating Crossbow (p. 231).

**Cutlass** (p. B273) **–** *Europe.* A short sword favored by sailors, pirates, and *savateurs.* Its substantial hilt encloses the hand, giving DR 4. This is cumulative with glove DR, but the hilt lacks the space to accommodate gloves with DR 3+ (e.g., steel gauntlets).

**Daab –** *Thailand.* A Shortsword (p. B273). Usually used in pairs.

**Dagger** (pp. B272, B276) **–** *Universal.* In ***GURPS*** usage, a short, point-only knife. Historically, the term described a *double-edged* knife with a crosspiece and a pommel – a tiny sword. In casual usage, it might instead mean a Rondel Dagger (p. 228), a Stiletto (p. 228), or any knife from Small Knife (pp. B272, B276) to Long Knife (p. 228) size. Proponents of Dagger Fighting (p. 155) favor the larger weapons.

**Dai-Kyu –** *Japan.* A Composite Bow (p. B275) with the grip one-third of the way up the bow instead of in the center. Used on foot (sometimes while kneeling) and from horseback.

**Dan Bong –** *Korea*. A Short Baton (pp. 229-229).

**Dan Gum –** *Korea*. A Large Knife (B272, B276).

**Dan Sang Gum –** *Korea*. A short, wide-bladed sword. Treat as a Small Falchion (p. 229).

**Dao** (p. 227) **–** *China*. A heavy-bladed sword with an extra-long handle, used one-handed for chopping and stabbing.

**Deer Antlers** (p. 228; illustration, p. 92) **–** *China.* Two interlocked, crescent-shaped blades with a handle in the center of one of the blades, creating a four-pointed cutting weapon capable of trapping weapons between its points. Usually used in pairs.

**Dhot –** *Burma*. A Baton (p. B273).

**Discus** (p. 231) **–** *Ancient Greece.* A wooden or metal throwing disc. Eclipsed as a weapon of war by bows and spears, but still thrown today by athletes (modern models may be weighted plastic).

**Dusack** (p. 229) **–** *Germany*. A sturdy wooden Shortsword (p. B273), wielded like the real thing. Also called a "rudis" (ancient Rome) or a "waster" (England).

**Eku** (p. 229; illustration, p. 213) **–** *Okinawa*. A *large* oar, used as a makeshift polearm.

**Épée –** *France*. A light, unsharpened thrusting sword intended for sport fencing. Treat as a Smallsword (p. B273), but the blunt tip inflicts thrust-1 *crushing* damage. Modern épées are equipped for electric scoring.

**Escrima Stick –** *Philippines*. A stick, usually 25" to 35" long, made of rattan for training or hardwood (such as ebony) for fighting. Treat as a Short Staff (p. B273).

**Estoc** (p. 227; illustration, p. 214) **–** *Europe*. An edgeless thrusting sword with a triangular or diamond cross section, designed to pierce chinks in plate armor. Generally held in a Defensive Grip (pp. 109-111) and used for Committed or All-Out Attacks on a prone victim. The specialized design removes -2 of the penalty for targeting chinks in armor (p. B400). Also called a "tuck."

**Falchion** (pp. 227, 229; illustration, below) **–** *Universal.* A medieval European term applied loosely to almost any single-edged sword, but most often to one that's flared, heavy, and/or curved forward at the tip, which favors cutting over thrusting. Most ironworking cultures developed such a blade; hunters and soldiers worldwide valued it as a tool (for butchering game, cutting brush, opening coconuts, etc.) and a weapon. Typically shortsword-sized, but the Large Falchion (p. 227) is broadsword-sized.

*Falchion*

**Fei Biao –** *China.* See *Flying Dart* (see below).

**Fire Wheel –** *China*. A form of Slashing Wheel (p. 228).

**Flail** (p. B274) **–** *Universal.* A two-handed weapon – seen almost anywhere grain flails are used – consisting of iron bars, spiked balls, or similar jagged weights attached to a long haft by a chain or a cord.

**Flying Dart –** *China*. A throwing blade with a ring handle and a length of cloth as a stabilizer. Treat as a Small Throwing Knife (p. 231) or a Large Throwing Knife (p. 231), depending on size.

**Foil –** *France*. A whippy sport-fencing "sword" with a button tip. The blade is designed to make precise strikes possible while punishing sloppy technique. Treat as a Dress Smallsword (p. 229), but damage is thrust-2 *crushing.* Modern foils are equipped for electric scoring.

**Force Sword** (p. B272) **–** *Science Fiction*. A space-opera swashbuckler's energy blade. The ***Basic Set*** version is used one- *or* two-handed – like a Katana (pp. B271, B274) – with the Force Sword skill. A smaller, one-handed model might do 7d(5) burn, have reach 1, cost $6,000, and weigh 1 lb. At the GM's option, it may have a Parry statistic of 0F and use Force Saber (DX/A, defaults to Force Sword-3 or any fencing skill-3).

# Weapons of Quality

The weapons in ***Martial Arts*** come in all the usual quality grades, with effects as described in *Melee Weapon Quality* (p. B274) and *Muscle-Powered Ranged Weapon Quality* (p. B277). Those two rules cover *materials* quality: seasoning, temper, etc. They affect breakage for all weapons; sharpness, and hence damage, for blades; and factors that influence range for missile weapons (e.g., elasticity, in the case of bows).

The GM may want to introduce quality grades for *balance,* too. Realistically, this is no less important than materials. For melee weapons, thrown weapons, and ammunition (arrows, bolts, etc.), balance modifies the user's weapon skill for all purposes. For missile weapons, it adjusts Accuracy.

*Cheap (Balance):* 40% of list price, -1 to skill or Acc.
*Good (Balance):* List price, no effect on skill or Acc.
*Fine (Balance):* 5× list price, +1 to skill or Acc.

Sticks – batons, clubs, quarterstaffs, wooden stakes, etc. – and improvised weapons can't have fine balance. All three grades are possible for melee and thrown weapons (besides sticks); for blowpipes, bows, and crossbows; and for arrows and bolts. The +1 for fine balance *is* cumulative with the +1 for Weapon Bond (p. 53) – a weapon can be nicely balanced for anyone but perfect for *you.*

To combine balance with materials quality, use the next rule.

## *Optional Rule: Custom Quality Levels*

The GM may opt to allow attractiveness, balance, and materials to vary independently. Pick the desired features below, add their price modifiers, and apply the final percentage to the weapon's price *after* all other modifications. If this gives a discount larger than -80%, limit it to -80%. "Balance" refers to the previous rule; "materials" describes the quality ratings in the ***Basic Set.***

*Cheap (Balance):* All weapons: -60%.
*Good (Balance):* All weapons: +0%.
*Fine (Balance):* All weapons but sticks and improvised weapons: +400%.

*Cheap (Materials):* Melee and thrown weapons only: -60% at TL0-6, -80% at TL7+.
*Good (Materials):* All weapons: +0% at TL0-6, -60% at TL7+.
*Fine (Materials):* Arrows, bolts, and crushing-only or impaling-only melee or thrown weapons: +200% at TL0-6, +0% at TL7+. Fencing weapons and swords: +300% at TL0-6, +0% at TL7+. Other cutting melee or thrown weapons: +900% at TL0-6, +0% at TL7+. Blowpipes, bows, and crossbows: +300%.
*Very Fine (Materials):* Fencing weapons and swords only: +1,900% at TL0-6, +300% at TL7+.

*Presentation:* All weapons: +400% or more. There's no upper limit! Such weapons fetch more when resold. Start with the inflated original purchase price and *halve* any discount or depreciation for a second-hand weapon.

*Silver:* Solid silver arrows, bolts, or melee or thrown weapons can only be of "good" materials quality, yet break as if cheap: +1,900%. Silver-coated or -edged weapons can be of any quality: +200%. See *Silver Weapons* (p. B275) for rules. While valuable, not all silver is "presentation" quality.

*Example 1:* Sir Liam, a TL3 knight, wants the ultimate werewolf-slaying sword. He commissions a thrusting broadsword that has fine-quality balance (+1 skill, +400%), very fine-quality materials (-2 breakage, +2 damage, +1,900%), and silver edges (+200%). The total modifier is +2,500%. Applying this to the sword's $600 list price gives a final cost of $15,600!

*Example 2:* General Schwarz, a TL7 officer, is presented with a dress saber. The blade is almost worthless for fighting, with cheap-quality balance (-1 skill, -60%) *and* materials (+2 breakage, -80%). However, it's of presentation quality – the rubies and gold look great (+400%). The final modifier is +260%. List cost for a saber is $700, so this one costs $2,520. If Schwarz ever sells it, he'll get most of that sum.

**Forest Bill –** *England*. A Dueling Bill (pp. 229-230).
**Fukiya –** *Japan*. A Blowpipe (p. B275), favored by ninja.
**Fuscina –** *Ancient Rome*. A Trident (p. 229). Often used by gladiators in conjunction with a Melee Net (p. B276).
**Gada** (p. 230; illustration, p. 174) **–** *India*. This giant mace symbolizes strength. Wielded two-handed, it can be swung or gripped near the head to "punch." The listed gada is *small;* the GM may scale up damage bonus, cost, weight, and ST together; e.g., ×1.2 gives sw+6, $120, 18 lbs., ST 19. Reach doesn't change – the head just gets bigger.
**Garrote** (p. B272) **–** *Universal.* Any length of cord, wire, or rope used to strangle.
**Gladius –** *Ancient Rome*. A Shortsword (p. B273).
**Glaive** (p. B272) **–** *Europe.* A polearm consisting of a pointed cleaver on a long haft, which evolved from the Heavy Spear (p. 229) in ancient times. A shorter version – the Dueling Glaive (p. 229) – was used for individual combat in the Middle Ages.
**Great Axe** (p. B274) **–** *Universal.* A large, two-handed axe, "weaponized" from the woodsman's (or executioner's!) axe.
**Greatsword** (p. B274) **–** *Europe.* A true two-handed sword. It usually has a sharp tip (a Thrusting Greatsword, p. B274). A typical European greatsword has a *ricasso* ending in two protruding spikes that protect the wielder's hand.
**Halberd** (p. B272) **–** *Europe*. A heavy polearm with an axe-like head that sports both a back-spike (enables the Hook technique, p. 74) and an axial spike (used like a spear). The battlefield version may be shortened to a Dueling Halberd (pp. 229-230) for individual combat.

**Hanbo** – *Japan.* Treat this "half-staff" (which is what the name means) as a Jo (pp. 227, 230).

**Han-Kyu** – *Japan*. Literally, "half-bow" – a Short Bow (p. B275) sometimes modified by ninja to fit in a sleeve.

**Harpoon** (p. B276) – *Universal.* A barbed hunting spear with a line attached. *Not* an entangling weapon; pulling on the line tends to yank it out (see footnote 8, p. B276). In melee, treat it as a clumsy Heavy Spear (p. 229) with reach 1, 2* and -2 to skill.

**Hatchet** (pp. B271, B276) – *Universal.* A light, short-hafted axe suitable for throwing.

**Hishi** – *Japan*. A Dagger (pp. B272, B276).

**Hook Sword** (pp. 226-227; illustration, p. 73) – *China*. A blunt weapon shaped like an inverted "J," with an edged handguard for punching. The crook enables the Hook technique (p. 74) – and the inside *is* edged, ostensibly for crippling horses! Usually used in pairs.

*Horse-Cutter*

**Horse-Cutter** (p. 229; illustration, at right) – *China*. A polearm with a heavy chopping blade similar to that of a Dao (p. 227), intended for use by footmen against horsemen. The Heavy Horse-Cutter (p. 229) is half again the length and mass of the Light Horse-Cutter (pp. 229-230).

**Hungamunga** (p. 231; illustration, p. 52) – *Sub-Saharan Africa.* A flat "throwing iron" with multiple sharp points – typically between five and eight – and a handle. Most hungamungas require Thrown Weapon (Knife), but the Large Hungamunga (p. 231) uses Thrown Weapon (Axe/Mace). TL2 models are soft iron and may bend on impact. Roll 1d after a throw; on a 1-3, it bends and is useless. Bending it back takes 10 seconds and an Armoury+3 roll. TL3+ steel blades may ignore this rule. Also called a "mongwanga."

**Iklwa** – *Zulu*. A Short Spear (p. 229) with a long, broad head, unbalanced for throwing.

**Jang Bong** – *Korea*. A Quarterstaff (pp. B273-274).

**Jang Gum** – *Korea*. A long, curved sword used in one or two hands. Treat as a Katana (pp. B271, B274).

**Javelin** (pp. B273, B276) – *Universal.* A slender spear, balanced for throwing but also useful as a light melee weapon.

**Ji** – *China.* A Halberd (p. B272).

**Jian** (pp. 227, 229; illustration, p. 69) – *China*. A straight, one-handed sword with a long, narrow blade that's light enough for fencing but strong enough for cutting. A tassel often decorates the handle.

**Jitte** – *Japan.* A sharp, spearhead-like blade with two side prongs for disarming. Treat as a Sai (pp. 227-228, 231). The name of this weapon and that of the Jutte (below) are occasionally exchanged, or used for both weapons – the result of a shift in transliteration practices.

**Jo** (pp. 227, 230) – *Japan*. A four- to five-foot stick normally used with two-handed staff techniques.

**Jutte** (pp. 227-228; illustration, p. 169) – *Japan.* A blunt baton with a single prong for catching parried blades for disarming. Confusingly, some sources swap the name of this weapon and that of the *jitte* (above), or use the same term for both.

**Kabutowari** – *Japan.* The so-called "helmet breaker" is a curved metal truncheon. Its handle and sheath resemble those of the *wakizashi* (p. 225), letting a non-samurai look as if he's carrying a sword without breaking the law. Some evidence suggests that it was used alongside the *tachi* (p. 225) as a secondary and parrying weapon. Treat as a Baton (p. B273) that's both presentation quality *and* fine quality. It gets +1 to swinging damage and costs $150; other statistics don't change.

**Kakute** (p. 227) – *Japan.* A ring with small teeth or "horns," used to get a firm grip on an opponent and assail pressure points. A pair – one on the ring finger, one on the thumb – gives +1 to rolls to prevent a grappled foe from breaking free and +1 to Pressure Points skill while grappling, but Bad Grip 1 (p. B123) with weapons. Twisting the rings into position for grappling or out of the way for other tasks takes a Ready maneuver.

**Kama** – *Japan*. A Sickle (p. 226) with a straight, pointed blade sharpened on the inside edge.

**Katana** (pp. B271, B274) – *Japan.* A slightly curved, single-edged sword designed for one- or two-handed use. The ***Basic Set*** describes an early Tokugawa-era weapon in transition from the two-handed *nodachi* (p. 221) to a blade short enough to wear thrust through a sash. Use the Late Katana (pp. 227, 230) statistics for later-era katanas, including modern ones.

**Katar** (pp. 228-229; illustration, p. 62) – *India*. A blade with a perpendicular handle equipped with hand or arm guards, awkward for slashing but ideal for thrusting. Grip mechanics permit the use of armed *or* unarmed combat skills to parry, as with the Tonfa (p. 226). Typically knife-sized, but the Large Katar (p. 229) is shortsword-sized.

**Kettukari** – *India*. A Quarterstaff (pp. B273-274).

**Kittate** – *Japan.* A one-piece iron pick with an L-shaped spike on the peen, intended as a portable candle-holder. Stuck in a wall pick-first, with a candle on the spike, it can provide hands-free light. It's also an effective weapon – treat as a Pick (p. B271).

**Knife** (pp. 228-229, B272, B276) – *Universal.* Any one-handed blade smaller than a sword, built for effective cutting *and* stabbing. Lightest is the Small Knife (pp. B272, B276), which may be balanced well enough to throw. The next size up is the Large Knife (pp. B272, B276), which is often purpose-built for combat but rarely throwable. Largest – at a total length between 15" and 23" – is the Long Knife (pp. 228-229), which is only marginally less substantial than a Shortsword (p. B273) and never throwable. For throwable knives, see Throwing Knife (p. 231).

# Hidden Weapons

Martial-arts tales (especially ninja stories) often feature concealed weapons. Normally, warriors who wish to hide weapons use the Holdout skill. The GM rolls in secret for each weapon. The roll is usually unopposed, but against an *alerted* observer it becomes a Quick Contest vs. Observation skill if watched or Search skill if searched. Treat potential foes as "alerted" on any failed uncontested roll. A badly hidden weapon is grounds for suspicion!

For a ranged weapon, Holdout has a penalty equal to Bulk. For a rigid melee weapon, add weight in lbs. (treat "neg." as 0) to *longest* reach in yards (treat "C" as 0), round up, and apply a penalty of that size. For a flexible weapon (kusari, whip, etc.), do the same calculation but use *shortest* reach.

*Examples:* A dagger is 0.25 lb., rigid, and has longest reach C; 0.25 + 0 = 0.25, which rounds up to give -1. A kusari is 5 lbs., flexible, and has shortest reach 1; 5 + 1 = 6, so the penalty is -6.

The *carrier's* size also matters. If the reach used above exceeds his height in yards (round up), don't bother rolling – the weapon is simply too long to hide. Otherwise, apply his Size Modifier to the roll; a bigger person has more hiding places. There are many ways to get further bonuses.

*Urumi*

## Concealed-Carry Rigs

A rig designed to buckle under clothing is $50 for +1 to Holdout, $200 for +2. It replaces the weapon's usual sheath or cover, so it adds no weight. The bonus applies only for a specific weapon or one just like it. The wearer must use Ready or Fast-Draw to get his weapon. Fast-Draw is at -1 from such rigs (*instead* of the penalty for a concealed weapon under *Fast-Draw from Odd Positions,* pp. 103-104).

## Trick Weapons

An alternative to the rigs above is to modify the *weapon,* removing its handle or stock and replacing it with a mechanism for extending it (like a sleeve sword on an armband) or firing it (like a sleeve pistol crossbow). This adds 50% to the weapon's cost. The added mechanism replaces a grip, so there's no effect on weight. This gives +2 to Holdout.

To use a trick weapon, the wearer must be able to work its mechanism. This requires a free hand for a wrist-blade, a bow from the waist for a back-mounted crossbow, etc., and a DX (*not* Fast-Draw) roll. Success readies a melee weapon instantly or fires a missile weapon. Failure means nothing happens; repeated attempts are possible. Critical failure means the weapon falls off, stabs the wearer, or anything else the GM likes. Trick weapons are notoriously finicky!

A strapped-on weapon is *awkward.* Melee weapons give -1 to skill. Missile weapons have Acc 0 and never get Aim bonuses.

## Special Clothing

Clothing designed to hide things gives a Holdout bonus for *all* weapons. This is cumulative with the bonus for a rig or a trick weapon. A price equal to cost of living (p. B265) for the wearer's apparent Status purchases an outfit that gives +1. Four times that amount buys +2.

## Disguised Weapons

Building a weapon into something obvious *doesn't* involve Holdout. Those looking for it *must* use Search to learn its true function.

A weapon that works "as is" but looks like a harmless item – normally possible only for blunt instruments – costs double. For instance, a *yagyuzue* (p. 225) is a presentation-quality jo, which would normally cost $50. Disguising it as a walking stick doubles that to $100.

A thrusting-only pole weapon can have a cap crafted to let it look and function as stick of the same overall weight until uncapped (a Ready maneuver). Add $30 to cost – $150 if presentation-quality – and 0.5 lb. to weight. A *makhila* (p. 219), for instance, is a presentation-quality javelin. That's usually $150, 2 lbs., but the fancy cap makes it $300, 2.5 lbs. and disguises it as a light club.

A weapon sheathed entirely inside a larger item has its usual weight but costs *triple.* The decoy item has its full weight, too; its cost is normal if fake, tripled if functional (like another weapon). For example, a *kusarijutte* (p. 219) built from a functional jutte ($40, 1 lb.) with a 2-yard kusari ($40, 2.5 lbs.) inside is $240, 3.5 lbs. Blades hidden this way, like sword canes, are thin – quality is a level lower than what's paid for.

## Effects of Hidden Weapons

A sudden assault with an *undetected* weapon counts as a surprise attack (p. B393). When one weapon is merely hidden inside another, the target knows a weapon is present. On the turn the hidden weapon pops out, his first defense against it is at -2. In either case, defenses against attacks after the first aren't affected.

**Knife-Wheel** (p. 228) – *China*. A Slashing Wheel (p. 223) with knife blades protruding from either side. Traditionally used in pairs.

**Knobbed Club** (p. 226; illustration, p. 154) – *Universal.* A club with an enlarged striking head, such as the knobkerrie.

**Kontos** – *Ancient Greece*. A Heavy Spear (p. 229).

**Kozuka** – *Japan*. A Small Knife (pp. B272, B276).

**Krabi** – *Thailand*. A light, curved sword with a long handle. Treat as a Saber (p. B273).

**Kris** – *Indonesia*. A wavy-bladed knife of any size, believed by some to possess magical powers. The blade is slotted loosely into the handle, which is usually curved; quality is often *cheap.* Treat as a Small Knife (p. B272), Large Knife (p. B272), or Long Knife (p. 228-229), as appropriate. Not balanced for throwing.

**Kukri** (p. 228; illustration, p. 255) – *Nepal.* A heavy chopping blade, curved to a 45° angle in the middle. The listed kukri is knife-sized; treat a larger one as a Small Falchion (p. 229) or even a Falchion (p. 229). Modern kukris are often made from truck springs – even fine and very fine examples!

**Kusari** (p. B272) – *Japan*. A chain weighted at both ends, also called a "kusarifundo" or "manrikigusari" ("ten-thousand-power chain"). It's possible to "snap" a kusari at the foe end-first. Damage becomes *thrust* crushing, but the attack avoids two of the drawbacks on p. B406: it works even in close quarters and has no chance of hitting you in the face on a critical miss.

**Kusarigama** (p. 228; illustration, p. 124) – *Japan*. A kama (Sickle, p. 226) with a two-yard Kusari (p. B272) attached to the handle's butt. Requires a hand on the handle and a hand on the chain, and counts as a weapon in either hand. The wielder snares the enemy with the kusari using Entangle (p. 71) and then finishes him with the kama. Treat these as normal kusari and kama attacks, but use the first line of kusarigama statistics for the two-yard kusari. Cinematic warriors sometimes swing the kama by the chain, like an edged flail – the second line represents this – but the GM may forbid this in a realistic game. Some versions affix a four-yard kusari to the butt (see *Combination Weapons,* p. 214) or a two-yard kusari *atop* the handle, opposite the blade (permits one-handed use but counts as only one weapon, either a kusari *or* a kama – choose each turn).

**Kusarijutte** (p. 228) – *Japan.* A Jutte (pp. 227-228) with a two-yard Kusari (p. B272) attached to the handle. One hand goes on the handle, the other on the chain. Use the standard jutte and kusari rules, except that the short kusari uses the statistics listed for the kusarijutte. Some versions hide the kusari *inside* the jutte and release it out the tip of the weapon – see *Combination Weapons* (p. 214) and *Disguised Weapons* (p. 218).

*Rapier*

**Lajatang** (p. 229) – *Indonesia*. A polearm with crescent-shaped blades on both ends.

**Lance** (p. B272) – *Europe.* "Lance" loosely describes any long spear, but the ***Basic Set*** weapon is a heavy spear sturdy enough to deliver the energy of a horseman equipped with stirrups and a high-backed saddle. It usually has a grip and a handguard, unlike an infantry spear. *Tournament* lances are blunt and shatter on impact; see p. B397.

**Lariat** (p. B276) – *Americas*. A rope that ends in a loop tied with slipknot, traditionally used to capture horses and cattle without injury. For *combat* rules, see p. B411. Also known as a "lasso."

**Liangtjat** – *Indonesia.* A Wooden Stake (pp. B272, B276).

**Life-Preserver** (p. 227) – *England*. Slang term for a small truncheon, often one with an attached cord. Use the listed statistics when swinging it by the cord (the "traditional" target is the legs); otherwise, treat as a cheap-quality Blackjack (p. B271).

*Monk's Spade*

**Light Club** (p. B271) – *Universal.* Any *balanced* wooden club, whether a dedicated weapon (good quality or better) or a handy branch, table leg, etc. (cheap). A baseball bat isn't a light club but a Knobbed Club (p. 226).

**Longsword** (p. 227; illustration, p. 4) – *Germany.* A light Thrusting Bastard Sword (pp. B271, B274) designed for two-handed thrusting, often from a Defensive Grip (pp. 109-111). To facilitate this tactic, only the tip-most 6" of the blade was normally sharpened.

**Mace** (pp. 226, 231, B271, B276) – *Universal.* Any unbalanced, one-handed war club with a massive stone, wooden, or metal crushing head. The smooth-headed Round Mace (pp. 226, 231) is ancient, but modern martial artists still use "melon head hammers" and similar weapons (sometimes even in pairs, in Chinese styles). The standard Mace (pp. B271, B276), with flanges or spikes for bashing through plate armor, is a classic weapon of medieval Europe. Lighter versions – the Small Round Mace (pp. 226, 231) and Small Mace (pp. B271, B276) – are often backup weapons. A thrown mace is a deadly projectile; the attacker lobs it rather than hurling it in a straight line.

**Machete** – *Universal.* A chopping blade used to harvest fruit and clear brush. Treat as a Kukri (p. 228) or a Falchion (p. 229), depending on size – but it may little resemble either and is often cheap-quality.

**Mae Sun-Sawk** – *Thailand*. A side-handled club, typically used in pairs. Treat as a Tonfa (p. 226).

**Main-Gauche** (p. 228) – *France, Italy.* A stiff knife with a large basket hilt and broad crosspiece, designed primarily as a parrying weapon. Used alongside a rapier. Not throwable.

**Makhila** (illustration, p. 114) – *Basque*. A gorgeous metal-shod cane. The heavy handgrip unscrews to reveal a spearhead. Treat as a Light Club (p. B271) if capped, a Javelin (pp. B273, B276) if uncapped. This presentation-quality disguised weapon costs $300, weighs 2.5 lbs.

**Masakari** – *Japan*. An Axe (p. B271). Less often, a Great Axe (p. B274).

**Maul** (p. B274) – *Universal.* A heavy, two-handed hammer.

# Unorthodox Attacks

Often in fiction, and occasionally in reality, a warrior will be capable (or crazy!) enough to use a weapon in a way that it was never meant to be used.

## *One-Handed Two-Handers*

As explained on p. B270, a strong enough fighter can wield a two-handed melee weapon – one with "†" or "‡" on its ST statistic – in one hand. When doing so, use the weapon's two-handed statistics but apply a -1 to damage. The skill required to wield it may change:

| *Two-Handed Use* | *One-Handed Use* |
|---|---|
| Polearm | Axe/Mace or Spear* |
| Spear | Spear† |
| Staff | Broadsword |
| Two-Handed Axe/Mace | Axe/Mace |
| Two-Handed Flail | Flail |
| Two-Handed Sword | Broadsword |

* Use Axe/Mace to *swing* the polearm, Spear to *thrust* with it.

† Most spears have a "†" next to ST on the second line of statistics – the one marked *"two hands."* Such weapons still use the Spear skill when wielded in one hand, and one-handed performance is given by the first line of statistics, *not* the rules above.

## *Hurled Melee Weapons*

The table below gives the skill used to hurl a weapon not built for throwing. Such an attack has an extra -4 to hit! Damage is the weapon's usual thrusting or swinging damage – consult the "Attack" column to learn which. Those who know Throwing Art may use that skill instead, at *no* penalty, and get its usual damage bonus. In all cases, Acc is 0; Range is ×0.5/×1 for weapons up to 4 lbs., ×0.2/×0.5 for heavier ones; RoF is 1; Shots is T(1); ST is unchanged; and Bulk is the Holdout penalty calculated in *Hidden Weapons* (p. 218).

| *Throwing Skill* | *Melee Weapon Types* | *Attack* |
|---|---|---|
| Bolas | Flail, Kusari, Two-Handed Flail | Swing |
| DX | Swords* | Thrust |
| Thrown Weapon (Axe/Mace) | Axe/Mace, Two-Handed Axe/Mace | Swing |
| Thrown Weapon (Disc) | Shield | Thrust |
| Thrown Weapon (Knife) | Jitte/Sai, Knife, Main-Gauche | Thrust |
| Thrown Weapon (Spear) | Polearm, Spear, Staff | Thrust |
| Thrown Weapon (Stick) | Sticks† | Swing |

* *Blades* wielded with Broadsword, Rapier, Saber, Shortsword, Smallsword, or Two-Handed Sword, hurled point-first. If the GM permits Thrown Weapon (Sword), use it at no penalty – not DX at -4. Kenjutsu (pp. 173-175) offers this skill.

† *Sticks* wielded with the sword skills listed above use Thrown Weapon (Stick) at -4 and inflict swinging damage.

**Mensurschläger** (pp. 226-227) – *Germany.* A narrow, blunt-tipped, basket-hilted sword for Schläger (p. 160).

**Metsubushi** – *Japan.* Ninja and police favor this all-in-one delivery system for powders (usually blinding agents). It consists of a mouthpiece with a removable cap. A tube at the other end contains one dose of powder. It takes only a second to *ready,* but it's too fussy to *reload* in combat. Treat as a Blowpipe (p. B275) that can only shoot powders at one yard – see *Blowpipe* (p. B180) for rules.

**Mijin** – *Japan*. Three short chains weighted with iron balls, linked to a central ring. Treat as a Bolas (p. 227, B275) for melee combat and throwing. The statistics don't change; metal is denser and pricier than leather and stones, but there's far less of it.

**Miséricorde** – *France.* Translates as "mercy," either in the sense of "beg for mercy" or the "mercy" shown by finishing a wounded foe. Describes any stabbing-only knife – typically a Dagger (pp. B272, B276), Rondel Dagger (p. 228), or Stiletto (p. 228) – and refers to its use to attack chinks in the armor of fallen knights.

> *It's hard to kill a horse with a flute!*
>
> *– The Blind Man,* ***The Silent Flute***

**Monk's Spade** (p. 229; illustration, p. 219) – *China*. A polearm with a sharp, spade-like head on one end and a crescent-shaped blade on the other.

**Monowire Whip** (p. B272) – *Science Fiction*. A weighted monomolecular wire on a short handle. For many special rules, see *Whips* (p. B406).

**Morningstar** (p. B272) – *Europe*. A one-handed flail consisting of a handle linked to a spiked striking head by a chain. Some sources use the term for a Mace (p. B271) with a spiked striking head.

**Muchan** – *India.* A Baton (p. B273) that's traditionally wielded in a Defensive Grip (pp. 109-111).

**Mutton** – *Philippines*. A Baton (p. B273).

**Myrmex** (p. 226) – *Ancient Greece*. Leather hand wrapping with sharp edges that inflict shallow cuts when punching. Gives DR 1 to the hand – but also Bad Grip 1 (p. B123).

**Nagamaki** – *Japan*. Fundamentally a Naginata (pp. B272-274), but with a longer blade and a shorter staff.

**Naginata** (pp. B272-274) – *Japan*. A staff-length polearm with a sword-like head. The sport of Naginatado (p. 187) uses wooden pole with a pliant, leather-tipped bamboo head; damage is swing or thrust *crushing.* All-hardwood training naginata prevent accidental cuts but are as deadly as any staff: swing+2 or thrust+2 crushing.

**Nata –** *Japan*. A Hatchet (pp. B271, B276).

**Neko-De –** *Japan*. A Bladed Hand (p. 226) commonly associated with ninja. Used for both climbing and fighting.

**Net** (p. B276) **–** *Ancient Rome*. A weighted net designed for combat. The Melee Net is a one-handed thrown or melee weapon, used by Roman gladiators in conjunction with the Trident (p. 229). The Large Net requires two hands and is only for throwing, but is also harder to escape from. See p. B411 for rules. A fighter with a net can trail it in front of him to trip foes. The hex containing the net is bad footing. Furthermore, the wielder can try to yank the net out from under the enemy. Roll a Quick Contest of ST. If the user wins, his opponent falls. Otherwise, nothing happens . . . but if his ST roll is a critical failure, *he* falls instead!

## *Designing the Perfect Weapon*

There are several rules for modifying weapons. Use them all if you like! They apply in the following order:

1. Add accessories using *Combination Weapons* (p. 214). Record the new cost and weight.

2. Adjust quality using *Weapons of Quality* (p. 216). Modifiers apply to the total price of combination weapons, using the most expensive applicable type; e.g., a staff with a sickle is "other cutting melee weapons" and not "crushing-only melee weapons."

3. Conceal the weapon using *Hidden Weapons* (p. 218). Cost modifiers apply after changes for accessories and quality. Weight modifiers are cumulative with those for accessories.

**Ngao –** *Thailand*. A polearm tipped with a fork, spearhead, or long blade. Treat a forked ngao as a Trident (p. 229), a spear-tip ngao as a Spear (p. B273), and a bladed ngao as a Naginata (pp. B272-274).

**Ninja-To –** *Japan*. Also called a "ninjaken," this is a straight-bladed Shortsword (p. 223) associated with ninja. Reputable historians and hoplologists have found no straight-bladed Japanese swords older than the mid-20th century – but Ninjutsu stylists (see *Ninja and Ninjutsu,* p. 202) claim that the design is almost a thousand years old. In a cinematic game, it has a hollow sheath that works as a Blowpipe (p. B275) and snorkel.

**Nodachi –** *Japan*. A curved sword similar to the Katana (pp. B271, B274), but longer. Treat as a Thrusting Bastard Sword (pp. B271, B274) or a Thrusting Greatsword (p. B274), depending on size. Longer weapons existed but were strictly ceremonial.

**Nunchaku** (p. B272) **–** *Okinawa*. Popular fiction wrongly portrays this Okinawan flail as a "ninja weapon." It consists of two lengths of wood linked by a chain or cord, the length of which varies but is usually short. Sometimes wielded in pairs.

**Okusarigama –** *Japan.* A large Scythe (p. B274) with a full-length Kusari (p. B272) mounted on the head; use *Combination Weapons* (p. 214) to work out statistics. Users often plant the staff on the ground or against the body with one hand (takes a Ready maneuver but lowers the weapon's ST requirement by one) and swing the kusari with the other.

**Otta –** *India*. An S-shaped club styled to resemble an elephant's tusk, traditionally held in a Defensive Grip (pp. 109-111). Treat as a Knobbed Club (p. 226).

**Paku –** *Indonesia*. A Wooden Stake (p. B276) used for throwing.

**Panthiruchan –** *India*. A Quarterstaff (pp. B273-274).

**Parang –** *Indonesia*. A cleaver- or machete-type sword of Small Falchion (p. 227) to Falchion (p. 229) size.

**Partisan –** *Europe*. A spear with triangular spikes ("ears") at the base of a broad head. This prevents impaled foes from running themselves through to close with the wielder; see *Holding a Foe at Bay* (p. 106). Otherwise, treat as an unthrowable Spear (p. B273). Also called a "Bohemian ear-spoon."

**Pedang –** *Indonesia*. A Shortsword (p. B273).

**Piau –** *Indonesia*. A throwing blade. Treat as a Shuriken (p. B276).

**Pick** (p. B271) **–** *Europe, Middle East.* A one-handed war club with a beaked head mounted at right angles to the handle. It's designed to penetrate armor; the narrow tip removes -2 of the penalty for targeting chinks in armor (p. B400).

**Pikestaff –** *England*. The shaft of a long spear or pike, used as a fighting stick. Treat as a Long Staff (p. 230).

**Pilum** (illustration, p. 222) **–** *Ancient Rome*. Plural is "pila." A throwing spear. Its head has an unhardened iron portion that bends on a hit, preventing the enemy from hurling it back or easily removing it from a shield. If a thrown pilum hits, it becomes useless except as a staff until straightened. Should it strike a *shield,* footnote [4] under the *Muscle-Powered Ranged Weapon Table* (p. 232) applies. In either case, unbending the head requires a free hand and a foot, and takes three Ready maneuvers and a ST roll. Treat as a Spear (pp. B273, B276) in all other respects.

**Pisau –** *Indonesia*. A Small Knife (pp. B272, B276).

**Plong –** *Thailand*. A bamboo Quarterstaff (pp. B273-274).

**Plumbata** (p. 231) **–** *Ancient Rome*. A short javelin or "war dart" with a fletched wooden shaft. Part of the slender metal head is made of lead (*plumbum,* whence the weapon's name) that deforms on impact, fouling shields and making it a one-use weapon.

## *Parrying Flails*

As explained under *Fencing Parries* (p. 221), the inability of the rapier, saber, and smallsword to parry flails (see p. B405) is a consequence of blade design, not weapon skill. Any weapon that works with the Main-Gauche, Rapier, Saber, or Smallsword skill *and* at least one Melee Weapon skill other than those four can parry flails at the usual penalties. This includes the edged rapier (and any other rapier that weighs 3 lbs. or more), jian, jutte, sai, and short staff (which is identical to a baton).

**Pollaxe** (p. B272) – *Europe*. The ***Basic Set*** calls this a "*pole*axe" and not a "*poll*axe." The error is forgivable for the weapon given there: a large axe head on a long pole – a battlefield polearm. The Dueling Pollaxe (pp. 229-230) is nearly identical but shortened for personal combat. However, "pollaxe" often refers to a far more elaborate dueling polearm with an axe *or* hammer head, a beaked peen, a top spike, a spiked butt, and a metal-reinforced shaft. Use the Dueling Halberd (pp. 229-230) statistics; the only effect of a hammer head is to exchange the swing+4 cutting attack for a swing+4 crushing attack. Purpose-built for Pollaxe Fighting (p. 191) between armored knights, this polearm is optimized for the Defensive Grip (pp. 109-111). Even in games that don't use the Defensive Grip option, the GM should allow it with *this* weapon.

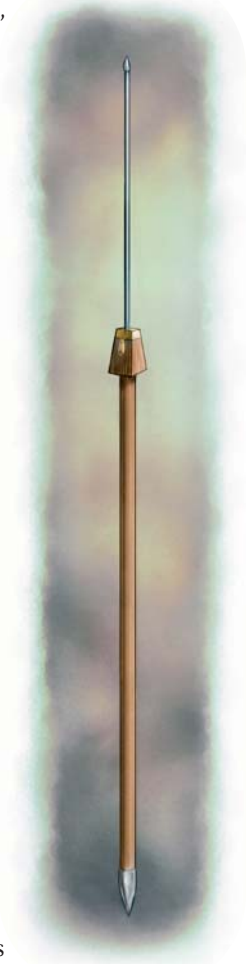
**Prodd** (p. B276) – *Europe, Middle East*. "Prodd" or "prod" means the bow assembly of any Crossbow (p. B276). It's also the name of a bird-hunting crossbow that launches lead pellets instead of bolts. Furusiyya (pp. 159-161) practitioners use special prodds that lob primitive naphtha grenades. These get Acc 1 and Range –/×5, and can't shoot pellets. See *Molotov Cocktails and Oil Flasks* (p. B411) for the effects of a hit.

**Pudao** – *China*. See Horse-Cutter (p. 217).

**Puñal** – *Philippines*. A knife of any size. Treat as a Dagger (pp. B272, B276), Small Knife (pp. B272, B276), Large Knife (pp. B272, B276), or Long Knife (pp. 228-229).

**Qian Kun Ri Yue Dao** (pp. 226, 230; illustration, p. 56) – *China*. The "heaven and earth, sun and moon sword" is a 4' to 5' metal bar with a sickle-like blade at either end. The wielder holds it across his body with his hands inside a pair of handguards – each with *another* crescent-shaped blade on it. He can cut and thrust with one end, "punch" in close combat, or use both ends at once for a Dual-Weapon Attack against two adjacent foes. Attacks with this complex weapon are at -1.

**Quarterstaff** (pp. B273-274) – *Universal*. A balanced 5' to 7' wooden pole, wielded two-handed (often in a central grip). It enjoys worldwide praise for its defensive utility and ability to deal combat-winning blows. The GM should allow it to benefit from *Parrying with Two-Handed Weapons* (p. 123), even if he doesn't otherwise use that rule. Soldiers regularly learned staff fighting to ensure that they could defend themselves if their polearm lost its head. A broken polearm uses the statistics for a Long Staff (p. 230) – as does the traditional 8' to 9' medieval European quarterstaff. Drag limits the striking power of a long staff, and it requires a Defensive Grip (pp. 109-111) to be useful at close range.



*Pilum*

**Rapier** (pp. 227, 229, B273; illustration, p. 219) – *Europe*. A long, one-handed sword with a stiff, narrow blade built for stabbing (but not for parrying – rapierists often carried a secondary weapon or a cloak for defense). Despite modern misconceptions, the rapier *isn't* flimsy or fragile; it's simply longer and thinner than a military cut-and-thrust sword of similar weight, as befits a civilian weapon designed to combat lightly armored foes. There are many variations. The Light Rapier (p. 229) is a later-era weapon well on its way to becoming a Smallsword (p. B273). In the other direction, there were longer rapiers calculated to give a tactical edge in a duel. Historically, the rapier "arms race" led to lengths so extreme that London had a law restricting length, enforced by snapping off the excess! Such blades aren't practical for adventurers. Early rapiers generally had sharp edges and enough weight for cutting, and later blades sometimes emulated this. These are the Edged Rapier (p. 229) and Light Edged Rapier (p. 229), respectively.

**Repeating Crossbow** (p. 231; illustration, p. 97) – *Asia*. A Crossbow (p. B276) that's first loaded (from a gravity-fed "magazine") and cocked, and then fired, by pushing and pulling a lever. It has no separate trigger and can't be carried cocked. The shooter must take a Ready maneuver immediately before each shot, but can shoot every other second.

**Ring Sword** – *China*. A Large Falchion (p. 227) decorated with rings on the back edge.

**Rochin** – *Japan*. A Short Spear (p. 229).

**Rokushaku Kama** – *Okinawa*. A kama (Sickle, p. 226)-Quarterstaff (pp. B273-274) combination. See *Combination Weapons* (p. 214).

**Rokushakubo** – *Okinawa*. A Quarterstaff (pp. B273-274), tapered at the ends.

**Rondel Dagger** (p. 228; illustration, p. 11) – *Europe*. A heavy dagger with broad discs as its pommel and handguard. The pommel design lets the user drive a blow home with the other hand, erasing -2 of the penalty for targeting chinks in armor (p. B400). If the wielder is wearing gauntlets (any gloves with DR 4+), the discs lock the weapon in place point-down: the wielder *must* use a Reversed Grip (pp. 111-112) but gets +2 to resist disarming.

**Rope Dart** (p. 229; illustration, p. 233) – *China*. A small metal throwing spike on the end of a rope. This lets the user retrieve the projectile after hurling it. The dart is smooth and bullet-shaped – not barbed – and can't snag and reel in the *target*. Light, ranged, and retrievable, the rope dart is a useful backup weapon for cavalry.

**Saber** (p. B273) – *Europe*. A light, one-handed cut-and-thrust sword built for fencing.

**Sai** (pp. 227-228, 231; illustration, p. 133) – *Okinawa*. A three-tined metal truncheon with a long central spike and a pair of short side prongs. Most often both side prongs point forward, but sometimes one is reversed (no game effect). Historical weapons had *sharp* points, but

improvised and modern ones might be blunt. Similar weapons exist throughout Asia; several predate the sai.

**San Jie Gun –** *China*. See Three-Part Staff (p. 225).

**Sang-Jyel-Bong –** *Korea*. A Nunchaku (p. B272).

**Sap Glove** (p. 226) **–** *Universal*. A soft leather glove with steel shot or lead powder sewn into it to increase punching power. Gives the hand DR 2 and Bad Grip 1 (p. B123).

**Scimitar –** *Asia*. A blanket term for a curved, one-handed slashing sword from Eastern Europe, Turkey, the Middle East, or South Asia, such as the *kiljic* (Ottoman Empire), *podang* (Indonesia), *shamshir* (Persia), *shasqa* (Russia), or *talwar* (India). A light one is a Shortsword (p. B273); a heavier one is a Cavalry Saber (p. B271) if steeply curved, a Thrusting Broadsword (p. B271) otherwise. A curved *chopping* sword, also common in these parts, is a Falchion (p. 229) or a Large Falchion (p. 227).

**Scythe** (p. B274) **–** *Universal.* A *big* sickle, used to harvest grain. Rarely a dedicated weapon – but a weaponized scythe forms the basis of the *okusarigama* (p. 221).

**Segu –** *Indonesia*. A slender metal Baton (p. B273).

**Sheng Biao –** *China*. See Rope Dart (p. 222).

**Shield** (pp. B273, B287) **–** *Universal.* Shields of all sizes appear worldwide. Some are designed for offense. A spiked boss (p. B273) adds $20 and 5 lbs. A sharpened edge – just a portion, for the bearer's safety! – is an option for any *metal* shield. This adds no cost or weight, and inflicts swing-2 cutting damage. Light shields can have one or two knives attached to the grip (like the Indian *madu*), making knife attacks an option for the shield hand without sacrificing blocking – although Knife and Shield skills are at -1. Add the cost and weight of the chosen knives.

**Short Staff** (p. B273) **–** *Universal.* A balanced stick, between 25" and 36" long, made of rattan (often fire-hardened) for training, hardwood for fighting. Often used in pairs.

**Shortsword** (p. B273) **–** *Universal.* A one-handed cut-and-thrust sword between 18" and 24" long.

**Shuriken** (p. 226, B276; illustration, p. 84) **–** *Japan*. An entire class of metal throwing weapons – small enough to conceal in clothing or hair – hurled with a flick of the hand or a snap of the wrist. Historically, they were samurai weapons as much as "ninja weapons." The best-known are *star shuriken,* which are disc-, cross-, or star-shaped, with sharp edges or spikes. Most have three to nine points, with four or eight being usual. A few are S-shaped. Any might have holes cut in them to make a distinctive sound in flight – as a psychological ploy, for signaling, or merely to show off. *Spike shuriken* resemble needles. Sharp at one end, the other end may be blunt, sharp, or have a fin-like tail. All shuriken use the statistics on p. B276, but alter damage to thrust-2 impaling for spike shuriken. It's possible to claw with a shuriken held in the hand; see the *Melee Weapon Table* (p. 226, 230). Cinematic ninja sometimes do this with shuriken held in the toes, which requires a perk equivalent to Capoeira's Razor Kicks (p. 154) and uses identical rules.

**Siangkam –** *Indonesia*. An arrow-like metal dagger used in one hand (often one in *each* hand). Treat as a Small Knife (p. B272) that's only capable of thrusting attacks.

**Sickle** (p. 226) **–** *Universal.* A weaponized farmer's tool. The blade on a weapon-quality sickle is usually straight, not crescent-shaped. This allows hooking and swung impaling attacks.

**Slashing Wheel** (p. 228) **–** *China*. A semicircular blade, sometimes toothed, gripped by a crossbar and used to cut opponents. Often used in pairs.

**Sleeve Sword –** *China*. A spring-loaded Shortsword (p. B273) attached to the arm. See *Trick Weapons* (p. 218) for rules.

## Silly Weapons

Realistic "martial-arts weapons" can be inefficient, overly complex, and/or hopelessly specialized. Cinematic ones are often all of those things and *silly,* too! They're still terrifyingly effective in their native setting, though. Below are some fictional examples. Cost, weight, and other details are deliberately left vague. Such factors seem quite irrelevant to the cinematic schoolgirls and old men who wield these weapons.

*Buzzsaw Ball-and-Chain:* This schoolyard classic combines the benefits of a heavy kusari and a giant morningstar! Now with spring-loaded saw blades in the ball. (The chain strikes with Kusari skill for thrust+3 crushing. The ball uses Two-Handed Flail skill for swing+4 crushing. Popping the blades takes a Ready maneuver but makes damage *cutting.* Reach 1-4*.)

*Decapitating Hood:* There's nothing quite like a chain that ends in a metal bell full of *whirling blades.* Catch your enemy's head in it to decapitate him. Fling the severed head at his friends to send an unmistakable message. True masters will want two! (Decapitating Hood is a unique DX/Very Hard skill. Roll at -5 to drop the bell over an opponent's head. It inflicts 5d cutting damage per second to the neck until the victim dies of decapitation. Expelling the head gives +5 to Intimidation. Ejecting a head or readying the weapon after a throw requires a Ready maneuver. Reach 1-10.)

*Doom Pincers:* What's better than a heavy gauntlet fitted with razor-sharp shears? One with a *powerful clockwork engine,* of course! (The blades can strike as a regular shortsword or grapple at -2 to grappling skill. Grappled foes take 2d cutting damage per second to the grappled body part. Reach C, 1.)

*Sword-Chuks:* Two swords linked pommel-to-pommel with a chain let you use slick nunchaku moves to slice and dice enemies. Yes, these are *full-length* swords – and that means superior reach! (Treat exactly as a nunchaku except that damage is *cutting* and reach is 1, 2.)

*Whip-Blade:* This sword is actually *five* blades linked end-to-end by a chain. A clever mechanism hidden in the handle lets you pull the sections together into a chopping blade or loosen them to create a deadly metal whip. (Functions as a regular falchion, wielded with the Shortsword skill, or as a two-yard whip that inflicts *cutting* damage, which uses the Whip skill. Changing modes requires a Ready maneuver.)

## Improvised Weapons

A real weapon is preferable to an improvised one – but an improvised one is much better than nothing. Below are some everyday items that can stand in for real weapons at skill and/or damage penalties. The skills or techniques needed appear in brackets. The Improvised Weapons perk (p. 50) for a skill allows you to ignore penalties to that skill but not to damage.

Treat an improvised weapon as *cheap* for all purposes. If it uses an unarmed skill or technique, the user can still parry with his hand. If it uses a weapon skill, it *can't* parry unless specifically noted. Glass objects break on 1-3 on 1d on any strike or parry; on a 1, you also suffer thrust cutting damage to the hand.

*Barbell:* Swing as maul at full damage [Two-Handed Axe/Mace-2]. Can parry.

*Belt:* Choke as rope garrote at -1 damage [Garrote-1]. Strike with buckle as life-preserver at -1 damage [Flail-1]. Strike or entangle as one-yard whip at -1 damage [Whip-2].

*Bootlaces:* Choke as rope garrote at -1 damage [Garrote-2].

*Bottle, Broken:* Strike as small knife at full damage but armor divisor (0.5) [Knife-2].

*Bottle, Intact:* Strike as knobbed club at -2 damage [Axe/Mace-2]. If it breaks, treat as "Bottle, Broken." Can parry.

*Bra:* Choke as rope garrote at -1 damage [Garrote-2]. Underwire can rake at +1 "damage" [Eye-Rake-1].

*Car Antenna:* Swing as baton or short staff at -2 damage [Shortsword-1 or Smallsword-1] – or at *full* damage with a bunch [Shortsword-2 or Smallsword-2]. Can parry.

*Chain, Unweighted:* Strike as kusari at -1 damage [Kusari-1] or entangle as kusari [Kusari-4]. Cheap chain is $6 and 2 lbs. per yard.

*Chopstick:* Punch as yawara [Hammer Fist-1].*

*Comb or Brush:* Punch as yawara [Hammer Fist-1].*

*Credit Card:* Cut with edge for swing-4 cut, maximum 1d-4 [Brawling-4, Karate-4, or Knife-4].*

*Curtain Rod:* Strike as jo at full damage if solid, -2 damage if hollow [Broadsword-1, Staff-1, or Two-Handed Sword-1]. Can parry.

*Dental Floss, Entire Braided Spool:* Choke as *wire* garrote at -2 damage [Garrote-3].

*Dumbbell:* Swing as small mace at full damage [Axe/Mace-1]. Can parry.

*Earring Posts, Pins, etc.:* Rake at +1 "damage" [Eye-Rake-1].*

*Eyeglasses:* Rake at +1 "damage" [Eye-Rake-1], automatically ruining them as eyeglasses.*

*Ice Scraper:* Swing as small knife at -2 damage [Knife-1].

*Keys:* Rake at +1 "damage" [Eye-Rake-1].*

*Magazine, Tightly Rolled:* Thrust (*not* swing) as baton at full damage [Shortsword-1]. Can parry.

*Nail Clippers:* Stab as dagger at -3 damage [Knife-2]. Rake at +1 "damage" [Eye-Rake-1].*

*Pen or Pencil:* Stab as dagger at -2 damage (-1 for a *huge* pen) [Knife-1].

*Purse, Clutched:* Use for two-handed punch [Two-Handed Punch-2]. Doesn't affect damage but eliminates extra risk of hand injury.

*Purse, Swung on Strap:* Strike as life-preserver at -1 damage [Flail-1].

*Rim of Bottle, Can, or Glass:* Punch as yawara [Hammer Fist-1].*

*Ruler, Steel:* Strike as one-yard urumi at -2 damage [Whip-2]. Too whippy to use with Knife skill!

*Scarf:* Choke as rope garrote at full damage [Garrote-1]. Knotting something heavy into an end creates a weighted scarf that strikes at full damage [Flail-1].

*Scissors:* Stab as dagger at -1 damage [Knife-1].

*Shank or Shiv:* A sharpened spoon, toothbrush handle, etc., made by prison inmates. Stab as dagger at -1 damage [Knife-1].

*Stiletto Heel:* In hand, swing for swing-4 imp, maximum 1d-4 [Axe/Mace-4]. Worn, stamp at +1 damage [Stamp Kick-2].

* Warriors who know Pressure Secrets (p. B215) may use this item to punch at no penalty beyond the standard -2 for that skill. This gives +1 on the ensuing Pressure Secrets roll. An item that counts as brass knuckles or a yawara gives its usual +1 to damage. An item with an edge, like a credit card, can deal *cutting* damage instead of impaling damage, if the attacker prefers.

**Sling** (p. B276) – *Universal.* A thong or cord with a pouch or cup for a missile. The wielder loads the pouch, grasps both ends of the cord in one hand, whirls the loaded sling overhead (horizontally) or next to him (vertically), and releases one end to launch the projectile. Attaching a sling to a stick wielded in two hands improves leverage, thereby increasing power and range; this is the Staff Sling. Either type of sling can lob stones or lead bullets – or even primitive Molotov cocktails (see *Molotov Cocktails and Oil Flasks,* p. B411), at Acc 0 and 40% normal range.

**Smallsword** (p. B273) – *France*. This one-handed thrusting sword is speedy on attack *and* defense, but its light weight and short reach are serious liabilities. The Dress Smallsword (p. 229) is even lighter and shorter, but can pass as a fashion accessory.

**Sodegarami** (p. 230; illustration, p. 64) – *Japan.* A metal-reinforced staff with barbs along its length and a barbed head that's either forked or T-shaped. The design is intended to snag clothing, and the standard attack with this weapon is the Hook technique (p. 74). The similar *sasumata* ends in a wide, blunt fork intended to enclose the opponent's torso. Use the same statistics but remove the thrust+2 crushing attack. However, the wielder can shove (p. B372) a standing foe using the Staff skill, or pin (p. B370) him if he's prone or against a wall – both at reach 1, 2. *Modern* sasumata lack barbs; hooking inflicts no damage.

**Southern-Tiger Fork –** *China*. A Trident (p. 229).

**Spear** (p. 196, B273, B276) **–** *Universal.* A pole with a pointed stabbing head, prized for its versatility: long, useful in one hand or two, often throwable, and uniformly deadly. Many variants sacrifice some flexibility for special-purpose effectiveness. The Short Spear (p. 229) – short, one-handed, and unthrowable – is a poor man's stabbing sword. The Long Spear (p. B273) is exclusively a melee weapon, employed with or without a shield for formation fighting. The Heavy Spear (p. 229) is similar, but has an extra-wide head for disemboweling; it's so massive that it *requires* two hands.

**Stiletto** (p. 228; illustration, p. 31) **–** *Italy*. A thin, stiff dagger that can slip between the links of mail and into the joints of plate armor. The narrow blade removes -2 of the penalty for targeting chinks in armor (p. B400).

**Straight Razor** (p. 228) **–** *Universal.* A man's folding razor, used to slash. It can't stab or parry. See *Capoeira* (pp. 153-154) for rules for kicking with a razor held in the toes; this gives reach 1 and +1 damage. Fine- and/or presentation-quality blades are common.

**Sykes-Fairbairn Commando Knife –** *England*. A famous knife used in Fairbairn Close Combat Training (pp. 182-183). The broad, double-edged blade is, at its base, wider than the handle. Balanced for melee *and* throwing. Treat as a Large Knife (pp. B272, B276).

**Tachi –** *Japan*. Treat this cavalry sword as a Cavalry Saber (p. B271) or a Katana (pp. B271, B274), depending on size. The main difference from the katana is that it's slung, not thrust through a sash.

**Tactical Flashlight –** *USA.* A shock-resistant flashlight designed for use as a Baton (p. B273) is $100, 1 lb.; a tough add-on light for an existing baton is $80. A smaller light with a reinforced or toothed lens rim counts as a *yawara* (p. 226), and is $100, 0.25 lb.

**Tanto –** *Japan*. A chisel-pointed Large Knife (p. B272).

**Tapado –** *Philippines*. A stick equivalent to a Jo (pp. 227, 230), used with moves similar to Jojutsu (p. 192).

**Tekko –** *Japan, Okinawa.* This variation on Brass Knuckles (p. B271) generally consists of a handle or thumb and pinky rings supporting a "knuckle" of metal.

**Tetsubo** (p. 230; illustration, p. 61) **–** *Japan*. The name means "iron staff," but it's actually a two-handed *wooden* club with an iron-studded cap. Usually used in a Defensive Grip (pp. 109-111).

**Three-Part Staff** (p. 230; illustration, p. 9) **–** *China*. Three short staffs linked by rope or chain, used two-handed – traditionally with a Defensive Grip (pp. 109-111). The wielder can grasp it at one end and swing it as an extra-long flail, or employ both ends like clubs or nunchaku for a Dual-Weapon Attack on adjacent foes. A difficult weapon; all attacks are at -1.

**Throwing Axe** (pp. B271, B276) **–** *Europe.* An Axe (p. B271) balanced for throwing. It comes in many varieties. The Small Throwing Axe (pp. 226, 231) is halfway between a full-sized axe and a Hatchet (pp. B271, B276) in size. Cruciform throwing axes (and hatchets) that lack proper handles give -2 to skill as melee weapons but cost $10 less.

**Throwing Knife** (p. 231) **–** *Universal.* True throwing knives rarely have a handguard, often lack a substantial handle, and are balanced for hurling, not fighting. This gives -2 to skill in melee combat. Like all knives, they come in many sizes; the Large Throwing Knife and Small Throwing Knife are typical.

**Throwing Stick** (p. 231) **–** *Universal.* Any heavy stick balanced enough to throw.

**Timbe –** *Okinawa*. A buckler-style light Shield (pp. B273, B287) used to strike and block.

**Tobiguchi –** *Japan.* The weaponized version of a short-bladed fire hook. Treat as an unthrowable Hatchet (p. B271) capable of the Hook technique (p. 74).

**Tomahawk –** *American Indian.* A Hatchet (pp. B271, B276), Small Axe (p. 226), or Small Throwing Axe (p. 226), depending on size and balance. Often sports a back spike (pick); see *Combination Weapons* (p. 231).

**Tonfa** (p. 226; illustration, p. 89) **–** *Okinawa*. A side-handled Baton (p. B273), often used in pairs. Held in a Reversed Grip (pp. 111-112) to aid Karate parries and enhance punches, or quickly spun to strike as a club.

**Tongkat –** *Indonesia*. A Short Staff (p. B273).

**Toya –** *Indonesia*. A Quarterstaff (pp. B273-274).

**Trident** (p. 229) **–** *Ancient Rome*. A three-tined fork based on a fishing spear, used with a Net (p. B276) by gladiators. Multiple tines make it tip-heavy (-2 to hit) and easy to intercept (+1 to target's Block or Parry), and distribute the force of impact (armor divisor (0.5)), but are tricky to evade (-1 to enemy's Dodge).

**Truncheon –** *Universal.* A generic term for a club of Blackjack (p. B271) to Baton (p. B273) size.

**Tuja –** *Okinawa*. A small fishing trident, used one-handed. Treat as a Sai (pp. 227-228, 231) with a (0.5) armor divisor.

**Uchine –** *Japan.* A throwing arrow. Treat as a Plumbata (p. 221).

**Urumi** (p. 230; illustration, p. 218) **–** *India.* A one-handed sword with a long, flexible blade, used to whip the target. Cutting damage assumes that one or both edges are sharp. Blunt urumi exist; these can only make crushing attacks. Sharpness doesn't affect cost or weight.

**Wakizashi –** *Japan.* This curved Shortsword (p. B273) is the traditional partner of the Katana (pp. B271, B274).

**War Fork –** *Europe.* A Trident (see above).

**Warhammer** (p. B274) **–** *Europe.* A long, two-handed Pick (p. B271). Often given a heavy hammer behind the spike (see *Combination Weapons,* p. 214).

**Weighted Scarf** (p. 227) **–** *India.* A scarf with a weight in one or both ends. Famously used as a Garrote (p. B272) by the Thuggee cult, but also a serviceable light flail.

**Whip** (p. B274) **–** *Universal.* A length of braided leather that allows the wielder to deliver lashes or use the Entangle technique (p. 71). At 2 lbs. per yard (footnote 12, p. B274), the whip is weighted and studded. Those interested primarily in entangling can use a lighter whip that inflicts swing-5 and weighs 0.5 lb. per yard. ST is 3, +1 per yard. Other statistics (including cost) don't change.

**Wooden Stake** (pp. B272, B276) **–** *Universal.* A pointed stick. Better than nothing.

**Yagyuzue –** *Japan*. A walking stick made by carefully fitting bamboo segments around a flanged steel rod, encasing this composite core in papier-mâché, and then lacquering the whole thing. This yields a beautiful hidden weapon. Treat it as a Jo (pp. 227, 230) with +1 to swinging damage. Its painstaking construction makes it presentation quality *and* fine quality. Cost – if available at all – is $100. Other statistics don't change.

**Yari –** *Japan*. A Spear (pp. B273, B276). May have an L-shaped head to facilitate the Disarming (p. 70) and Hook (p. 74) techniques; this adds $10 and 0.5 lb. Such spears aren't throwable.

**Yarinage –** *Japan*. A Javelin (pp. B273, B276).

**Yawara –** *Japan*. A short stick held in the fist with its ends protruding, used as a fist load and a lever. Cost and weight are as Brass Knuckles (p. B271). Gives +1 to damage with the Hammer Fist technique (p. 74) and +1 to follow-up rolls with Judo holds and locks (to injure, prevent escape, etc.). The similar *dokko, kubotan,* and *tenouchi* use identical rules.

**Yumi –** *Japan*. A Bow (p. B275), most often a *dai-kyu* (p. 215).

**Zweihänder –** *Germany*. A Thrusting Greatsword (p. B274) with a *ricasso* to facilitate a Defensive Grip (pp. 109-111).

# Melee Weapon Table

Each melee weapon in the table below appears once per skill that can be used to wield it. Weapons capable of several different attacks get one line per basic attack. In all cases, "–" means the statistic doesn't apply, "var." means the value varies, and "spec." indicates that special rules apply; see the footnotes. Other terms and notation are as defined in *Weapon Statistics* (pp. B268-271). For quick reference:

*TL:* The tech level at which the weapon became widespread in the real world.

*Weapon:* The name of the specific weapon if it's unique to a particular culture, or of the *class* of weapon if it's used in many places (see the appropriate entry on pp. 212-226).

*Damage:* The ST-based damage that the weapon inflicts. Weapons that are poor at penetrating armor have an armor divisor of (0.5), which multiplies DR by 2.

*Reach:* The weapon's reach, in yards. "C" indicates a weapon for close combat (see p. B391). A weapon with multiple reaches (e.g., "1, 2") can strike at any of those reaches – but an asterisk (*) means that changing reach requires a Ready maneuver.

*Parry:* The modifier to parry when using the weapon with the indicated skill. "F" means the weapon is a fencing weapon (see p. B404). "U" means it's unbalanced and can't parry on the turn it attacks. "No" means it *can't* parry!

*Cost:* The price of a new weapon, in $.

*Weight:* The weapon's weight, in lbs.

*ST:* The minimum ST needed to wield the weapon properly; fighters with lower ST suffer -1 to skill per point of ST deficit. Effective ST for damage purposes can't exceed triple the listed ST. "†" means the weapon requires two hands; "‡" means it requires two hands and becomes *unready* after an attack unless you have at least 1.5 times the listed ST.

*Notes:* Any special notes, including applicable footnotes at the end of the table.

| *TL* | *Weapon* | *Damage* | *Reach* | *Parry* | *Cost* | *Weight* | *ST* | *Notes* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **AXE/MACE (DX-5, Flail-4, or Two-Handed Axe/Mace-3)** | | | | | | | | |
| 0 | Knobbed Club | sw+1 cr | 1 | 0 | $20 | 2 | 8 | |
| 0 | Round Mace | sw+2 cr | 1 | 0U | $35 | 5 | 12 | [1] |
| 0 | Small Axe | sw+1 cut | 1 | 0U | $45 | 3 | 10 | |
| 0 | Small Round Mace | sw+1 cr | 1 | 0U | $25 | 3 | 10 | [1] |
| 0 | Small Throwing Axe | sw+1 cut | 1 | 0U | $50 | 3 | 10 | [1] |
| 1 | Sickle | sw cut | 1 | 0 | $40 | 2 | 8 | |
| | *or* | sw imp | 1 | 0U | – | – | 8 | [2] |
| | *or* | thr-2 cut | 1 | 0U | – | – | 8 | Hook. [3] |
| **BRAWLING, KARATE, or DX** | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Myrmex | thr cr | C | 0 | $20 | 0.25 | – | [4, 5] |
| 2 | Cestus | thr cr | C | 0 | $50 | 1 | – | [4, 5] |
| 3 | Bladed Hand | sw-2 cut | C | 0 | $100 | 1 | 6 | [4] |
| | *or* | thr imp | C | 0 | – | – | 6 | [4] |
| 3 | Combat Fan | thr cr | C | 0 | $40 | 1 | 7 | [4] |
| | *or* | thr-2 cut | C | 0 | – | – | 6 | -2 to hit. |
| 3 | Hook Sword | thr-1 cut | C | 0 | $200 | 3 | – | Hilt punch. [4, 5] |
| 3 | Qian Kun Ri Yue Dao | thr-1 cut | C | 0 | $250 | 3 | – | Hilt punch. [4, 5] |
| 3 | Shuriken | thr-2 cut | C | 0 | $3 | 0.1 | – | Used to claw. [4] |
| 3 | Tonfa | thr cr | C | 0 | $40 | 1.5 | – | Butt jab. [4] |
| 4 | Backsword | thr cr | C | 0 | $550 | 3 | – | Hilt punch. [4, 5] |
| 5 | Mensurschläger | thr cr | C | 0 | $500 | 3 | – | Hilt punch. [4, 5] |
| 6 | Sap Glove | thr cr | C | 0 | $30 | 0.5 | – | [4, 5] |

*Craig: Uh, uh, they're not that cool.*
*Stan: Hyeah, "they're not that cool." These are real authentic weapons from the Far East.*
*– **South Park,** "Good Times with Weapons"*

| *TL* | *Weapon* | *Damage* | *Reach* | *Parry* | *Cost* | *Weight* | *ST* | *Notes* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **BROADSWORD (DX-5, Force Sword-4, Rapier-4, Saber-4, Shortsword-2, or Two-Handed Sword-4)** | | | | | | | | |
| 0 | Jo | sw cr | 1 | 0 | $10 | 2 | 9 | |
| | *or* | thr cr | 1 | 0 | – | – | 9 | |
| 3 | Bokken | sw+1 cr | 1 | 0 | $40 | 3 | 10 | |
| | *or* | thr+1 cr | 1 | 0 | – | – | 10 | |
| 3 | Dao | sw+2 cut | 1 | 0U | $700 | 5 | 11 | |
| | *or* | thr imp | 1 | 0U | – | – | 11 | |
| 3 | Estoc | thr+2 imp | 1 | 0 | $500 | 3 | 10 | [6] |
| | *or* | sw+1 cr | 1 | 0 | – | – | 10 | |
| 3 | Hook Sword | sw+1 cr | 1 | 0 | $200 | 3 | 10 | [5] |
| | *or* | thr+1 cr | 1 | 0 | – | – | 10 | |
| | *or* | thr-2 cut | 1 | 0 | – | – | 10 | Hook. [3, 7] |
| 3 | Jian | sw cut | 1 | 0 | $700 | 3 | 10 | |
| | *or* | thr+1 imp | 1, 2 | 0 | – | – | 10 | |
| 3 | Large Falchion | sw+2 cut | 1 | 0U | $625 | 4.5 | 11 | |
| | *or* | thr-1 imp | 1 | 0U | – | – | 11 | |
| 3 | Longsword | sw+1 cut | 1 | 0 | $700 | 4 | 10 | |
| | *or* | thr+2 imp | 1, 2 | 0 | – | – | 10 | |
| 4 | Backsword | sw+1 cut | 1 | 0 | $550 | 3 | 10 | [5] |
| | *or* | thr+1 imp | 1 | 0 | – | – | 10 | |
| 4 | Edged Rapier | sw cut | 1, 2 | 0 | $1,000 | 3 | 10 | |
| | *or* | thr+1 imp | 1, 2 | 0 | – | – | 10 | |
| 4 | Late Katana | sw+1 cut | 1 | 0 | $550 | 3 | 10 | |
| | *or* | thr+1 imp | 1 | 0 | – | – | 10 | |
| 5 | Mensurschläger | sw+1 cut | 1 | 0 | $500 | 3 | 10 | [5] |
| | *or* | thr cr | 1 | 0 | – | – | 10 | |
| **FLAIL (DX-6, Axe/Mace-4, or Two-Handed Flail-3)** | | | | | | | | |
| 0 | Bola Perdida | sw cr | 1 | -2U | $10 | 1 | 6 | [1, 8] |
| 0 | Bolas | sw+1 cr | 1 | -2U | $20 | 2 | 7 | [1, 8] |
| 0 | Life-Preserver | sw-1 cr | 1 | -2U | $5 | 0.5 | 5 | [8] |
| 0 | Weighted Scarf | sw cr | 1 | -2U | $10 | 1 | 6 | [8] |
| **GARROTE (DX-4)** | | | | | | | | |
| 0 | Weighted Scarf | spec. | C | No | $10 | 1 | – | [9] |
| **JITTE/SAI (DX-5, Force Sword-4, Main-Gauche-4, or Shortsword-3)** | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | Jutte | sw cr | 1 | 0 | $40 | 1 | 6 | [10] |
| | *or* | thr cr | 1 | 0 | – | – | 6 | |
| 3 | Sai | sw cr | 1 | 0 | $60 | 1.5 | 7 | [1, 10] |
| | *or* | thr imp | 1 | 0 | – | – | 7 | |
| **JUDO, SUMO WRESTLING, WRESTLING, or DX** | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | Kakute | spec. | C | No | $10 | 0.1 | – | +1 vs. break free. |

| TL | Weapon | Damage | Reach | Parry | Cost | Weight | ST | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **KNIFE (DX-4, Force Sword-3, Main-Gauche-3, or Shortsword-3)** | | | | | | | | |
| 0 | Short Baton | sw-1 cr | C, 1 | -1 | $10 | 0.5 | 5 | |
| | *or* | thr cr | C | -1 | – | – | 5 | |
| 2 | Katar | sw-3 cut | C, 1 | -1 | $50 | 1 | 6 | [5, 6, 11] |
| | *or* | thr+1 imp | C | -1 | – | – | 6 | |
| 2 | Kukri | sw-1 cut | C, 1 | 0 | $50 | 1.5 | 7 | |
| | *or* | thr-1 imp | C | 0 | – | – | 7 | |
| 2 | Long Knife | sw-1 cut | C, 1 | 0 | $120 | 1.5 | 7 | |
| | *or* | thr imp | C, 1 | 0 | – | – | 7 | |
| 3 | Balisong | sw-3 cut | C, 1 | -1 | $50 | 0.5 | 5 | +1 Holdout. |
| | *or* | thr-1 imp | C | -1 | – | – | 5 | |
| 3 | Deer Antlers | thr+1 cut | C | 0 | $75 | 1.5 | 5 | [5, 7] |
| 3 | Knife-Wheel | thr+1 cut | C | 0 | $75 | 1.5 | 5 | [5] |
| | *or* | thr-1 imp | C | 0 | – | – | 5 | |
| 3 | Rondel Dagger | thr imp | C | -1 | $40 | 1 | 6 | [6] |
| 3 | Slashing Wheel | thr+1 cut | C | 0 | $60 | 1 | 5 | [5] |
| 3 | Stiletto | thr-1 imp | C | -1 | $20 | 0.25 | 5 | [6] |
| 4 | Main-Gauche | sw-3 cut | C, 1 | 0 | $50 | 1.25 | 6 | [5] |
| | *or* | thr imp | C | 0 | – | – | 6 | |
| 5 | Straight Razor | thr-2 cut | C | No | $30 | 0.1 | 4 | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **KUSARI (DX-6, Monowire Whip-3, Two-Handed Flail-4, or Whip-3)** | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | Rope Dart | sw-1 cr | 1-4 | -2U | $30 | 0.5 | 5† | [8, 12] |
| | *or* | thr-1 imp | 1-4 | -2U | – | – | 5† | [8, 12] |
| 3 | Chain Whip | sw+(1-4) cr | 1-4* | -2U | $50/yd. | 3/yd. | var.† | [8, 13] |
| 3 | Kusarigama | sw+2 cr | 1, 2* | -2U | $80 | 4.5 | 10† | [8] |
| | *or* | sw+2 cut | 1, 2* | -2U | – | – | 11† | [8, 14] |
| 3 | Kusarijutte | sw+2 cr | 1, 2* | -2U | $80 | 3.5 | 8† | [8] |
| **MAIN-GAUCHE (DX-5, Jitte/Sai-4, Knife-4, Rapier-3, Saber-3, or Smallsword-3)** | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | Deer Antlers | thr+1 cut | C | 0F | $75 | 1.5 | 5 | [5, 7] |
| 3 | Jutte | sw cr | 1 | 0F | $40 | 1 | 6 | |
| | *or* | thr cr | 1 | 0F | – | – | 6 | |
| 3 | Knife-Wheel | thr+1 cut | C | 0F | $75 | 1.5 | 5 | [5] |
| | *or* | thr-1 imp | C | 0F | – | – | 5 | |
| 3 | Rondel Dagger | thr imp | C | 0F | $40 | 1 | 6 | [6] |
| 3 | Sai | sw cr | 1 | 0F | $60 | 1.5 | 7 | [1] |
| | *or* | thr imp | 1 | 0F | – | – | 7 | |
| 3 | Slashing Wheel | thr+1 cut | C | 0F | $60 | 1 | 5 | [5] |
| 3 | Stiletto | thr-1 imp | C | 0F | $20 | 0.25 | 5 | [6] |
| 4 | Main-Gauche | sw-3 cut | C, 1 | 0F | $50 | 1.25 | 6 | [5] |
| | *or* | thr imp | C, 1 | 0F | – | – | 6 | |

| TL | Weapon | Damage | Reach | Parry | Cost | Weight | ST | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **POLEARM (DX-5, Spear-4, Staff-4, or Two-Handed Axe/Mace-4)** | | | | | | | | |
| 0 | Eku | sw+3 cr | 1, 2* | 0U | $40 | 8 | 12‡ | |
| 3 | Bill | sw+3 cut | 2, 3* | 0U | $125 | 8 | 11‡ | |
| | *or* | thr+3 imp | 1-3* | 0U | – | – | 11† | |
| | *or* | thr-1 cut | 1-3* | 0U | – | – | 11† | Hook. [3, 7] |
| 3 | Dueling Bill | sw+2 cut | 1, 2* | 0U | $100 | 6 | 9† | |
| | *or* | thr+3 imp | 1, 2* | 0 | – | – | 9† | |
| | *or* | thr-1 cut | 1, 2* | 0U | – | – | 9† | Hook. [3, 7] |
| 3 | Dueling Glaive | sw+2 cut | 1, 2* | 0U | $80 | 6 | 9† | |
| | *or* | thr+3 imp | 1, 2* | 0 | – | – | 9† | |
| 3 | Dueling Halberd | sw+4 cut | 1, 2* | 0U | $120 | 10 | 12† | |
| | *or* | sw+3 imp | 1, 2* | 0U | – | – | 12† | [2] |
| | *or* | thr+3 imp | 1, 2* | 0 | – | – | 11† | |
| 3 | Dueling Pollaxe | sw+3 cut | 1, 2* | 0U | $100 | 8 | 11† | |
| | *or* | sw+3 cr | 1, 2* | 0U | – | – | 11† | |
| 3 | Heavy Horse-Cutter | sw+5 cut | 2, 3* | 0U | $150 | 12 | 13‡ | |
| | *or* | thr+3 imp | 1-3* | 0U | – | – | 12† | |
| 3 | Lajatang | sw+2 cut | 1, 2* | 0U | $100 | 7 | 10† | |
| | *or* | thr+2 cut | 1, 2* | 0 | – | – | 10† | |
| 3 | Light Horse-Cutter | sw+4 cut | 1, 2* | 0U | $120 | 8 | 11‡ | |
| | *or* | thr+3 imp | 1, 2* | 0U | – | – | 11† | |
| 3 | Monk's Spade | sw+1 cut | 1, 2* | 0U | $100 | 6 | 9† | |
| | *or* | sw+2 cr | 1, 2* | 0U | – | – | 9† | |
| | *or* | thr+2 cut | 1, 2* | 0 | – | – | 9† | |
| **RAPIER (DX-5, Broadsword-4, Main-Gauche-3, Saber-3, or Smallsword-3)** | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | Jian | sw cut | 1 | 0F | $700 | 3 | 10 | |
| | *or* | thr+1 imp | 1, 2 | 0F | – | – | 10 | |
| 4 | Edged Rapier | sw cut | 1, 2 | 0F | $1,000 | 3 | 10 | |
| | *or* | thr+1 imp | 1, 2 | 0F | – | – | 10 | |
| 4 | Light Rapier | thr+1 imp | 1 | 0F | $400 | 2 | 8 | |
| 4 | Light Edged Rapier | sw-1 cut | 1 | 0F | $700 | 2.25 | 8 | |
| | *or* | thr+1 imp | 1 | 0F | – | – | 8 | |
| **SHORTSWORD (DX-5, Broadsword-2, Force Sword-4, Jitte/Sai-3, Knife-4, Saber-4, Smallsword-4, or Tonfa-3)** | | | | | | | | |
| 0 | Short Baton | sw-1 cr | C, 1 | -1 | $10 | 0.5 | 5 | |
| | *or* | thr cr | C | -1 | – | – | 5 | |
| 2 | Dusack | sw cr | 1 | 0 | $30 | 1.5 | 7 | |
| | *or* | thr cr | 1 | 0 | – | – | 7 | |
| 2 | Falchion | sw+1 cut | 1 | 0 | $400 | 3 | 10 | |
| | *or* | thr-2 imp | 1 | 0 | – | – | 10 | |
| 2 | Large Katar | sw-1 cut | 1 | 0 | $400 | 2 | 8 | [5, 6, 11] |
| | *or* | thr+1 imp | 1 | 0 | – | – | 8 | |
| 2 | Long Knife | sw-1 cut | 1 | 0 | $120 | 1.5 | 7 | |
| | *or* | thr imp | C, 1 | 0 | – | – | 7 | |
| 2 | Small Falchion | sw cut | 1 | 0 | $200 | 2 | 8 | |
| | *or* | thr-2 imp | 1 | 0 | – | – | 8 | |
| **SMALLSWORD (DX-5, Main-Gauche-3, Rapier-3, Saber-3, or Shortsword-4)** | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | Dress Smallsword | thr imp | C, 1 | 0F | $300 | 1 | 5 | |
| **SPEAR (DX-5, Polearm-4, or Staff-2)** | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Heavy Spear | thr+4 imp | 2, 3* | 0U | $90 | 6 | 11† | [15] |
| 1 | Short Spear | thr+1 imp | 1 | 0 | $30 | 2 | 6 | [15] |
| 2 | Trident | thr+3(0.5) imp | 1* | 0U | $80 | 5 | 11 | -2 to hit. [7, 16] |
| | *two hands* | thr+4(0.5) imp | 1, 2* | 0 | – | – | 10† | -2 to hit. [7, 16] |

| TL | Weapon | Damage | Reach | Parry | Cost | Weight | ST | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **STAFF (DX-5, Polearm-4, or Spear-2)** | | | | | | | | |
| 0 | Jo | sw+1 cr | 1 | +2 | $10 | 2 | 6† | |
| | *or* | thr+1 cr | 1 | +2 | – | – | 6† | |
| 0 | Long Staff | sw+2 cr | 2, 3 | +2 | $15 | 5 | 10† | |
| | *or* | thr+2 cr | 2, 3 | +2 | – | – | 10† | |
| 3 | Dueling Bill | sw+2 cr | 1, 2 | 0U | $100 | 6 | 9† | Blunt pole. |
| | *or* | thr+2 cr | 1, 2 | 0 | – | – | 9† | Blunt tip. |
| 3 | Dueling Halberd | sw+2 cr | 1, 2 | 0U | $120 | 10 | 12† | Blunt pole. |
| | *or* | thr+2 cr | 1, 2 | 0 | – | – | 11† | Blunt tip. |
| 3 | Dueling Pollaxe | sw+2 cr | 1, 2 | 0U | $100 | 8 | 11† | Blunt pole. |
| | *or* | thr+2 cr | 1, 2 | 0 | – | – | 11† | Blunt tip. |
| 3 | Light Horse-Cutter | sw+2 cr | 1, 2 | 0U | $120 | 8 | 11† | Blunt pole. |
| | *or* | thr+2 cr | 1, 2 | 0 | – | – | 11† | Blunt tip. |
| 3 | Qian Kun Ri Yue Dao | sw+1 cut | 1 | +2 | $250 | 3 | 7† | -1 to hit. [5] |
| | *or* | thr+1 imp | 1 | +2 | – | – | 7† | -1 to hit. |
| | *or* | thr cut | 1 | +2 | – | – | 7† | -1 to hit. [17] |
| 3 | Sodegarami | sw+2 cr | 1, 2 | 0 | $100 | 4 | 7† | |
| | *or* | thr+2 cr | 1, 2 | 0 | – | – | 7† | |
| | *or* | thr-1 cut | 1, 2 | 0U | – | – | 7† | Hook. [3] |
| **TONFA (DX-5 or Shortsword-3)** | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | Tonfa | sw cr | 1 | 0 | $40 | 1.5 | 7 | [11] |
| | *or* | thr cr | C, 1 | 0 | – | – | 7 | |
| **TWO-HANDED AXE/MACE (DX-5, Axe/Mace-3, Polearm-4, or Two-Handed Flail-4)** | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Gada | sw+5 cr | 1, 2* | 0U | $100 | 15 | 16‡ | |
| | *or* | thr+2 cr | 1* | 0 | – | – | 15† | |
| 2 | Tetsubo | sw+4 cr | 1, 2* | 0U | $100 | 10 | 13‡ | |
| | *or* | thr+2 cr | 1, 2* | 0 | – | – | 12† | |
| **TWO-HANDED FLAIL (DX-6, Flail-3, Kusari-4, or Two-Handed Axe/Mace-4)** | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | Three-Part Staff | sw+3 cr | 1-3 | 0U | $60 | 5 | 11† | -1 to hit. [8] |
| | *or* | sw+1 cr | 1 | 0U | – | – | 11† | -1 to hit. [8, 17] |
| **TWO-HANDED SWORD (DX-5, Broadsword-4, or Force Sword-4)** | | | | | | | | |
| 0 | Jo | sw+1 cr | 1 | 0 | $10 | 2 | 8† | |
| | *or* | thr+1 cr | 1 | 0 | – | – | 8† | |
| 2 | Tetsubo | sw+3 cr | 1, 2 | 0U | $100 | 10 | 13† | |
| | *or* | thr+2 cr | 2 | 0 | – | – | 12† | |
| 3 | Bokken | sw+2 cr | 1 | 0 | $40 | 3 | 9† | |
| | *or* | thr+1 cr | 1 | 0 | – | – | 9† | |
| 3 | Longsword | sw+1 cut | 1 | 0 | $700 | 4 | 9† | |
| | *or* | thr+3 imp | 1, 2 | 0 | – | – | 9† | |
| 4 | Late Katana | sw+2 cut | 1 | 0 | $550 | 3 | 9† | |
| | *or* | thr+1 imp | 1 | 0 | – | – | 9† | |
| **WHIP (DX-5, Kusari-3, or Monowire Whip-3)** | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | Urumi | sw-1 cr | 1-3 | -2U | $400 | 4 | 8 | [12] |
| | *or* | sw-1(0.5) cut | 1-3 | -2U | – | – | 8 | [12] |

**Notes:**

[1] Can be thrown. See *Muscle-Powered Ranged Weapon Table* (pp. 231-232).

[2] May get *stuck;* see *Picks* (p. B405).

[3] Hook enables the Hook technique (p. 74), which also damages the victim.

[4] This attack receives Brawling or Karate damage bonuses.

[5] Gives the hand (only) DR. A myrmex gives DR 1, a cestus gives DR 4, and a sap glove gives DR 2; all are gloves of a sort and mutually exclusive with other gloves. For other weapons, this indicates a metal hilt that provides DR 4, cumulative with glove DR – although the hilt is too cramped to accommodate *metal* gauntlets. Deer antlers, hook swords, katars, qian kun ri yue dao, and wheels don't enclose the hand completely; DR applies only on a roll of 1-3 on 1d.

[6] Reduce penalty for targeting chinks in armor (p. B400) by -2.

[7] Can strike to disarm (p. B401) *without* -2 to hit for using a non-fencing weapon.

[8] Attempts to *parry* flails and kusaris are at -4; fencing weapons ("F" parry) can't parry at all! Attempts to *block* such weapons are at -2. Halve these penalties for the bola perdida, bolas, life-preserver, and weighted scarf.

[9] Counts as a rope garrote; see *Garrotes* (p. B405).

[10] Gets +2 to disarm when wielded with Jitte/Sai skill; see pp. B208, B401.

[11] Use Brawling or Karate parry if better than usual weapon parry.

[12] Can only lash the target for damage; none of the special whip rules apply.

[13] Specify maximum reach (1-4 yards) when bought. Damage is swing, +1 per yard of maximum reach. Cost and weight are *per yard.* ST is 8, +1 per yard.

[14] When swinging the kama on the end of the chain, the kusarigama can't disarm or entangle like a regular kusari (p. B406).

[15] Broad, edged head gives +1 to Tip Slash (p. 113) damage.

[16] Target at -1 to Dodge, +1 to Block or Parry.

[17] Use these statistics when using both ends for a Dual-Weapon Attack.

# Muscle-Powered Ranged Weapon Table

All terms and notation in this table follow the definitions on pp. B268-271. In brief:

*TL:* The tech level at which the weapon became widespread in the real world.

*Weapon:* The name of the weapon or class of weapon; see the matching entry on pp. 212-226.

*Damage:* The ST-based damage that the weapon inflicts.

*Acc:* Accuracy, the bonus to skill if you take an Aim maneuver before attacking.

*Range:* The number before the slash is Half-Damage Range; at or beyond this range, halve the weapon's damage roll. The number after the slash is Maximum Range. These are expressed as multiples of the wielder's ST – or the *weapon's* ST, for crossbows.

*Weight:* The weapon's weight, in lbs. If the weapon has Shots 1, this is *unloaded* weight and the weight after the slash is that of one shot. If the weapon has shots 2+, this is *loaded* weight and the weight after the slash is that of one full reload.

*RoF:* Rate of Fire. This is 1 for all of these weapons (but see *Ranged Attack Options,* pp. 119-121).

*Shots:* The number of shots the weapon can fire before you must reload. "T" indicates a thrown weapon. The parenthetical number is the number of Ready maneuvers required to reload the weapon or ready another thrown weapon. An "i" next to this means the time listed is *per shot.* Crossbows use special rules; see pp. B270, B410.

*Cost:* The price of a new weapon, in $.

*ST:* The minimum ST needed to use the weapon properly; wielders with lower ST suffer -1 to skill per point of ST deficit. "†" means the weapon requires two hands. This *isn't* the ST used to determine range and damage for a crossbow; see p. B270.

*Bulk:* The penalty to skill when you take a Move and Attack maneuver (p. B365) or use Holdout to conceal the weapon.

*Notes:* Applicable footnotes at the end of the table.

| *TL* | *Weapon* | *Damage* | *Acc* | *Range* | *Weight* | *RoF* | *Shots* | *Cost* | *ST* | *Bulk* | *Notes* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **BOLAS (No default) or SLING (DX-6)** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 0 | Bola Perdida | sw cr | 0 | ×6/×10 | 1 | 1 | T(1) | $10 | 6 | -2 | |
| **CROSSBOW (DX-4)** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | Repeating Crossbow | thr+1 imp | 1 | ×7/×15 | 10/0.6 | 1 | 10(3i) | $500 | 7† | -5 | [1, 2] |
| 3 | Composite Crossbow | thr+5 imp | 4 | ×25/×30 | 7/0.06 | 1 | 1(4) | $950 | 8† | -6 | [1] |
| **THROWN WEAPON (AXE/MACE) (DX-4)** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 0 | Round Mace | sw+2 cr | 1 | ×0.5/×1 | 5 | 1 | T(1) | $35 | 12 | -4 | |
| 0 | Small Round Mace | sw+1 cr | 1 | ×1/×1.5 | 3 | 1 | T(1) | $25 | 10 | -3 | |
| 0 | Small Throwing Axe | sw+1 cut | 1 | ×1/×1.5 | 3 | 1 | T(1) | $50 | 10 | -3 | |
| 2 | Large Hungamunga | sw+2 cut | 2 | ×1/×1.5 | 4 | 1 | T(1) | $60 | 11 | -3 | [3] |
| **THROWN WEAPON (DART) (DX-4 or Throwing-2)** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | Plumbata | thr imp | 1 | ×2.5/×3.5 | 1 | 1 | T(1) | $20 | 6 | -2 | [4] |
| **THROWN WEAPON (DISC) (DX-4 or Throwing-2)** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Discus | thr+2 cr | 2 | ×4/×6 | 2 | 1 | T(1) | $40 | 6 | -3 | |
| 2 | Chakram | thr+1 cut | 1 | ×4/×6 | 1.5 | 1 | T(1) | $50 | 6 | -2 | |
| **THROWN WEAPON (KNIFE) (DX-4)** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | Hungamunga | sw-1 cut | 1 | ×0.8/×1.5 | 1 | 1 | T(1) | $40 | 6 | -3 | [3] |
| 2 | Large Throwing Knife | thr imp | 1 | ×1/×2 | 1 | 1 | T(1) | $40 | 6 | -1 | [3] |
| 2 | Small Throwing Knife | thr-1 imp | 1 | ×0.8/×1.5 | 0.5 | 1 | T(1) | $30 | 5 | 0 | [3] |
| 3 | Sai | thr imp | 0 | ×0.8/×1.5 | 1.5 | 1 | T(1) | $60 | 7 | -3 | |
| **THROWN WEAPON (STICK) (DX-4)** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 0 | Boomerang | sw cr | 2 | ×6/×10 | 1 | 1 | T(1) | $20 | 6 | -2 | |
| 0 | Throwing Stick | sw-1 cr | 1 | ×4/×8 | 1 | 1 | T(1) | $10 | 6 | -2 | |

Notes:

[1] A crossbow bolt costs $2.

[2] Requires a Ready maneuver on the turn *immediately* before each attack, to work the lever. If using *Malfunction* (p. B279), Malf. is 14.

[3] Not balanced for melee combat! Treat a small throwing knife as a small knife, a hungamunga or a large throwing knife as a large knife, and a large hungamunga as an axe, but with -2 to skill and therefore -1 to Parry (for knives, this adds to the usual -1 to Parry).

[4] *Plumbatae* (or *pila,* p. 221) striking a nonmetallic shield – deliberately (see *Striking at Shields,* p. 112) or on a block – stick and deform, penalizing Shield skill: -1 for any at all, -2 if total projectile weight is at least half shield weight, -4 if total weight equals or exceeds shield weight. Removing each dart requires a Ready and a ST roll at a penalty equal to its damage roll.

## Special Arrows

Practitioners of Kyujutsu (pp. 179-180) – and many other archers – will be familiar with these special arrowheads as well as with regular and bodkin points (p. B277):

*Barbed:* Yanking out a barbed arrow inflicts *half* the injury it delivered going in. No effect on cost or weight (most war arrows are barbed by default).

*Blunt:* Converts damage to *crushing.* Used for training or for hunting fowl. Half cost, normal weight.

*Bowel Raker:* Converts damage to *cutting.* Gives -1 to Acc and subtracts 5 from both Range multipliers; e.g., ×15/×20 becomes ×10/×15. Yanking it out inflicts *half* the injury it delivered going in. No effect on cost or weight.

*Frog Crotch:* Has a C-, U-, or Y-shaped head sharpened on the inside of the curve. Used against limbs, and to cut ropes or (in heroic stories) bowstrings. Converts damage to *cutting*. No effect on other statistics.

*Humming Bulb:* Has a hollow, fluted tip that whistles in flight. Used to signal or to flush game. Some of these heads can carry a tiny payload – often an oil-soaked rag. Gives -1 to Acc and subtracts 5 from both range multipliers. Damage becomes *crushing* with an armor divisor of (0.5). No effect on cost or weight.

*Willow Leaf:* Converts damage to *cutting.* No effect on other statistics.

# Training Equipment

For some people, "martial-arts school" conjures up images of wooden dummies and *makiwara,* racks of weapons, and walls covered in yin-yang symbols and pictures of the founder. Others imagine a dimly lit gym with battered heavy bags, weight benches, and dangling speed bags arranged around a ring or a cage. A martial-arts school might look like that . . . or an ordinary hardwood gym strewn with wrestling mats . . . or a shallow dirt pit . . . or a clearing in the woods!

A properly designed training environment with good equipment helps students hone their skills. It makes more challenging exercises possible and minimizes the likelihood of unpleasant consequences. The wrong environment can make practice impossible (try doing acrobatic kung fu moves in a tiny room) or *painful* (like a hardwood floor you're going to hit a hundred times while perfecting a technique).

Equally important is how the school trains. Some schools frown upon sparring but let students use bags and mitts to practice strikes. Others go further and emphasize kata and choreographed partner drills over throwing full-powered blows. Still others encourage students to pound on each other in minimal gear – "Only bleeding in training lets you avoid bleeding in combat." Most artistic styles avoid contact and sparring, while combat styles employ such methods extensively or exclusively; either way, the equipment must support the training.

### *Training Equipment Quality*

A flimsy heavy bag or fragile *muk yang jong* will soon break, while rusty swords and snapped-off broom handles are unsafe practice weapons at best. High-quality gear costs more but is *better* in every way. In particular, good equipment – or a good variety of it – gives a bonus to success rolls for teaching and learning the martial arts, including those for *The Training Sequence* (p. 147).

The bonuses for training equipment correspond to those under *Equipment Modifiers* (p. B345), but *individual* item quality (e.g., a fine-quality heavy bag) isn't usually what's important. Instead, look at the gear's total cost – whether that buys a few high-quality pieces of equipment, an eclectic collection of oddball paraphernalia, or a whole lot of nearly expendable items. The bigger the cash outlay, the better the bonus.

Below are some guidelines. The GM should be flexible in allowing substitutions; not all styles train alike. This is especially true in historical and cinematic games. Generally, an improvised weapon can substitute for a real one in training, and unarmed martial artists should *never* suffer penalties for poor or missing equipment – the human body and a source of martial knowledge are all they need!

*Basic Equipment* (+0): At least $500 for a modest open space (e.g., a bedroom with the furniture pushed out of the way) with a mat or other smooth surface; a heavy bag, *makiwara,* or dummy; wraps and gloves – or a practice weapon and protective gear, for weapon arts; a man-sized mirror; and appropriate clothing.

*Good Equipment* (+1): At least $2,500 on better "basic" items – e.g., a larger space; wall-to-wall, floor-to-ceiling mirrors; or extra bags, *makiwara,* or dummies – and any of the specific items on pp. 233-234.

*Fine Equipment* (+2): At least $10,000 on "basic" items, plus machines that measure striking pressure, a regulation cage or ring, and a full range of the gear on pp. 233-234.

*Best Equipment* (+TL/2, minimum +2): A building-sized setup that costs at least $1 million – be it a secret commando base, state-of-the-art Olympic facility, the Shaolin Temple, or a superhero danger room. Until TL6, the bonus is no higher than the +2 for "fine" equipment, but *hundreds* of students at once can benefit from it.

Well-made equipment also lasts longer. Apply the quality modifier to any HT roll made for the *equipment* during training; see *Damage to Objects* (p. B483).

# Gloves

Contrary to popular belief, martial artists wear gloves more to protect themselves than for their opponents' safety. Some gloves *do* reduce striking damage, but their purpose is mainly to prevent fight-stopping hand injury.

## *Boxing Gloves*

Regular boxing gloves are mitten-like, completely enclosing the fingers and thumb. They give DR 2 vs. crushing (DR 1 vs. other damage) and -2 to punching damage. The wearer has Bad Grip 3 (p. B123) for *all* purposes. $40, 1 lb. (pair).

## *Open-Palmed Gloves*

As *Boxing Gloves,* except that they only give Bad Grip 2 and their DR doesn't protect against finger locks, which can target the uncovered thumb!

## *Mixed Martial Arts Gloves*

These open-palmed gloves have separate fingers and thin protection everywhere but over the knuckles. They let the wearer grapple as well as strike, and don't give Bad Grip. They provide DR 1 vs. self-inflicted injury only; see *Hurting Yourself* (p. B379). $65, 0.5 lb. (pair).

*Rope Dart*

## *Hand Wraps*

In competition, boxers and other unarmed strikers generally wrap their hands before donning gloves. This protects the hands by padding the knuckles and reinforcing the wrist. It also absorbs sweat, which wears out the cheap wraps instead of the expensive gloves. Some sports use wraps alone. Wraps provide +1 DR vs. self-inflicted injury only. They cause Bad Grip 1 by themselves. Worn under gloves, DR is cumulative but only the *worst* level of Bad Grip applies. $5, neg. wt.

# Targets

Every striking style uses some kind of target when live humans aren't available (or permitted) for the purpose.

## *Heavy Bag*

A cylindrical canvas, vinyl, or leather bag filled with rags, sawdust, or shredded stuffing – or rarely, with sand, small rocks, or other exotica. Most hang from a rope or a chain; some are freestanding, and may be water-filled. All are designed for punching and larger ones are also good for kicking. Punching a bag can tear the skin, so it's standard to wear wraps or gloves. Heavy bags help fighters develop hitting power and "toughen up" hands, feet, or shins (often by striking progressively harder bags).

Heavy bags normally range in 10-lb. increments from 20 lbs. (a small bag, suitable for punching) to 120 lbs. (a long "banana" bag for low shin kicks). Standard sizes are 80 lbs. and 100 lbs. Cost is $1 a pound, and includes a 3-lb. chain to hang the bag. Freestanding bags cost $1.50 a pound but don't require a chain or an overhead beam.

## *Makiwara*

A board wrapped in canvas, cord, or thick rope – in order of increasing coarseness – used to toughen the hands and practice full-powered strikes. Some *makiwara* are small and handheld; others are large and freestanding, or spring-loaded for wall mounting. Cost ranges from free for homemade models to $50+ for sturdy, attractively decorated boards.

## *Muk Yang Jong*

A wooden training dummy used in Wing Chun and other Chinese styles. It consists of a thick post set upright on a base, with two "arms" and a bent "leg" near the ground. The limbs are mounted securely but loosely, allowing hard contact without injury. $650, 110 lbs.

## *Pads*

Padded targets worn by a partner and used to practice striking include:

*Focus Mitts:* Small, glove-like pads for punching. Give the hands DR 2 vs. crushing (DR 1 vs. other damage) and Bad Grip 3. $50, 2 lbs. (pair).

*Shield:* A large, handheld target for kicking and kneeing. Provides DR 3 vs. crushing (DR 2 vs. other damage). $50, 2 lbs.

*Heavy Pads:* Larger mitts for punching and kicking. Give the hands DR 5 vs. crushing (DR 3 vs. other damage) and Bad Grip 3. $75, 5 lbs. (pair).

*Body Pads:* Groin and stomach protection that allows kicks and knees to the body. Give the torso DR 4 vs. crushing (DR 2 vs. other damage). $60, 8 lbs.

## Armor

Martial artists, especially practitioners of armed styles, often wear armor. Historical warriors should use the armor on pp. B282-286. The following items are specialized equipment for competition or training. Some safety gear costs more than "real" armor that provides higher DR. This is because it's built to safeguard *both* participants, not simply to protect one from deliberate harm!

*Breastplate, Sparring:* Upper-body protection for contact sparring. Foam gives the torso (including vitals) DR 1 vs. crushing damage, only from the front. $40, 2.5 lbs.

Leather – required for women's MMA matches – increases DR to 2 vs. crushing (DR 1 vs. other damage). $60, 4 lbs.

*Cup:* A plastic guard that gives the groin DR 2 vs. crushing (DR 1 vs. other damage), only from the front. Also grants +2 to knockdown rolls for groin hits. $20, neg. wt.

*Foot Guards, Sparring:* Foam guards for the *top* of the foot. DR 2 vs. crushing (DR 1 vs. other damage); only applies on a roll of 1-3 on 1d if the bottom of the foot could also be hit. Also gives -2 to kicking damage. $30, 0.5 lb. (pair).

*Helmet, Sparring:* Used by boxers and karateka. A foam mask gives the skull and face DR 1 vs. crushing. $40, 1 lb.

A leather-covered padded helmet increases DR to 2 vs. crushing (DR 1 vs. other damage). $60, 3 lbs.

If using *Harsh Realism for Unarmed Fighters* (p. 124), either helmet prevents self-inflicted damage from striking the skull.

*Kendo Do:* A fiberglass, lacquered-bamboo, or plastic cuirass that gives the torso (including vitals) DR 3, only from the front, on a roll of 1-5 on 1d. $100, 4 lbs.

*Kendo Kote:* Padded, open-palmed gloves with wrist protection. Give the hands DR 2 vs. crushing (DR 1 vs. other damage). Also protect the arm on a roll of 1 on 1d. Give Bad Grip 1 (p. B123). $65, 1 lb (pair).

*Kendo Men:* A steel-grilled helmet with neck protection. Gives the face and neck DR 3, and the skull DR 1, only from the front. $150, 5 lbs.

*Kendo Tare:* A belt of armor that protects the hips and groin from the front. The center guard is usually decorated with the kendoka's name. Gives the groin DR 1, only from the front. $120, 2 lbs.

*Mask, Fencing:* A metal-grilled mask, used for sport fencing with the épée, foil, or saber. Gives the skull, eyes, and face DR 2. $50, 3 lbs. Add $50 if insulated for electric scoring.

*Mouthguard:* A form-fitted plastic mouthpiece worn to protect the jaw and teeth. Gives +1 to knockdown rolls for face or jaw hits, but makes speech difficult (treat as Disturbing Voice, p. B132). $20, neg. wt.

*Police Training Suit:* A padded training suit with a metal-masked helmet. Bulky and restrictive (-3 DX, -1 Move), it gives the skull and face DR 5; the torso and groin DR 3 vs. crushing (DR 1 vs. other damage); and the arms, legs, hands, and feet DR 2 vs. crushing (DR 1 vs. other damage). A basic suit without hand or head protection is $500, 7 lbs.; a full suit is $2,000, 15 lbs.

*Shin Pads:* Padded leather-, vinyl-, or cloth-covered pads that protect the knee, shin, and top of the foot, giving the legs and feet DR 2 vs. crushing (DR 1 vs. other damage), only from the front, on a roll of 1-3 on 1d. Also gives the wearer -2 damage with shin kicks. $40, 2 lbs. (pair).

Rigid plastic pads raise DR to 2 and don't affect shin kick damage. $20, 3 lbs.

## Training Weapons

Training weapons are blunted, less-rigid, padded, and/or made of softer materials. Varieties include:

*Blunt:* A cutting or cut-and-thrust weapon that isn't sharpened but could be. Treat as a good-quality weapon for all purposes but damage, which becomes *crushing.*

*Flexible:* A thrusting-only weapon made whippy, with a button tip. Treat as a blunt that gets -2 crushing damage. Use *cheap* costs for TL6+ sporting gear. Price anything earlier as good-quality. Classic examples are the flexible smallsword and dress smallsword, known as the épée (p. 215) and foil (p. 215), respectively.

*Heavy Blunt:* An overweight weapon – blunt and unable to take an edge, if bladed – designed to develop the muscles used to control it. Common historically but rare today; trainers believe that overcompensating for extra weight teaches incorrect reflexes. Has 20% of the cost and 200% of the weight of a good weapon. Damage becomes crushing, at +1 for swings but -1 for thrusts. Add +2 to the ST requirement.

*Padded:* A wooden weapon wrapped with cloth, foam, etc. Has 5% of the cost and 100% of the weight of a good weapon. Damage becomes *crushing,* at -2 for thrusts and -4 for swings.

*Ultra-Light:* A light, flexible nonmetallic weapon for competition – usually aimed at an armored target to allow full-powered hits without injury. Has 5% of the cost and 60% of the weight of a good weapon. Damage becomes crushing with an armor divisor of (0.5). ST requirement is 1/3 usual (round down). An example is the Japanese *shinai:* a straight-edged "katana" made of split bamboo held together with cloth bindings.

*Wooden:* A *hard* wooden version of a metal weapon. Has 5-10% of the cost and 100% of the weight of a good weapon. Damage becomes crushing but isn't reduced – such weapons are quite capable of beating someone to death or shattering bones. The best-known example is the *bokken* (p. 213): a wooden katana.

## Weights

Barbells and dumbbells are standard tools for modern martial artists who lift weights. Earlier warriors did weight training with heavy wooden clubs, rocks on sticks, and even weighted shoes. The idea that weight training is "new" to the martial arts is far from true! Weight gear varies greatly in cost. Improvised equipment may be free or nearly so; a full gym, with machines and/or rubber-coated weights machined to Olympic tolerances, can cost tens of thousands of dollars.

# Chapter Seven
# Campaigns

*Del Duque burst the door with a drop kick and rolled to his feet. Nobody home, but there was the stolen Chinese statue, attached to a machine with a date readout. Carbon dating, perhaps? As he touched the statue, things went black . . .*

*Kai stepped over the last thug and slipped behind the curtain. There was the Five Tigers Jade Buddha, in the hands of an unconscious, masked man. How odd! She reached for the Buddha.*

*As Del Duque came to, he saw a petite woman grab for the statue. He tried to warn her: "Peligro!"*

*Kai seized the Buddha but the fat man hung on, yelling in Spanish. A Mexican bandito! As she summoned her chi for the upcoming battle, the Buddha's eyes flashed. Oh, no . . .*

*Adrian hadn't noticed a trapdoor, but the man and woman who fell from the ceiling were a blessing. They knocked down one of her adversaries, evening the odds.*

*The other bounty hunter responded by dropping his hatchet and pulling forth a strange device. An instant later, a dagger struck his hand. Adrian capitalized on the distraction, sending her foe to the ground with a vicious blow.*

*A man with a shortsword stepped from the shadows, glanced at the Buddha, and yelled, "Prof!" Then he turned to the others. "I'm Dai. If you want to get out of this, follow us!"*

A good ***Martial Arts*** campaign is more than a series of adventures for expert fighters. The GM needs to plan both the setting and his plots with care, and gameplay shouldn't always boil down to a glorified slugfest. Martial-arts fiction – even the backstory of the typical video game – features such classic dramatic fixtures as the attainment of long-sought goals, the rise of heroes, quests (for justice, knowledge, or vengeance), and exotic cultures and locations. The goal of this chapter is to help the GM take advantage of this rich tradition.

# Cinematic vs. Realistic Campaigns

When starting any new campaign, the GM must choose whether to take a "realistic" stance, a "cinematic" one, or some middle road. This is arguably the most important decision of all in a game that features the martial arts – overshadowing even the choice of genre and setting – because martial-arts legend and fiction are about warriors trained in skills intended for violence. Where there's violence, there's pain, injury, and death . . . except when the storyteller focuses instead on such ideals as the heroes' principles, abilities, or basic "coolness." It can be difficult to reconcile the differences.

Each type of campaign has its strengths and weaknesses, and of course the players' preferences may differ from the GM's. If the PCs behave like high-kicking action heroes in a realistic game, or are all brutal pirates and mast-top snipers in a romantic 17th-century swashbuckling tale, the result will be a pile of dead bodies, followed by a dead campaign. The GM should therefore involve the players in his decision and note the abilities and rules that the campaign will use – and perhaps more importantly, the ones that it *won't* use.

## The Realistic Campaign

The real world is the one we know best, but it *isn't* what many gamers think of when you say "martial arts." Contrary to movies and comic books, realistic martial artists can't rely on fists to defeat a sword, never mind a volley of arrows – and even the best archer or swordsman is just a poorly armed target to a gunman. Except in a staged exhibition, a real martial artist can't smash a door with a single punch, either . . . or shoot two arrows at once . . . or fence blindfolded. Without cinematic abilities and combat options, all of this is true in ***GURPS,*** too – although ***GURPS*** is fairly forgiving because a game that punishes the players for not being combat experts isn't fun!

There are two, equally important elements to a realistic ***Martial Arts*** game: believable characters and realistic combat. We discuss these in greater detail below. A good GM carefully weighs both considerations against player expectations before opting to run a realistic campaign.

### *Realistic Characters*

In a realistic campaign, the PCs should be built as discussed under *Realistic Martial Artists* (p. 29): limited attributes, mundane advantages and disadvantages only, and no cinematic abilities. The GM sets the power level but should realize that individuals built on over 200 points will be

### *NPCs for **Martial Arts** Campaigns*

Much of *Cinematic vs. Realistic Campaigns* discusses what the GM lets PCs do. That's only half the picture – the players of martial-artist PCs will grow bored without enemies to fight and masters to learn from. Because martial-arts styles have the potential to add *many* skills, techniques, and perks to character sheets, martial-artist NPCs can be time-consuming to design and play; therefore, it's wise to "triage" the supporting cast and match bookkeeping efforts to relative importance.

*Cannon Fodder:* Cardinal's Guards, students of rival schools, gang members . . . these are NPCs whose role is to harass the PCs while their leader escapes, plots, or sets an elaborate ambush. Ignore character points and full character sheets, and don't bother writing down full-fledged styles. Such NPCs know their style's realistic skills (never its cinematic ones), use techniques at default, and lack perks beyond Style Familiarity. Aside from skills, all they need is ST, DX, HT, HP, Basic Speed, Basic Move, and damage for their main attack. In combat, they're subject to the *Cannon Fodder* (p. B417) rule. In a realistic game, modify this so that wounded NPCs flee, feign death, or surrender instead of collapsing. Most real people don't want to die! If the NPCs are low-grade thugs, consider using *Untrained Fighters* (p. 113) regardless of actual training.

*"Name" NPCs:* These include the leader of a Guard patrol, the star student of a rival school, and the boss' lieutenant. They might merely be high-value targets, but their wit, social skills, and so on can become important, so build them as full-fledged characters. To save time, select a template from Chapter 2 (or another ***GURPS*** book) and make few changes. When adding a style, focus on skills – but select a few "signature" techniques, a Style Perk or two, and perhaps an optional trait to give the NPC some depth. A single cinematic skill is also appropriate, in a cinematic game. If there are multiple NPCs like this, distinguish them by giving them different styles, or different skills and weapons taught by the same style. In a realistic campaign, *most* NPCs should be like this unless you want to send the message "life is cheap." Even a hulking psycho is a *person.* In any type of game, NPC allies should use these guidelines, too.

*Masters:* True masters are rare enough to be built the hard way, like PCs. They should have all of their style's skills, many of its techniques, and multiple Style Perks (possibly including custom perks). Most have optional traits, too; after all, such abilities are optional because some master, somewhere, believes they're important. In a cinematic campaign, add cinematic skills and techniques freely. Note that in a realistic game, the *boss* needn't be the *master*. A crime lord or enemy officer might be in charge, but an underling who's dedicated to fighting – perhaps the boss' guard or private fencing instructor – is more likely to be a martial-arts master.

notable, not ordinary Joes. In addition, the PCs shouldn't have character-point investments in combat-ready martial arts that outstrip what's realistic for their occupations. Martial-arts skills should fill one of the roles that they fill in real life:

*Hobby:* Most students of the martial arts are dabblers, studying the martial arts out of curiosity, with neither the intention nor the training to enter combat. They rarely have anything more than a few points in Combat Art and Sport skills. If they study a style, it has the "Self-Defense" or "Trained by a Fraud" lens (see *Choosing a Style,* pp. 144-146). They don't use *any* of the templates in Chapter 2; their occupational templates are things like "Cook," "Duke," and "Reporter."

*Backup Skills:* This is the most realistic role for combat-effective martial arts. People in dangerous occupations, if they think they might have to fight without ranged weapons or the support of allies, often study a martial art for survival's sake. Their style typically has the "Military," "Police," or "Street" lens. To have the slightest chance against better-armed foes or superior numbers, they need to invest a lot of time – potentially more than they put into their job skills. The *Assassin, Crimefighter, Spy,* and *Warrior* templates in Chapter 2 reflect this.

*Specialized Career:* Full-time martial artists in the real world are usually athletes (the *Contender, Instructor,* and *Student* templates), ascetics (use the *Monk* template), or from a time or a place where it's possible to make a living with martial-arts skills (the *Duelist, Movie Star,* and *Stuntman* templates). Most are acutely aware that, outside their rarefied specialty, their skills are of limited value and no match for the weapons and training of soldiers. Their mental disadvantages might reflect such concerns; Pacifism is reasonable, and even Cowardice isn't out of line for someone who avoids real fights.

## *Combat Realism*

Realism is also about how forgiving the *setting* is when fists, swords, and arrows start flying. Obviously, almost all cinematic combat rules are out of place in a realistic game; see *Cinematic Combat* (pp. 125-133) for a long list. Many GMs insist on using *Tactical Combat* (pp. B384-392), too, so that the action is in sharp focus and there's no "fudging" of movement. "Realism" means different things to different people, though.

### Gritty Realism

This type of campaign pays attention to every lethal detail. It zooms in on the blood and snapping bones, and because it doesn't let the surprising durability of the human body get in the way of a good mauling, it can be *more* deadly than reality. A game like this uses all of the detailed options from Chapter 4 and the ***Basic Set:*** *Changing Posture in Armor* (p. B395), *Posture, Hit Locations, and Techniques* (pp. 98-99), *A Matter of Inches* (p. 110)**,** *Limiting Dodges* (pp. 122-123), and so on. Rules that involve pain and maiming are key; e.g., *Teeth* (p. 115), *Pain in Close Combat* (p. 119), *Grab and Smash!* (p. 118), *Harsh Realism for Unarmed Fighters* (p. 124), and *Realistic Injury* (pp. 136-139). Options that give the final word on realism to the GM – *Extra Effort in Combat* (p. B357), *Dual-Weapon Attacks* (p. B417), and anything labeled "Acrobatic" – usually aren't available.

*Strengths:* Ideal for introducing martial-arts rules into a realistic campaign where they didn't previously feature, because the risks tied to their use minimize the odds of players suddenly turning every fight into a martial-arts exhibition and shifting the game's focus. This is especially true if the campaign already had a gritty theme: trench warfare, hyper-realistic detective stories, etc. The detailed approach appeals to players who regard RPGs more as simulations than as storytelling tools.

*Weaknesses:* Many gamers get their perceptions of the martial arts from movies and comic books, and play their characters accordingly. In a gritty game, this is a recipe for maimed or dead PCs and unhappy players. Using every realistic rule means a lot of extra bookkeeping for everyone – especially the GM – and slows down combat as people turn pages to check every rule that applies in the situation. Realistic violence is quite disturbing to some people.

### Moderate Realism

This is what most gamers view as "realism." People can die, and karateka are advised not to parry swords with bare hands, but the heroes are insulated from the worst fates by the game's inherent bias toward PC survival. A moderate-realism campaign should use the combat rules in the ***Basic Set,*** plus any of the realistic maneuvers and combat options from Chapter 4 that the GM likes – *All-Out Attack (Long)* (pp. 97-98), *Committed Attack* (pp. 99-100), *Defensive Grip* (pp. 109-111), and so on. It should avoid optional rules that add fine detail (such as *A Matter of Inches*) or painful consequences (like *Harsh Realism for Unarmed Fighters*), but might add one or two for flavor.

*Strengths:* Has the advantage of familiarity, since it uses rules that everybody already knows plus a handful of new options that players can ignore without handicapping their characters. Players who know something about real-world martial arts get to show off their knowledge. Probably the best compromise for a storytelling GM with a group of ultra-realistic gamers.

*Weaknesses:* Still too deadly for gamers raised on action movies and comics. It can be *worse* than a gritty campaign in this regard, because the system's tendency to err on the side of PC survival – explicitly suppressed in a gritty campaign – can lull some players into assuming that the game is cinematic and playing accordingly. Just close enough to gritty realism to frustrate players who like bloody simulations.

### Borderline Realism

This kind of game allows anything that doesn't actively challenge the players' willing suspension of disbelief – even if it isn't strictly realistic. What matters is the *appearance* of realism. Such a campaign follows the guidelines under *Moderate Realism,* except that it avoids all rules that add fine detail to combat and injury while permitting many options of debatable realism; e.g., *Buying Success* (p. B347), *Extra Effort in Combat* (p. B357), *Dual-Weapon Attacks* (p. B417), *Acrobatic Movement* (pp. 105-107), *Acrobatic Attack* (p. 107), *Quick-Shooting Bows* (pp. 119-120), and *Tricky Shooting* (p. 121).

## Special-Case NPCs

Non-player characters should generally be subject to the same rules as PCs. Needlessly dangling options in front of the players that *they* can't exercise – but that the GM's alter egos can – erodes GM-player relations. There are situations where it's appropriate to make exceptions, however.

*Cinematic NPCs in Realistic Games:* A martial-arts master with cinematic abilities provides a handy way to segue from a realistic campaign to a hybrid or cinematic one. Often he's a teacher, helping the PCs develop cinematic abilities of their own. In a conspiracy or horror game – and even in some kinds of pulp and fantasy – a fighter with cinematic martial-arts abilities is a suitable *opponent*. In that case, it's crucial that the GM portray the villain's capabilities as mysterious and dangerous – like black magic – so that the players experience fear or moral superiority, not jealousy.

*Realistic NPCs in Cinematic Games:* In games where the PCs are bouncing off walls and swinging from chandeliers, it's traditional for "cannon fodder" NPCs to lack access to cinematic abilities and combat options that the PCs take for granted. If the campaign has horror overtones or focuses on epic moral conflict – both of which feature in many martial-arts movies – it's true-to-genre for certain foes to be dangerous because a number of realistic rules apply when fighting them. For instance, the faceless knights of the evil overlord might have no special skills and rely on armor for defense . . . but hitting them with bare fists *hurts* (*Harsh Realism for Unarmed Fighters,* p. 124) and they fight dirty, chopping off limbs and targeting vital areas (*Realistic Injury,* pp. 136-139).

*Strengths:* Gamers who like to play action heroes can pull it off by spending character points to buy successes or burning FP for extra effort. Players who prefer a trusty, no-frills sword or gun can have that, too – and the points they save by avoiding massive investments in flashy skills such as Acrobatics can buy combat skills that make them as effective as their showoff teammates. A fair compromise, but compare *Rubber Realism* (p. 240).

*Weaknesses:* Too cinematic for some diehard realists, who will see enough of the pro-realism bias in the combat system to want more. Those who like cinematic games may be frustrated at the "glass wall" between them and the *really* cool optional rules. Powerful borderline-realistic PCs can do through brute force much of what cinematic ones can do with special abilities, defeating the point of choosing a realistic campaign.

# The Cinematic Campaign

The cinematic world is that of martial-arts movies and legend. In a cinematic game, martial artists *can* do the impossible – or at least the highly improbable. As with realistic games, abilities and combat rules both make a contribution to the overall "feel," and the GM must make choices that satisfy his expectations and those of his players. Below are some ***Martial Arts***-specific guidelines to supplement the general advice on cinematic campaigns on pp. B488-489.

## *Cinematic Characters*

Cinematic PCs (and NPCs) should have access to incredible abilities. As noted under *Cinematic Martial Artists* (p. 30), these can range from a few cinematic skills, through superhuman attributes and exotic advantages, to full-fledged super-powers – and perhaps include all of these things – depending on the GM's plans for the campaign. Minimum power level is around 200 points, simply because the PCs have to be able to afford such abilities.

Unlike realistic campaigns, cinematic campaigns don't demand that abilities line up with occupations. The cook at the noodle stand is often a master of chopping more than vegetables, the foppish duke could be a deadly swordsman, and the mild-mannered reporter might be a superhero by night. What matters isn't that a hero's skills are realistic – because they won't be – but that they're consistent with the legends about his fighting style and with his *personal* style.

Still, the templates in Chapter 2 can help players design many kinds of heroes found in martial-arts fiction – just apply the "Cinematic" lens! For instance, the ninja of legend would use the cinematic *Assassin* or *Spy* template, while an action-movie vigilante has the cinematic *Crimefighter* template. Several templates provide a "Tough Guy" lens for the player who wants his PC to thrive in a cinematic environment *without* flashy moves – an important archetype in many martial-arts tales.

Cinematic heroes should have at least some of the cinematic skills, techniques, and Style Perks listed for their style in Chapter 5, and probably several optional traits. This makes the style lenses under *Choosing a Style* (pp. 144-146) unsuitable, since they specifically exclude cinematic skills and techniques. However, "Self-Defense" and "Trained by a Fraud" have a way of showing up in *silly* stories . . . and tough guys without cinematic skills often have the "Military," "Police," or "Street" lens.

Above all, a cinematic PC or NPC needs a strong sense of his place in the campaign. Be he a bumbling fool with untapped talent, a brooding assassin, a square-jawed pulp hero, or a romantic swashbuckler, his personality, actions, fighting style, and gear should paint a single, vivid picture. For instance, cinematic ninja dress in black and use swords, not guns; pulp heroes do carry guns, but prefer fists; and swashbucklers use swords *and* pistols, but dress in lace and avoid skulking and brutish fisticuffs.

## *Mad, Crazy Action*

Cinematic campaigns should move quickly and emphasize action over detail. When the heroes are taking on guns with fists and dashing up tree trunks, it's missing the point to worry about how hard it is to stand up in armor (you can do *acrobatics* in armor!) or whether it's possible to throw a Back Kick while seated (over the shoulder, of course!). Cinematic games should therefore avoid the high-detail options recommended for realistic campaigns in *Combat Realism* (pp. 237-238) – particularly those suggested under *Gritty Realism.* Instead, the GM should use the cinematic

rules he feels suit the genre and setting. Details vary, depending on how wild the campaign is supposed to be, but all cinematic games can benefit from *Faster Combat* (p. 126).

### Larger-than-Life

This is *Borderline Realism* (pp. 237-238) writ large. The world is a lot like our own but cinematic martial artists can bend the rules, just like the heroes in pulp stories and Hollywood action movies. In a larger-than-life campaign, all of the barely realistic and cinematic rules listed under *Cinematic Combat* (pp. 125-133) are in effect *except* for *Chambara Fighting* (pp. 128-130) and *More Cinematic Combat Rules* (pp. 132-133). This allows acrobatics and extra effort in combat – and makes multiple attacks and defenses easier – but everything is within the realm of the possible under absolutely ideal conditions (that rarely occur in real life!).

*Strengths:* Gamers who want to play action heroes are happy. Players who find that silly aren't out of luck, because *not* buying Trained by a Master or Weapon Master means 20-45 more points for Bow or Guns – and they can exploit "merely" borderline-realistic rules such as *Tricky Shooting* (p. 121) to nail the annoying, back-flipping ninja. Since most gaming groups have mixed preferences but lean more toward the cinematic side, this might be the best compromise of all.

> *Yes, these are bruises from fighting, and yes, I'm okay with that. I am enlightened.*
>
> *– Narrator,* ***Fight Club***

*Weaknesses:* The presence of any cinematic abilities shatters many gamers' willing suspension of disbelief. Meanwhile, roleplayers who want *wuxia* or *chambara* heroes are liable to scoff at the campaign being called "cinematic." Once the genie of cinematic abilities is out of the bottle, there's no going back; some players will dump character points into such traits, yielding unbalanced PCs and making the game more cinematic than the GM intended.

### Epic

Epic campaigns are the realm of *wuxia* and *chambara* films, which don't allow the laws of physics to get in the way of a good story. Every option in *Cinematic Combat* is potentially appropriate, except for *Bullet Time* (p. 133). The GM should still avoid silly rules – for instance, *Proxy Fighting* (p. 132) – in a serious game. Epic games don't make an intentional effort to violate natural laws, though. The goal is to remain true to legend, which often requires the world to be largely realistic for everyone but the heroes and their arch-enemies so that their abilities look suitably impressive.

*Strengths:* Comes closest to traditional martial-arts legend, and handles the often-campy action of movies that superimpose legendary abilities on modern settings. Thus, it's satisfactory to even the most demanding fan of martial-arts fiction. For the rest of us, it's just plain fun!

*Weaknesses:* Totally incompatible with a group that prefers realistic games. Epic campaigns aren't extreme enough for gamers who want superhero and anime martial artists with physics-warping capabilities unrelated to traditional martial arts, either. Unless the GM has mastered the rules, using many cinematic options can slow down play as much as using lots of detailed, realistic options – but *not* using cinematic rules defeats the purpose.

### Over-the-Top

At the pinnacle of the cinematic pyramid are campaigns that work like anime or comic books, which – freed of the need for actors and sets, and limited only by the artists' imagination – *aren't* constrained by physics. Over-the-top games are totally unlimited. They might use extreme rules like *Bullet Time* and "switch off" certain core rules. For instance, the GM could ignore ST requirements for melee weapons to let elfin warriors wield greatswords one-handed; suspend *The Rule of 16* (p. B349) so that masters of Hypnotic Hands, Pressure Points, etc., are invincible; or ignore the limits of *Parrying Heavy Weapons* and *Parrying Unarmed* (p. B376) so that knives and fists can parry the heftiest weapons with impunity.

*Strengths:* Perfect for fans of anime, superhero comics, and movies filled with CGI effects. The GM can simply *ignore* a large number of rules that exist to make combat realistic, which lets the game run more quickly. Cartoon violence may make the violent martial-arts genre more acceptable to squeamish gamers and more suitable for younger players.

*Weaknesses:* Even those who love action movies may find that the bent physics and weak resemblance to reality make it hard to identify with their characters. Those who prefer realistic gaming but are willing to try a cinematic game may dislike the fact that realistic PCs seem like comic relief. The lack of limits on the PCs' capabilities can lead irresponsible players to assume that there are no limits on *behavior,* either, and things can rapidly grow sillier (or more offensive) than intended.

## Hybrid Campaigns

Some genres lend themselves naturally to "hybrid" campaigns that mix cinematic and realistic elements. A hybrid can also result from a player-GM compromise on tastes and expectations. There are a number of ways to handle such games.

The simplest is to view realism level as a sliding scale with *Gritty Realism* (p. 237) at one end and *Over-the-Top* (see above) at the other. In this picture, hybrid campaigns fall into the area in the middle, where *Borderline Realism* (pp. 237-238) shades into *Larger-than-Life* (see above). The advice given for those campaign styles is all that's needed to run this type of hybrid. This is especially suitable for simple compromises and for dramatizations of real-world events (which are basically realistic but take some cinematic license to engage the audience).

A more intricate approach is to treat "realistic" and "cinematic" as two distinct sets of building blocks for campaigns. *Most* campaigns use either one set or the other – but with care, a good GM can blend elements from both. Below are two examples; see *The Secret Abilities Campaign* (p. 240) for a third.

## Amazing Abilities

One option is to embed some of the unrealistic abilities from *Cinematic Characters* (p. 238) in a setting that obeys *Combat Realism* (pp. 237-238). Users can do the impossible, but without the protection from realistic consequences that would accompany their capabilities in a cinematic game world. A board-breaking karateka might know Power Blow . . . but if *Harsh Realism for Unarmed Fighters* (p. 124) is in effect, he must apply -2 to the ST of his off hand before multiplying it and risks breaking his hand if he slugs an enemy in the skull. A super-fast martial artist might have Extra Attack or even Altered Time Rate . . . at the cost of Increased Consumption, Short Lifespan, and Skinny to reflect his sped-up metabolism.

This approach suits conspiratorial settings that seem outwardly realistic but where the Secret Masters suppress knowledge of aliens, Bigfoot, psi powers, and so forth. In such a campaign, super-soldier serum or the teachings of Shangri-La might permit ordinary humans to perform amazing feats in a coldly unforgiving world. Of course, nothing says that a martial artist with uncanny abilities knows how they work, who wants to dissect him to figure him out, or what *other* secrets the universe holds.

Other possibilities include "gritty" fantasy, post-apocalypse, and superhero games. Magic, weird radiation, etc., might give rise to unusual gifts without shoring up the human body's weaknesses or making it any less painful to punch steel or bite dirt. A cinematic master might be capable of everything in the kung fu movies, but a knee in the groin can still make him let go and a crossbow bolt in the knee can still cripple him for life.

*Strengths:* Excellent for the specialized genres noted above, and also a useful way to introduce cinematic martial arts into an existing game without overshadowing everything else. If the combat realism level is gritty but the abilities are over-the-top, this type of campaign can unify a divided gaming group: the realism aficionados get blood, guts, and precisely customized swords and rifles, while the cinema buffs get cool powers.

*Weaknesses:* The limits of a realistic backdrop can backfire if the players turn the PCs' special abilities against a world that isn't ready for them. If cinematic abilities continue to triumph because of great die rolls, the players are liable to forget the risks of failure – which may lead to dead PCs when the luck finally runs out. Not everyone is comfortable with the idea of supernatural forces lurking in the real world.

### The Secret Abilities Campaign

A special type of hybrid campaign is one where the setting is no more realistic than a cinematic one but the heroes initially have little or no access to special abilities. This isn't because those advantages, skills, and techniques don't exist, but because they're emerging for the first time, reappearing after centuries of neglect, or controlled by masters who haven't chosen to reveal themselves to the world. Whatever cinematic abilities the GM allows, the PCs must discover most or all of them in play. Adventure possibilities include tracking down rumors and ancient writings, seeking a master, and dealing with the jealousy of rivals and the fear of the less-gifted.

The GM could even develop a Secret Abilities campaign slowly and artfully from an established realistic campaign. He should subtly feel out the players ahead of time to ensure that they're open to such a shift, of course. Fantastic elements would show up first on the periphery, then as minor special abilities in the hands of foes, and so on. Ultimately, the PCs would end up with capabilities totally outside their original concepts.

This isn't the same as *Amazing Abilities* (see above). Both kinds of games feature Secret Masters and strange powers set against a backdrop that looks like our own world, but the heroes of a Secret Abilities story *aren't* in a realistic setting; they're simply unaware of what's possible with suitable training, or that their grasp of the laws of the universe is incomplete. A common theme in this kind of tale is for one of the heroes to experience an event that should have been fatal – and would have been, in the real world – only to cheat death at the last moment by doing something he *thought* was impossible, or to awaken in the care of an ancient master or mysterious monks who reveal the truth.

*Strengths:* In keeping with a lot of traditional martial-arts fiction, and therefore with players' expectations of how cinematic heroes start their careers. The GM can phase in cinematic abilities and rules *gradually,* so that he and the players can learn at a reasonable pace. The GM has maximum control of the cinematic options allowed, which helps prevent the worst abuses.

*Weaknesses:* Proponents of cinematic games might get anxious waiting for things to get moving. If the cinematic truths are revealed suddenly in an overtly realistic game, players may resent the "bait and switch" nature of the campaign. On the other hand, if the GM is forthright with his plans, the players may look for clues and secret masters at every turn, and hoard character points for cinematic abilities instead of developing their characters.

## Rubber Realism

On the other hand, the PCs might be constrained by *Realistic Characters* (pp. 236-237) in a world that operates according to *Mad, Crazy Action* (pp. 238-239). In that case, adept martial artists can do more not because they have unrealistic abilities but because they're good at realistic skills in a world where "realism" is bent or broken. For instance, being an expert at Acrobatics would allow amazing dodging and movement, and a sufficiently high level of Karate would permit many attacks with a Rapid Strike . . . but because nobody knows Flying Leap, Light Walk, or Lizard Climb, *those* stunts wouldn't be possible.

This kind of campaign is more suitable than a purely cinematic one for simulating modern action movies where the violence is unrealistic but mythical martial-arts abilities are unknown. Bullets don't hurt much and explosions are slow enough to outrun, but martial arts are merely another weapon in the arsenal, alongside big guns, explosives, and speeding cars. Campaigns inspired by epic costume pieces (notably "sword and sandal" films) can also work this way. The heroes all have perfect teeth and

shiny armor, and never die from an infected wound, but it's all thanks to destiny, valor, or divine favor – not strange martial-arts abilities.

*Strengths:* At the combat realism level of *Larger-than-Life* (p. 239), this type of game shares the strengths of *Borderline Realism* (p. 237-238); in fact, many roleplayers are willing to accept the realism level of *Epic* (p. 239) as long as the *characters* are believable. This approach is handy for cinematic games where martial arts exist but aren't supposed to be in the spotlight.

*Weaknesses:* Devotees of historical fiction will find the lack of festering wounds and bad breath disappointing. Cinema enthusiasts might not see the point of allowing flashy forms of Move and Attack without cinematic techniques to remove the penalties, large numbers of Rapid Strikes without Trained by a Master to offset *those* penalties, and so on. Thus, rubber realism can further split a divided group if the GM isn't diplomatic.

# Campaign Setting

After determining the realism level of his ***Martial Arts*** campaign – including its power level – the GM must choose its setting. This decision influences the types of martial artists suitable as PCs, the styles they can learn, and the kinds of adventures they'll have.

## Tech Level

Tech level (see pp. B511-514) is a crucial parameter in any setting but *particularly* important in a ***Martial Arts*** campaign. Technology – guns in particular – can diminish the importance of martial-arts skills or render them completely irrelevant!

> *When you get into a fight, everybody reacts differently.*
>
> *– Bruce Lee*

At TL0-3, portable firearms are nonexistent – or so weak as to be no more threatening than muscle-powered weapons. Melee weapons and low-tech missile weapons decide battles, making martial-arts skills *vital* for warriors. Cinematic abilities can make their wielders supreme! Metallic armor, especially in TL3, makes unarmed combat difficult . . . but armed styles take into account both wearing and defeating such armor.

At TL4, guns begin to dominate the battlefield. Martial artists become less relevant; warfare is about massed firepower more than individual skills. Armor remains heavy but grows less common as firearms advance, and is rare *off* the battlefield. Martial-arts skills remain important when the powder runs out, for missions where guns aren't ideal (taking prisoners, stealthy operations, etc.), and in civilian affrays.

At TL5-8, increasingly efficient repeating firearms appear. Armor is rare, so unarmed fighters and melee weapons can in theory be effective . . . but guns are *many times* as lethal. To be relevant, martial artists need to pour far more points into their skills than do their gun-armed friends and foes. By TL6, even potent cinematic abilities are less useful than an automatic weapon and a point or two in Guns.

At TL9+, *realistic* ultra-tech renders martial arts little more than a specialized niche. The trend might reverse in a space-opera universe, though. For instance, fighters might wear personal force screens that can stop bullets and beams from small arms, but which have little effect on relatively slow melee attacks. Or they might wield force swords and be able to parry incoming fire with impunity!

## Other Fantastic Abilities

There's no need to limit superhuman abilities to chi powers and cinematic skills and techniques in a ***Martial Arts*** game. Gamers *expect* magic in fantasy and psionics in space opera. Regardless of genre, such elements are an excellent match for the myths associated with some styles. The GM should also consider the role of nonhumans and supernatural events. These might be the campaign's focus or inexplicable elements on its fringes, but both feature prominently in martial-arts legend. For details about the folklore and remarkable claims surrounding particular arts, see Chapter 5.

## Time and Place

A campaign's location and period largely determine the available martial arts. A style doesn't exist until it's founded . . . and often disappears after its heyday. For instance, heroes can't learn Jeet Kune Do (pp. 164-165) in 19th-century China and will have difficulty finding training in Knightly Mounted Combat (pp. 175-177) in 20th-century America. These considerations needn't be rigid, though – a globetrotting game can include styles from all over, a time-travel campaign can feature the arts of any period, and the Infinite Worlds setting knows *no* limits!

# Classical Greece and Rome

Classical Greece was home to some of the world's oldest verifiable fighting arts. Those described in ***Martial Arts*** include Ancient Greek Boxing (p. 153), Pankration (pp. 188-189), and Wrestling (pp. 204-206). Treat Greek wrestling as Submission Wrestling (p. 205) – the styles are very similar.

The most important martial arts of ancient Rome were Armatura (p. 150) and Armatura Equestris (p. 150), developed for the legions. Rome had relatively few native unarmed arts. Gladiators and dedicated legionaries tended to adopt Greek styles of barehanded fighting.

An especially appropriate theme for the Classical campaign is *The Contender* (p. 250), with the PCs playing Olympic wrestlers, boxers, and pankrationists. Greek fighters such as Milo of Croton (p. 21) and Theogenes of Thasos (p. 21) were professionals, fighting full-time. Theogenes fought so often that he lacked the time to earn his keep any other way! Between Olympic events, athletes toured, competing for prize money in regional matches. The Olympics were the season's peak event. Roman gladiators suit this theme equally well – pampered, massaged, fed, and trained to fight. The call of the arena seduced free men and women, even nobles, to take up the trident and net.

Another excellent theme is *War is Hell* (p. 248). Warrior PCs might be elite members of Alexander's Companions, Spartan hoplites, or Roman legionaries. Appropriate Greek styles are Hoplomachia (pp. 161-162) for hoplites and Heroic Spear Fighting (p. 196) for the early Greek warriors of Homeric epic. Armatura and Armatura Equestris suit Roman troops.

*The Quest* (p. 247) is almost required for a mythic Greek game. The Gods are always sending strapping young heroes (sometimes demigods) on quests that demand much swordplay, spear combat, and wrestling. On completing their quest, the heroes usually end up in charge. This sets the stage for a mythic War is Hell game, as the heroes fight to expand – or merely to keep – their kingdom.

# Historical China

No place is more storied in the martial arts than China. In fact, China's influence is so profound that many people associate the term "martial arts" exclusively with Asian arts – and sometimes specifically with *Chinese* ones.

## *Spring and Autumn*

The period known as "Spring and Autumn" lasted from 722 to 481 B.C. It was during this time that the *xia* lived (see *Xia,* p. 8). The xia are a ***Martial Arts*** campaign waiting to happen. Many modern martial-arts legends originate in tales of the xia.

The xia confront bandits, corrupt bureaucrats, evil warlords, and injustice in general. In a magical campaign, they face the supernatural as well. The *Vigilante Justice* (p. 249) theme is tailor-made for them – they aren't government officials but self-motivated do-gooders bent on justice, not law! The period of the xia is rather short, but there's no good reason not to extend it. Later xia might confront Mongol invaders, fight the Manchu, and stand side-by-side with Shaolin monks.

Virtually any kung fu style is appropriate for xia. In a cinematic game, *any* Chinese style works, no matter how anachronistic. Cinematic Wushu (pp. 206-207) is especially suitable. It's a 20th-century style, but actors in *wuxia* movies are frequently Wushu practitioners.

Campaigns featuring xia work best if using the realism level described for *Epic* (p. 239) or even *Over-the-Top* (p. 239), as legends of the xia emphasize abilities far beyond the constraints of reality. Almost any power level can work if cinematic abilities exist – although players familiar with the genre might be disappointed if the game lacks wire-work, invincible swordsmen, and magic, all of which drive up the power level. Even in games that lack cinematic abilities, the *PCs* should firmly believe in such things and expect and respect the supernatural.

## *Medieval China*

"Medieval China" describes a long period for a huge country. This can be daunting to those unfamiliar with Chinese history, but the necessary research is worth the effort – frequent warfare, secret societies, invasion, and rebellion make it a time of high adventure! Many kung fu styles claim origins in this era, too, so PCs can interact directly with style founders . . . or *be* them, in a high-powered game. Finally, the Shaolin Temple is at the height of its power during this age.

Any kung fu style would fit a game set in medieval China. Styles with a verifiable existence during the early years, such as Shaolin Kung Fu (p. 194), are appropriate throughout the period. Later styles, such as Pak Hok (p. 188) and T'ai Chi Chuan (pp. 200-201), *claim* earlier origins and wouldn't be out of place. As always, Wushu (pp. 206-207) works well in a cinematic campaign thanks to its appearance in modern films.

## *Modern China*

Modern China is fertile ground for adventure – especially during the tail end of the 19th century and opening decades of the 20th.

From 1899 until 1901, the Boxer Rebellion raged. Those events make an excellent backdrop for confrontations between martial arts and modern firepower. A campaign could focus on waves of sword-wielding kung fu artists versus small groups of heroic Japanese, Americans, and Europeans . . . or on heroic Chinese martial artists rallying their brethren against colonial oppressors!

A down side to this kind of campaign is that the Boxer Rebellion demonstrated just how ineffective the martial arts are against guns and disciplined troops. This might still be true in a game with cinematic abilities – Hypnotic Hands and Power Blow won't stop bullets. Heroes with unrealistically high Dodge scores *can* handle gunfire routinely, but this unbalances melee combat. The Rebellion is a great background for a Secret Abilities campaign (p. 240), though: perhaps the Boxers *had* special abilities, just not enough masters to defeat the numbers and technology of the colonial powers.

In the decades after the Boxer Rebellion and before World War II, China is a land in chaos, with enemies inside and out. Foreigners and Chinese can adventure side-by-side. In the 1920s and 1930s, feuding warlords, White Russian refugees, Western adventurers, encroaching Japanese, and a Communist revolution provide an explosive mix . . . all in a land steeped in martial arts. Many period-piece movies are set in this time, including the *Once Upon a Time in China* series and Bruce Lee's *The Chinese Connection*.

William Fairbairn's (pp. 23-24) special police unit in Shanghai – constantly involved in tricky situations and fights (armed and unarmed), and with a colorful character in charge – is a great employer for PCs in this period. It's also a good backdrop for a high-realism campaign. Fairbairn himself suffered serious injury using his martial arts against troublemakers!

After WWII, Communist China suppressed the association of superhuman powers with the martial arts. Chinese

movies kept the myths alive, however. These were often period pieces set in the era of the *xia* or the Shaolin Temple. While many were made in pre-unification Hong Kong, epics such as *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and *Hero* are more recent, and highly regarded as *wuxia*. Actors in these movies practice Wushu (pp. 206-207), which is China's official art, making it suitable for modern Chinese martial artists even in a cinematic game. It *is* still possible to train in all other forms of kung fu in China, however.

# Historical Japan

Japan has a rich martial-arts history. Like China, it's often synonymous with "martial arts" in the popular mind. Two groups of historical Japanese martial artists – the samurai and the ninja – are the subject of a large proportion of martial-arts legend and fiction.

## *The "Samurai Era" and Tokugawa Era*

The samurai were central to Japanese martial arts from about 800 A.D. until abolished as a class in the 19th century. Along with low-born hopefuls, they fought in the constant conflicts that first fractured and then eventually unified Japan. They rose to prominence when the Yamato government began to rely on local nobles to provide mounted archers, and remained important until around 1600, when Japan was unified under the Tokugawa Shogunate. After that, battle became rare but the martial arts didn't decline in popularity or social importance.

This entire period is flush with martial arts. Armed styles prevail – taking on armored opponents barehanded is foolhardy if there are weapons handy! Appropriate styles include Bajutsu (p. 151), Bojutsu (p. 192), Iaijutsu (p. 174), Kenjutsu (pp. 173-175), Kusarijutsu (p. 179), Kusarigamajutsu (p. 180), Kyujutsu (pp. 179-180), Naginatajutsu (p. 186), and Sojutsu (pp. 197-198). Shurikenjutsu (pp. 195-197) also exists, and grows useful later in the period, when armor heavy enough to shrug off shuriken isn't worn routinely. An early samurai would be an expert in the bow and regard it as the central weapon of combat. Later samurai would emphasize the sword, spear, and polearms – but the bow remains in use even after the advent of the gun. On Okinawa, the main weapon style is Kobujutsu (p. 178), although samurai from the mainland and those educated in China practice styles from abroad, too.

Unarmed styles include Aikijutsu (p. 149) and Jujutsu (pp. 166-168). Sumo (pp. 198-199) is mainly a sport . . . but some sources have lords hiring *sumotori* as bodyguards, implying that sumo hadn't yet lost all combat utility. Te (pp. 169-170) is the dominant barehanded style on Okinawa, but frequent contact with China makes kung fu styles another possibility.

Ninja participated in the conflicts of this era. Ninja characters should be trained in Taijutsu (pp. 202-203) and some of the armed styles listed for samurai. For more on the topic, see *Ninja and Ninjutsu* (p. 202).

The Tokugawa era marked an end to the continuous conflict. With more students and instructors surviving to pass on their skills, the period saw an explosion in the number of *ryuha*. Some detractors point out that this was partly because *ineffective* styles survived – styles that in an earlier era would have gotten their proponents killed in combat before they could pass on their art. On the other hand, Musashi Miyamoto (pp. 21-22) was active at this time and founded *Niten Ichi Ryu* (see *Nito Ryu,* pp. 174-175) . . . and the founder of Jojutsu (p. 192) created his style after an encounter with Musashi. Both styles are quite effective!

What's certain is that a game set in this age would feature all of the earlier styles plus those developed during the peaceful times that followed. Many of these arts suit any Japanese campaign set before the modern era. Some exist even today, although *-do* forms are more common than *-jutsu* forms.

Most Japanese movies and manga depicting these periods boast cinematic abilities *and* extreme bloodshed. A campaign inspired by this fiction would be an excellent hybrid (see *Hybrid Campaigns,* pp. 239-241). It might adopt such realistic rules as *Harsh Realism for Unarmed Fighters* (p. 124) and *Realistic Injury* (pp. 136-139) (*Extreme Dismemberment* in particular!), but depict reality as described for *Borderline Realism* (pp. 237-238) or even *Epic* (p. 239) games. Especially appropriate themes are *The Quest* (p. 247) and *War is Hell* (p. 248).

Running historically accurate Japanese characters can be challenging for non-Japanese. However, such anime as *Samurai Champloo* simply transplant modern attitudes into the era to facilitate the story. The GM might wish to do the same.

## *Modern Japan*

After World War II, the American occupiers initially banned most martial arts. The ban didn't hold up for long, though. American servicemen often trained enthusiastically, and many went on to found dojos upon returning to the U.S. The most famous modern art was probably Karate (pp. 169-172), introduced into Japan prior to WWII by Okinawan instructors.

Today, Karate (especially Shotokan and Kyokushin), Aikido (p. 149), and Taijutsu (pp. 202-203) are all popular. In addition, *-do* forms of most historical combat arts still exist and some schools keep ancient traditions alive. Yabusame (p. 181) practitioners demonstrate their art on holidays. Japanese participation in Sumo (pp. 198-199) is declining but the sport is still wildly popular – and a steady influx of foreign-born wrestlers competing at the top levels keeps interest high. Such sports as Judo (p. 166), Kendo (p. 175), and Kyudo (p. 181) are common activities for Japanese teenagers, although people of all ages participate.

In late 20th- and early 21st-century Japan, mixed martial arts (p. 189) are becoming more popular. There are a number of competing "brands" or leagues, and fighters often compete in several of these. MMA and kickboxing matches are major television events, and participants endorse products and make TV appearances quite unrelated to fighting!

A modern Japanese campaign might have any realism level and any theme. Recent Japanese fiction runs the gamut from *Gritty Realism* (p. 237) to *Over-the-Top* (p. 239). Modern Japan is relatively safe, though, making the "Street" lens (p. 145) on styles inappropriate and the courses represented by "Self-Defense" (p. 145) vanishingly rare. Even the riot police train in formal, traditional styles.

# Post-Classical Europe

The uninformed often regard Europe as the poor cousin of the martial-arts world – a latecomer that only developed true "martial arts" in the 19th and 20th centuries. In fact, Europe has *always* had martial-arts styles, taught by dedicated instructors who handed down their art from generation to generation. Few ancient arts survived because, unlike China and Japan, Europe lacked long periods of peace during which to preserve them. European styles had to adapt continuously to the changing face of combat!

## *Medieval Europe*

The dominant battlefield styles for a medieval European campaign are mounted. Most important is Knightly Mounted Combat (pp. 175-177), the version depending on the period. The style detailed under *Early Medieval* is suitable until the 12th century – and practitioners might coexist with Byzantine cavalry trained in Armatura Equestris (p. 150). The variety under *High Medieval* is appropriate for the 12th through 14th centuries. *Late Medieval* describes the form that accompanied the adoption of plate armor by knights, and suits the end of the Middle Ages. In Outremer, the Crusaders' Muslim foes and local allies practice Furusiyya (pp. 159-161). Finally, while Bajutsu (p. 151) is Japanese, Christian and Islamic knights alike have equivalent training.

On foot, styles used by both nobles and commoners include Sword-and-Shield Fighting (pp. 199-200) and Sword-and-Buckler Play (p. 199). The latter is especially popular with wealthy commoners, students, and city-dwelling young men of all kinds. Dagger Fighting (p. 155) suits both students and toughs seeking an edge in a brawl, as well as soldiers and knights skilled with their backup weapon. The "ultimate" commoner art is Masters of Defence Weapon Training (p. 182). Its exponents train in a wide variety of weapons for both the battlefield and individual combat.

Primarily unarmed martial arts are also in wide use. Wrestling is a popular pastime, and Combat Wrestling (pp. 204-205) is a serious combative art. Striking styles include a form of Bare-Knuckle Boxing (p. 153) – but in this period, the Boxing skill is out of fashion. Bouts use Brawling, and fighters who duck, parry, or avoid attacks are seen as cowardly and weak. The object is to batter your rival with punches before his blows stop *you* in your tracks! Complex striking arts such as Pankration (pp. 188-189) are all but lost thanks to the decline of a structured system of support for professional athletes, Christian denunciations of gladiatorial games, and the simple fact that wrestling is more practical against armored foes.

Many themes suit the era. *The Quest* (p. 247) might involve efforts to reclaim the Holy Lands – or the Holy Grail. *War Is Hell* (p. 248) is ideal for any of the Crusades or many European wars. *Wanted!* (p. 249) is of course perfect for a campaign inspired by Robin Hood. *The Contender* (p. 250) works well in later eras, with the PCs as a group of knights errant or wandering Masters of Defence, fighting at tourneys and displaying their skills.

## *Renaissance Europe*

Contrary to common belief, guns didn't instantly render armor obsolete and in doing so inspire the replacement of heavy, armor-defeating weapons with lighter blades. That's a rough summary of about *400 years* of evolution, much of it post-Renaissance – that is, all of TL4. Guns, armor, and fencing coexisted for centuries. Civilians carried fencing weapons; soldiers used firearms and polearms, and armor grew heavier in response. The rapier was for the street and private grievances; halberd, pike, and two-handed sword dominated melees in the affairs of kings. Thus, many medieval European arts survived well into the Renaissance.

Most civilians and others who seek "self-defense" or dueling arts will study fencing in a Renaissance campaign. The rapier appears early on, with the Italian School (pp. 156-157). Proponents of Masters of Defence Weapon Training (p. 182), notably George Silver (p. 22), still teach their art but are losing out to the more fashionable and popular rapier.

On the battlefield, soldiers wield halberds using a style almost identical to Chinese Horse-Cutter Fighting (p. 187), or use glaives and bills with Glaive Fighting (p. 187). Knights and infantry with two-handed swords train at Longsword Fighting (pp. 180-182). Foot soldiers, knights, and civilians alike learn Dagger Fighting (p. 155) and Shortsword Fighting (p. 195). Across the Mediterranean, the Mamluks of Egypt still practice Furusiyya (pp. 159-161) – and continue to do so until defeated by Napoleon in 1796!

Unarmed arts are virtually unchanged from the Middle Ages. The main combative style is Combat Wrestling (pp. 204-205). Brutal Bare-Knuckle Boxing (p. 153) matches in front of wagering crowds remain common in urban and rural areas alike. Armed styles typically include the grappling, throwing, and locking skills needed to defeat an armed and often armored adversary.

## *Swashbuckling Europe*

The rise of the state and the disappearance of the armored knight didn't bring about a decline in the martial arts. In fact, they rang in an era of legendary swordsmen – although the most famous of these lived in later works of fiction! Martial arts suitable for a post-Renaissance campaign vary with the chosen time period, but fencing styles are without a doubt the most important of these.

In a swashbuckling campaign, both arms and armor are *light.* Rapiers – and later, smallswords – are as much a fashion accessory as a means of personal violence. Armor is rare aside from ornate dress suits; even on the battlefield, only such specialized troops as cuirassiers (heavy cavalry equipped with swords, breastplates, and helmets) wear it.

In warfare, guns dominate but skirmishing with blades continues. Military men favor heavy cut-and-thrust swords over fencing weapons for this purpose. Despite the much-touted "primacy of the point," they still prefer a blade heavy enough to whack through helmets, shakos, and skulls

during wartime – and substantial enough to counter bayonets and the exotic weapons of hostile natives. Officers learn to use fencing weapons for duels *and* heavier swords for battle, and carry the weapon appropriate to the situation. A cavalry saber would be decidedly gauche at court, while a smallsword isn't ideal when facing charging cuirassiers.

Two groups in this period lend themselves especially well to a ***Martial Arts*** game: Musketeers and pirates. The Musketeers are an elite force of mounted infantry who serve the king of France. Early on, they use the rapier, cloak, and main-gauche more than their namesake weapon. After 1720 or so they favor the smallsword, but still prefer the blade to the gun for settling affairs of honor. The Italian School (pp. 156-157), Transitional French School (pp. 158-159), and French Smallsword (p. 159) are ideal styles for Musketeers and their rivals. La Verdadera Destreza (p. 158) fits Spanish-centered games – and Spanish-trained rivals of PCs in the King's service! Unarmed combat rarely figures in accounts of the period, but low-born fighters using Bare-Knuckle Boxing (p. 153), Dagger Fighting (p. 155), and possibly Savate (pp. 193-194) can keep the game from becoming too sword-centered.

Some pirates fence, too – especially fictional ones such as Captain Blood (from the books by Rafael Sabatini) and the heroes of Errol Flynn movies. They don't have "chi abilities" but *do* display aptitude beyond that of normal men. Historical pirates would more likely be of common birth and have little opportunity to learn fencing. Appropriate styles for them include Bare-Knuckle Boxing, Dagger Fighting, and Combat Wrestling (pp. 204-205). Pirates range far and wide, and might encounter slaves adept at Capoeira (pp. 153-154), experts at African Stickfighting (p. 157), dismounted Mamluks using Furusiyya (pp. 159-161) to protect their fleet, Indonesians who practice Pentjak Silat (pp. 189-191), and so on. In a sufficiently cinematic (or well-traveled historical) campaign, practitioners of all of these styles might find their way to the Spanish Main!

Swashbuckling almost *demands* a low realism level and a highly cinematic treatment; see *Borderline Realism* (pp. 237-238) and *Epic* (p. 239). However, it's perfectly valid to run an extremely realistic game set in this period, especially one centered on pirates or historical European wars. Almost any theme can work. *Wanted!* (p. 249) and *The Quest* (p. 247) suit the freebooting character of pirates. A Musketeer-style campaign works better with *War is Hell* (p. 248) – or even *Vigilante Justice* (p. 249), in the spirit of the Scarlet Pimpernel.

# Fantasy

Fantasy games generally take place in pre-gunpowder environments where muscle-powered melee and missile weapons dominate combat. Such settings are ideal for the martial arts! Warriors who depend on their brawn for warfare, monster-slaying, and questing after treasure will almost certainly develop advanced fighting styles.

Two fictional styles tailored to fantasy campaigns appear in Chapter 5: Death Fist (pp. 207-208) is exclusively for mages, while Dragon-Man Kung Fu (pp. 208-209) can grant almost anyone "magical" powers. Many historical styles work as well. Traditional fantasy often takes place in a setting heavily influenced by medieval Europe, so such medieval arts as Knightly Mounted Combat (pp. 175-177) and Quarterstaff (pp. 192-193) are appropriate. Well-rounded fighters should look at Masters of Defence Weapon Training (p. 182) – especially if the GM allows the Weapon Master advantage. For barehanded fantasy warriors, Pankration (pp. 188-189) is an excellent choice. In a game world inspired by historical Asia, the many Asian styles that trace their origins to ancient times are similarly useful.

Kalaripayit (pp. 168-169) and Pentjak Silat (pp. 189-191) are particularly well-suited to a game that features magic. The former has spell-like mantras, while practitioners of the latter ascribe magical powers to the *kris*. If magic is a real, active force, then it would greatly enhance either art.

Most fantasy campaigns include magic use, so cinematic martial-arts abilities aren't likely to pose much of a threat to game balance – in fact, they can actually *strengthen* it. If fighters can use Power Blow and Flying Leap, then their players are less likely to feel overwhelmed by mages who can fly and toss fireballs. A blend of *some* cinematic feats with generally realistic combat rules can also be fun, however; see *Hybrid Campaigns* (pp. 239-241). Any theme can work – "fantasy" is a broad category – but of course *The Quest* (p. 247) is a time-honored tradition.

## *Yrth*

The land of Yrth, detailed in ***GURPS Banestorm,*** is an excellent setting for a ***Martial Arts*** campaign. Any medieval European or Islamic style *might* be present! Particularly suitable are Furusiyya (pp. 159-161), the High Medieval variation on Knightly Mounted Combat (pp. 175-177), Longsword Fighting (pp. 180-182), Masters of Defence Weapon Training (p. 182), Pollaxe Fighting (p. 191), and Quarterstaff (pp. 192-193) – and Viking Spear Fighting (p. 197), at least in the Nomad Lands.

There's plenty of room for regional specialties, too. Classical arts, notably Ancient Greek Boxing (p. 153) and Pankration (pp. 188-189), might reemerge in Megalan arena combat. In Araterre, such fencing styles as the Italian School (p. 156), La Verdadera Destreza (p. 158), and Transitional French School (pp. 156-157) are suitable – albeit with less emphasis on lighter blades and more on swords capable of defeating armored opponents. Sahud is likely home to *many* Asian arts, including most kung fu styles and Japanese martial arts; Okinawan immigrants might even have brought Te (pp. 169-170). In any of these regions, the presence of multiple Earthly styles makes unusual combinations probable. Sahud in particular is a confusing blend of cultures and doubtless home to a bewildering variety of "fusion" martial arts.

Later banestorms could convey students and instructors of more recent styles to Yrth. Bear in mind that Yrth is a combative place, though. Styles intended for fitness, artistic display, or theatrics in a modern, gun-dominated environment simply won't do as well as arts that employ melee weapons and teach techniques useful in combat.

On top of all this, nonhumans on Yrth surely brought *their* styles; see *Smasha* (p. 210) for an example. And of course human and nonhuman systems will adapt, blend, and cross-train in strange ways, leading to variations unheard of on Earth. A campaign set outside Sahud is unlikely to fit the "kung fu movie" stereotype, but martial artists have a role to play in *any* combat-heavy game – or even in one that features tournaments and the accompanying courtly intrigues.

# Modern Day

Modern-day games are among the easiest to stage. The players are intimately familiar with the setting. Adventure ideas are no further away than the daily news. Best of all, such campaigns can take advantage of an *incredibly* broad range of martial arts.

For one thing, *many* of the traditional arts described in *Historical and Modern Styles* (pp. 148-207) exist in the modern world. Styles formerly available only in remote locales or to select students have spread worldwide; usually, the sole requirement for training is a monthly fee. As well, recreationists have restored many "lost" styles using the original manuals, making it possible to study Longsword Fighting (p. 180-182), historical fencing (pp. 156-159), and so on. The Internet gives anyone with access to a computer the ability to look at reproductions of priceless historical documents that would otherwise be available only to a lucky few scholars – and these are often digital copies of the originals, not merely text.

There's also a wealth of *new* martial arts to choose from. Styles such as Aikido (p. 149), Brazilian Jiu-jitsu (pp. 167-168), Jeet Kune Do (pp. 164-165), Kajukenbo (p. 168), Karate (p. 183), Krav Maga (p. 185), Sambo (pp. 169-172), and Tae Kwon Do (p. 200), to name but a few, are 20th-century creations, even if they claim older roots. Mixed martial arts (p. 189) are exciting, popular, and an entirely modern invention – one that owes a lot to no-holds-barred spectacles broadcast on TV.

A few of the style lenses under *Choosing a Style* (pp. 144-146) are especially appropriate in a modern-day game. The "Police" lens suits cops, from patrolmen to SWAT. "Self-Defense" is common for those learning quick-and-dirty techniques to protect themselves from crime. And "Trained by a Fraud" fits both McDojo students and store-bought black belts.

The main challenge in a modern-day game is "gun control." Dozens of points spent on martial-arts abilities can become irrelevant in a single burst of gunfire. The law is another obstacle: except in a cinematic game, punches and kicks that can incapacitate a foe can land you in prison. For more on this topic, see *Martial Arts and the Law* (pp. 26-27).

Many themes can work in a present-day campaign, but today's focus on the martial arts as sports makes *The Contender* (p. 250) especially fitting. *To Serve and Protect* (pp. 247-248) and *Vigilante Justice* (p. 249) are good for action-movie games. Any realism level is appropriate, but because players in modern-day games often expect something between *Gritty Realism* (p. 237) and *Moderate Realism* (p. 247), the GM should introduce cinematic elements with care.

# Post-Apocalypse

Most post-apocalypse stories are set after a nuclear war, natural disaster (asteroid strikes and plagues are popular), or supernatural force (often zombies) has devastated the world. Civilization has collapsed or is rapidly disintegrating, and its comforts – from automobiles to mass-produced ammunition – are in short supply. In some scenarios, tiny pockets of survivors carve out lives in the aftermath. In others, warlords forge empires from the ruins.

This is an ideal backdrop for a ***Martial Arts*** game, because the GM can inject *limited* doses of the technology that makes modern-day campaigns amusing – snazzy firearms, explosives, etc. – into a world where melee combat enjoys the same importance that it has in a pre-gunpowder setting. Ammo and spare parts for high-tech gear are in short supply . . . but fists, feet, sticks, and knives always work. Any art that suits a modern-day game might survive. The "Military," "Street," and "Self-Defense" style lenses (pp. 144-145) are all useful for stripping down martial arts for combat. If there are unusual threats to confront, completely new styles might emerge – just imagine one built around weapons and tactics effective against zombies!

The role of martial artists can vary. If the GM emphasizes "might makes right," then a pocket empire might grow around a martial-arts master and his loyal disciples – or a warlord could employ such fighters to train his army. Alternatively, martial artists might go into voluntary exile, shunning the shattered world to concentrate on their art. Hermit masters are a trope of martial-arts fiction. Campy, mutant-filled worlds are another post-apocalypse staple, and equally suitable for a ***Martial Arts*** game. Mutants might roam the hostile wastelands, and ultra-tech weapons could go hand-in-hand with kung fu. "Chi powers" could even be *mutant* powers!

*The Quest* (p. 247) is the most important theme, and typically involves the search for some lost bit of technology that can save the world. However, *War is Hell* (p. 248) works for soldiers serving a warlord, and *The Contender* (p. 250) suits a game centered on B-movie death sports played out in the ruins of civilization. Any realism level is possible. Mutants, or sword-wielding barbarians fighting sorcerers in the ruins, call for *Epic* (p. 239) or *Over-the-Top* (p. 239). For survivors eking out an existence in an unfriendly world, though, *Gritty Realism* (p. 237) is ideal.

# Science Fiction

Most science-fiction settings fall into one of two broad categories: "space opera" or "hard science."

## *Space Opera*

The space-opera genre is sometimes called "sword and blaster" for a reason: warriors of the future seem to rely as much on a trusty blade – be it a force sword or a material one – as on ultra-tech firearms. Stories often feature low-tech natives who have their own forms of swordsmanship for these futuristic fencers to contend with. All of this is ideal for a ***Martial Arts*** game!

If martial artists use force swords, then they're likely to study Precognitive Parry (p. 62) in order to deflect energy bolts. This puts swordsmanship and marksmanship on an equal footing. Force-Swordsmanship (p. 209) is tailor-made for such games. With sufficient investment in a chi-powered Innate Attack (pp. 45-47), a cinematic fighter can rival guns and missiles even at a distance.

Alternatively, swordsmen might prefer traditional blades, or ultra-tech upgrades such as vibroblades and monomolecular swords. The best-known example of this appears in Frank Herbert's *Dune,* where force shields can stop swift blows but not a knife pushed slowly through the screen. In such a setting, Dagger Fighting (p. 155) and Combat Wrestling (pp. 204-205) – or even a renamed version of Jujutsu (pp. 166-168) – would be *de rigueur* for a serious martial artist.

Any martial-arts style can work in a space-opera game. The more it relies on weapons amenable to ultra-tech improvements – whips become *monowire* whips, katanas become *vibro*-katanas, three-part staffs become flexible stun batons, etc. – the better. Unarmed arts also suit the genre, especially in swashbuckling games where two-fisted heroes fight bug-eyed monsters on any terms possible.

Campaign themes for space-opera games include *The Quest* (p. 247), with the heroes seeking an elusive force-sword master; *War is Hell* (p. 248), for soldiers fighting for or against the Galactic Emperor's legions; and *Warriors of the Night* (pp. 249-250), for ultra-tech ninja using cinematic abilities against aliens. Realism is strictly optional. Any of the lenses under *Mad, Crazy Action* (pp. 238-239) is appropriate.

### *Hard Science*

Hard-science games are set in a future with little or no "superscience." Blasters, bug-eyed aliens, faster-than-light travel, psionics, etc., are rare or nonexistent. Stories often take place entirely on near-future Earth or within the solar system.

This kind of campaign faces the same challenges as a modern-day game – notably, the superiority of guns to muscle-powered combat – without the up side of player familiarity with the game world. Still, hard science fiction can be a good place for the martial arts. Indeed, if the campaign is set in Earth's future, it would be difficult to justify the demise of the martial arts when they've already survived *millennia* of technological change!

Appropriate styles are as described for *Modern Day* (p. 246). Moreover, if martial-arts history is anything to go by, new needs will inspire fresh styles. For instance, if people live and fight in low gravity, they'll invent fighting arts for their environment. This is the logic behind Freefighting (p. 210), which doesn't require superscience or chi powers to be effective.

Such a campaign can still feature cinematic abilities. Consider William Gibson's near-future tale *Neuromancer,* which includes a ninja who seems to possess the Blind Fighting skill. Cybernetic implants, biotech, and advanced physical and psychological conditioning can all provide believable explanations.

Realism levels and campaign themes are as for *Modern Day.* Hard science *generally* favors a realistic game. The GM shouldn't feel bound by this, however.

## Campaign Themes

After choosing a realism level and setting for his campaign, the GM should lend some thought to its tone. What's its focal point, if any? What sorts of roles do the PCs play? In short, what's the *theme?*

Some campaigns have no real theme. The GM creates the setting, the players generate their characters, and then the heroes drift from adventure to adventure. This tends to give the campaign an amorphous feeling unless the GM is exceptionally skilled at thinking on his feet or the players really want a mindless slugfest (which *can* be fun . . . for a while).

The gaming group that feels that a campaign should be like a collaborative novel (or series), with some sort of central plot, will probably prefer something more focused. The GM can either choose a theme based on the PCs his players create or select it beforehand and restrict the character types to those that fit. Below are several possibilities.

### *The Quest*

The PCs are on a quest. They might be seeking enlightenment, tracking down a lost artifact, searching for rare materials needed for high-quality weapons, or working toward a laudable goal. Appropriate goals include rescuing a prisoner, freeing a people from bondage, defeating a conspiracy or an enemy, and bringing peace to the land. A common quest in cheesy kung fu movies is recovering "lost" knowledge – typically a miraculous cure for a disease, a tome of all wisdom, or forgotten martial-arts secrets.

The advantage of such a campaign is that the PCs have an excuse to wander around, looking into every mystery. Still, the GM should ensure *some* kind of steady progress or the quest will seem never-ending. A wide-ranging adventuring party can run into martial artists from around the world during their search. Some might be allies; others, enemies. Either way, such encounters enable the GM to introduce new martial-arts styles for the seekers to learn or contend with. Enemies might be genuine adversaries, but rivals for the quest object – willing to sabotage the heroes' progress to get ahead – are equally fitting.

*Star Wars* depicts a quest – the heroes seek to defeat a galactic empire – and includes a young martial-arts student seeking a master (see *The Quest for the Master,* p. 248). *The Swordsman II* is another example, the goal being to stop a power-crazed martial artist from becoming completely invincible. *The Silent Flute* is a classic quest: a martial artist seeks the ultimate truth, aided by an enigmatic guide!

Don't overlook the quest for *revenge.* The PCs might seek the enemy who killed their master, betrayed them in the past, or otherwise wronged them and theirs. Revenge quests are common in martial-arts fiction. *The Count of Monte Cristo* is of course a classic – but there are plenty of excellent modern tales, such as *Kill Bill* and *Lady Snowblood.*

### *To Serve and Protect*

The PCs are law enforcers, private eyes, or security forces. Historical games can have them as cops in 1920s Shanghai, 19th-century San Francisco . . . or Tokugawa Japan. The further back one goes, the less significant the role of firearms and the greater the importance of the martial arts. Modern campaigns have all of their usual drawbacks: the presence of guns and the relative scarcity of situations where martial-arts abilities make a difference. Even on the street, Driving, Guns, and social skills are more valuable than martial-arts training – at least in a realistic game.

## The Quest for the Master

In a cinematic game, the PCs will eventually want to learn cinematic skills . . . or acquire Trained by a Master, Weapon Master, or Heroic Archer in order to be *able* to learn such skills. In any kind of campaign, they might want to study a new style. The GM could simply charge points and move on, but the quest for the Master – the sole teacher who can impart the necessary training – is an ancient and honorable subplot.

This could become a quest for any of several reasons. The most obvious is that the students don't have a master. Even if they do, he might not be able to teach them. He might believe that they're unready for the next lesson and send them on a mission, with the promise of training if they succeed. He might realize that he has taught them everything he knows and direct them to seek out *his* master. He might die of old age . . . or be killed.

The quest itself should be an adventure – possibly long, definitely dangerous. And once the heroes find the Master, they needn't immediately realize this. Most players expect the B-movie clichés: a wise old man, traditional in every way, who always knows what would-be students need (typically, the opposite of what they *want*). The Master doesn't *have* to be anything like that.

The Master might be a boy. Or a woman. Or skilled but stupid. Or a drunk. Or *evil.* Or greedy. ("Sure, I'll teach you the Seven Secret Kicks. That'll be $30,000, in gold. For each of you.") In a cinematic game, the Master might be a member of another race, a spirit, or even a god. The Master might not be a single entity at all, but an entire temple, village, or *planet* full of special teachers.

The adventure doesn't end when the students find the Master. The Master may set tasks for them, and these might not appear to make much sense . . . they might even seem evil or illegal. Perhaps they are! There's no law that says all masters must be good people. How the would-be students react to this is a roleplaying challenge.

There's also the matter of the time required. Instruction could take years (per *Learning Secret Martial-Arts Techniques,* p. B293) or be compressed into a few days or weeks (see *The Training Sequence,* p. 147). In a highly cinematic game, the adventurers might journey to a hidden valley or isolated monastery where years seem to pass but only a few weeks go by in the outside world.

Then again, the quest might not lead the students to a person. Founders of real-world styles have named dreams, meditation, and watching animals fight as inspirations. Enlightenment might come from the quest itself, with the seekers learning from their journey – if they survive it! Each obstacle they pass might teach an important lesson. Such things take as long as learning from a Master – perhaps longer.

The quest works best in a historical setting where teachers are rare and some schools are outlawed. In the modern world, where martial-arts schools advertise, the quest is usually part of a cinematic campaign. Searching for "hand of death" on 411.com won't accomplish much!

Still, a quest is possible in a realistic modern-day game. The Master need not advertise, or have a phone number or a fixed address. He could be an illegal immigrant with ties to organized crime. The PCs might not even know his name. Or the Master might be easy to *find* but temperamental, and the "quest" lies in convincing him to give lessons. Situations like this can be as trying and deadly as any journey – especially if the PCs must stay in the wrong end of town or an isolated village in a foreign country while they look for the Master or wait for him to make up his mind.

To make the martial arts central to a modern police game requires cinematic combat realism, even if cinematic *abilities* don't exist. "Buddy movies" regularly feature martial artists – usually one of an odd-couple detective duo – who use their arts to augment their shooting skills or who actually *prefer* fists and feet to firearms. Such cops draw their weapons only after using a few well-placed kicks to take down the bad guy and just before slapping on the cuffs! Television shows such as *Martial Law* are inspirational, as are innumerable Hollywood movies – the martial-artist lawman is a B-movie staple.

### *War Is Hell*

A war campaign is an excellent place for the martial arts, obviously. The PCs needn't belong to a national army – mercenaries are common throughout history. During global conflicts, such as the World Wars, "adventurers" on the fringes of major theatres or in minor theatres might choose sides on the basis of personal gain, not national allegiance. In smaller struggles, soldiers of fortune can nearly always find employment.

World War II is especially fertile ground for a ***Martial Arts*** game. Japanese officers carry swords and have martial-arts training in the form of Aikijutsu (p. 149), Jujutsu (pp. 166-168), Kenjutsu (pp.173-175), or Kendo (pp. 175); their enlisted underlings practice Jukenjutsu (p. 197). Allied commandos learn Fairbairn Close Combat Training (p. 182-183p). Burmese, Filipino, and Indonesian guerrillas fight the Japanese with guns, sticks, and swords. Many 20th-century style originators lived through and fought in WWII.

In modern games, guns dominate warfare. Why drop your rifle to punch and kick if a three-round burst can settle the matter more effectively? The martial arts are still part of the military experience, though – from basic training for green recruits to advanced arts reserved for special-operations forces. The more elite the troops, the more opportunities they have to learn and use martial arts. A "silencer" isn't perfect, it merely makes a gun less noisy . . . but a stealthy, well-trained man with a knife *can* remove a sentry without a sound – at least in a cinematic campaign!

Good examples of war-themed martial-arts fiction are *The Duellists,* which chronicles a private duel during wartime, and *The Three Musketeers* (the novel and many movies), which includes intrigue, private squabbles, and a siege. David Gemmell's *Legend* features a Weapon Master and other larger-than-life martial artists at war. *The Seven Samurai* follows mercenaries in a small, private war.

## A Learning Experience

The PCs might be students. They might practice at a dojo, kwoon, salle, or boxing gym . . . or belong to a gladiator school . . . or train under a wizened old master in his remote hideout (or suburban home). Or perhaps *they* are the instructors. Whatever the situation, the campaign focuses primarily on the *students'* training and advancement.

This type of game works well in settings where inter- or intra-school competition can turn violent, or where martial-arts academies are centers of political intrigue. Even in a modern-day campaign, street fights between schools can occur. Realistic rivalries are mostly friendly; rivals might compete and then go out together after the tournament to celebrate. But cinematic (and many historical) settings feature more violent relationships.

The Shaolin Temple is the most famous martial-arts school of all time. Scores if not hundreds of movies have featured students training there. Historically, the Temple was a refuge for rebels and wanderers, and was ultimately destroyed by a besieging army. This catapulted its surviving students into a life on the run – a desperate situation, but an ideal premise for an adventure-filled campaign.

This theme often segues into others. If the school teaches fighters for competition, the campaign can cross over with *The Contender* (p. 250) theme. If events force the academy underground, the game will take on elements of *Wanted!* (see below).

*The Karate Kid* illustrates this theme well: a bullied teen in a new town pairs up with a wise old master. *The Paladin,* by C.J. Cherryh, is another example. It later adds elements of *War is Hell* (p. 248) and *The Quest* (p. 247), all in the same story!

## Vigilante Justice

The PCs are rogue crimefighters – not merely maverick lawmen. They might be in cahoots with the police, tolerated by them, or actively hunted by criminal and cop alike. If the vigilantes are wanted by the authorities, then a secret identity is a must.

Suitable characters and martial-arts styles depend on the campaign's location, time period, and realism level. In a realistic, modern-day game, guns are more useful than martial arts. In cinematic settings, though, vigilantes tend to be as good with their fists as they are with firearms, and use Jeet Kune Do (pp. 164-165), Taijutsu (pp. 202-203), etc., to defeat crooks. Templates such as *Crimefighter* (pp. 32-34), *Assassin* (pp. 31-32), and *Spy* (p. 38) suit fictional heroes well. While implausible in real life, even *Movie Star* (pp. 36-38) or *Stuntman* (p. 40) could work, for a vigilante with a secret identity.

Without investigation or some other form of activity, this kind of campaign quickly degenerates into a series of fights against the Bad Guy of the Week. To keep the game fresh, the GM might want to combine this theme with another. *The Quest* (p. 247) works well if the heroes are hunting a long-term foe or criminal mastermind, while stepping too far over the line can lead to a *Wanted!* (see right) campaign.

This theme is extremely popular in martial-arts fiction. *The Green Hornet* television series is a perfect example, with secretly police-sanctioned vigilantes and a nod and wink to reality. *Kung Fu* features a Shaolin monk wandering the American West, dispensing fortune-cookie wisdom and hard kicks to bad guys. Other sources include *Yojimbo,* with a feudal Japanese ronin playing both sides of a conflict to further his personal sense of justice, and most Jackie Chan and Bruce Lee movies. In fact, all of Lee's movies except *Enter the Dragon* feature him as a private citizen bent on justice – in that movie, he's a *sanctioned* agent!

## Wanted!

A powerful enemy such as a rival school, the mob, or a ninja clan hunts the PCs. Or perhaps the *authorities* seek them, in which case they could be heroic rebels, vigilantes who went too far, or loyal spies who happen to work for the wrong side. Of course, they might simply be common criminals – assassins, thieves, etc.

The protagonists must either keep moving or operate out of a hideout that their enemies can't easily locate or penetrate. Regardless, they can't let down their guard because their hunters could be anywhere . . . or have gotten to anyone. To give them more to do than flee or hide, the GM should consider adding elements of *The Quest* (p. 247). Perhaps the fugitives seek the piece of information that can prove their innocence, the secret style that will let them turn the tables on their opponents, or the one person who can help them escape to freedom.

The GM can run any ***Martial Arts*** game with a small group or a single player, but this theme works especially well under such circumstances. A small group is less prone to squabbles that risk compromising everyone. A single PC, however powerful, will often need to deal with NPCs to get by – exposing himself to adventure and possible betrayal.

The *Lone Wolf and Cub* series is about a ronin-turned-assassin hunted by a powerful, government-connected ninja clan. It's also a quest, because the hero seeks revenge – on a huge scale. Robin Hood and his Merry Men (a showcase for Heroic Archer, p. 45, and *Quarterstaff,* pp. 192-193) constitute another excellent example.

## Warriors of the Night

The PCs might be ninja or sulsa . . . or members of a secret society such as a tong or a Triad . . . or guerrillas using their martial-arts skills to wreak havoc after an invasion. Alternatively, they might be on the other side, tracking down and destroying such a group. Or they might be on *neither* side, and caught in the middle.

There are many variations on this theme. The "warriors of the night" might be loyal servants of a lord or commander, freedom fighters, mercenaries, or an evil cult. They might have no master or a single employer, or hire out to the highest bidder. If they answer to someone, that person might have little loyalty to *them* and regard them as expendable. In a realistic campaign, betraying such a valuable asset as a band of guerrillas or group of ninja after a job would be foolish and wasteful. In a cinematic game, it should happen often!

This theme sometimes shows up alongside *A Learning Experience* (p. 249). The heroes are ninja-in-training – or perhaps someone is using their school as a cover for clandestine activities. Their master might work for good or for evil, and they might be his loyal dupes or willing partners.

Almost any setting is possible. In feudal Japan, the PCs might be ninja, helping their lord unify Japan or keep the Tokugawa Shogunate in power. In China, they might belong to a secret society that's trying to overthrow the Manchu. In a modern-day game, they might be special-ops troopers working behind enemy lines or in remote lands where resupply is difficult and martial arts are a way to save ammo. A fun *cinematic* modern-day campaign has the heroes caught in the crossfire between rival tongs or ninja clans – and having little luck convincing anyone of their unlikely predicament!

Timothy Zahn's *The Blackcollar* exemplifies this kind of campaign: a tiny group of cinematic ninja spearhead the resistance against alien invaders. The Chuck Norris movie *The Octagon* is inspirational for a "good hero vs. evil ninja" campaign.

## The Contender

The PCs are fighters on a competitive circuit. Perhaps all of them compete, or maybe only one or two are contenders while the rest are instructors, coaches, trainers, doctors, bodyguards, and friends. Many martial-arts schools enter multiple contestants in a tournament, so fighters could reasonably travel from event to event as a group – and occasionally even face each other in bouts.

The focus of such a campaign is the tournaments. Fights might be legal and regulated or illicit and of dubious safety. Even legal matches can prove deadly, intentionally (as in Roman gladiatorial contests) or accidentally (as in modern boxing). Illegal events in the real world generally feature lower-quality opponents – the desperate fight illegally, while the talented fight in the big leagues for the real money. In a cinematic game, the opposite is true: underground death matches attract only the best!

The activities that dominate the time in between tournaments depend on the setting and the realism level, and might suggest a whole different theme. Examples include training, working at jobs that use fighting skills outside the ring, and fending off rivals or money-hungry crime syndicates in order to survive to the next bout. Historical contenders moved in a variety of social circles, too, from the lowest to the highest. Roman gladiators, Japanese sumotori, and American boxers were all hired as bodyguards, desired as party guests, and retained as martial-arts instructors.

This theme is surprisingly portable across history, and allows for travel and adventure. Pankrationists and boxers traveled between events in ancient Greece. Indian wrestlers and American bare-knuckle boxers might compete almost anywhere in the world in an early 20th-century game. Mixed martial artists and Lethwei (p. 186) fighters would compete in full-contact matches worldwide in a 21st-century campaign. South America's vale tudo matches are an ideal venue for a modern-day game.

*Rocky* and *Raging Bull* are both excellent fictional treatments of this theme – and see *The Blood of Heroes* for a post-apocalypse twist. For real-life inspiration, the best places to look are the professional boxing, kickboxing, sumo, and wrestling circuits, and the various MMA championships. The rules, format, and prize money for such contests are widely available, making it easy to stage a realistic modern-day game. Historical records for some older events are available, too – sumo records go back centuries.

*. . . what kind of powers do you have? Do you use them for good, or for awesome?*

*– Strong Bad,*
***Some Kinda Robot***

## The Silly Campaign

The GM *can* simply play the martial arts for laughs! One option is a campaign in the tradition of low-quality kung fu movies with bad dubbing, worse plots, and blatant continuity errors. Another is a game inspired by *well-made* martial-arts comedies.

The shorter the campaign will run, the better silliness works as a standalone theme. In a one-shot game, you can have great fun with a paper-thin plot ("You killed my brother! Prepare to die!"), clichéd PCs, horrendous accents, and legions of disposable goons . . . but such things get old after a few sessions. In a long-running campaign, it's advisable to mix silliness with a more serious theme: fighting imperialism, saving a school, etc. The silliness *level* can be the same in both cases. For instance, the movie *Shaolin Soccer* features high silliness (Shaolin monks use chi abilities to win soccer games!) but mixes it with *The Quest* (p. 247).

Silly martial-arts movies abound. Slapstick is an excellent match with the martial arts, if only because the difference between a pratfall and a spectacular martial-arts move is a painfully small slip. This describes almost all the work of Jackie Chan and his frequent costar, Sammo Hung. Most Chan movies combine *Borderline Realism* (pp. 237-238) with lots of humor and quickly healing bruises. *Kung Fu Hustle* is definitely *Over-the-Top* (p. 239)! Silly stories don't *have* to dispense with reality or tragedy, though: *Magnificent Butcher* is a classically silly martial-arts film, yet depicts a violent murder. There are also many "serious" movies with such low quality and bad dubbing that they seem silly, although the distinction can be hazy; for instance, *Dirty Ho* is intentionally silly *and* dubiously dubbed.

Silly martial arts can lighten up even a non-***Martial Arts*** game! For inspiration, see Blake Edwards' "Pink Panther" movies or any 1960s super-spy flick that features "judo chops" and "Hi-keeba!" karate action.

# Glossary

***Martial Arts*** uses many foreign-language terms and assigns specific technical meanings to several everyday words.

**bushi:** *Japan*. A warrior, most often a *samurai* (q.v.).

**capoeirista:** *Brazil.* A Capoeira (pp. 153-154) practitioner.

**chambara:** *Japan*. A genre of action cinema showcasing improbable martial-arts exploits, typically featuring *ninja* and *samurai* (qq.v.).

**chi:** *China*. The life force found in all beings. Literally means "breath." Also transliterated as "qi." See *Religion, Philosophy, and Fists* (p. 11).

**cinematic:** Describes campaigns inspired by action movies, martial-arts mythology, etc., and unrealistic traits or combat options suitable for such games.

**circular:** Describes a style where attacks and defenses favor pivoting or sweeping motions *around* an axis, most often the stylist's upright body.

**dojang:** *Korea*. A martial-arts school.

**dojo:** *Japan*. A martial-arts school. Might refer to *any* school in modern usage, not just a Japanese one; e.g., "Muay Thai dojo."

**fechtbuch (**pl. **fechtbücher):** *Germany*. A "book of fighting" or martial-arts manual – usually one that combines weapon play with no-holds-barred striking and wrestling.

**guard: 1.** Any combination of stance and limb/weapon placement that enables a fighter to defend. **2.** In ground fighting, when the bottom fighter, facing up, uses his legs to grapple his rival and gain a defensive and even offensive advantage. The top fighter must try to avoid this by passing the legs and achieving a *mount* (q.v.).

**gymnasium:** *Ancient Greece*. A place for learning martial arts (which most Greek sports were or emulated, in some fashion). In modern usage, any space for practicing sports.

**-ka:** *Japan*. The Japanese suffix for a person who does an activity. A Karate practitioner is a *karateka,* a Judo stylist is a *judoka,* and so forth. Sumo wrestlers are *rikishi* (q.v.) or *sumotori,* though.

**kalari:** *India*. A martial-arts training area – often a shallow, dirt-walled pit.

**kata:** *Japan*. A preset – some would say dance-like – routine done to learn a style's techniques. Also called "forms." Some martial artists regard kata as a waste of time; others claim mastery of kata is a precondition to true mastery of the style.

**Kenpo:** *Japan*. **1.** A different transliteration of Kempo (pp. 172-173), used interchangeably. **2.** A term for some forms of Kenjutsu (pp. 173-175).

**ki:** *Japan*. The Japanese term for *chi* (q.v.).

**kiai:** *Japan*. A shout or battle cry, usually done simultaneously with a technique. In cinematic games, it's a chi-based attack in its own right; see *Kiai* (p. B203).

**kwoon:** *China*. A martial-arts school.

**LINE:** Acronym for "Linear Infighting Neural-override Engagement," the U.S. Marine Corps' predecessor to MCMAP (q.v.). LINE is a series of set responses to specific attacks rather than a genuine style.

**linear:** Describes a style where attacks and defenses favor straight-line movement *along* one or two axes, either directly toward/away from the enemy (a "|" or "+" shape, with the foe at the top) or at an angle to him (more of a "×" shape).

**McDojo:** A disparaging name for a martial-arts school perceived to be selling belts; a common place to be Trained by a Fraud (p. 145).

**MCMAP:** "Marine Corps Martial Arts Program," the current hand-to-hand combat style of the U.S. Marine Corps. See pp. 183-185.

**mestre:** *Brazil*. A Capoeira (pp. 153-154) teacher.

**mixed martial arts (MMA):** An umbrella term for modern sportive martial arts used in limited-rules, full-contact striking and grappling matches (p. 189).

**mount:** In ground fighting, when the top fighter kneels and straddles his rival's chest or back, grappling or pinning him for an almost decisive advantage. The bottom fighter must try to escape, perhaps by putting the enemy in his *guard* (q.v.).

**ninja:** *Japan*. Historically, a spy and/or assassin. Cinematically, a black-clad master of stealth and exotic weapons and techniques.

**prana:** *India*. Another – arguably the earliest – term for *chi* (q.v.).

**ricasso:** *Europe*. An unsharpened and sometimes leather-wrapped length of blade just above a sword's hilt for the wielder to grasp when using a Defensive Grip (pp. 109-111).

**rikishi:** *Japan*. A Sumo (pp. 198-199) practitioner.

**ronin:** *Japan.* A masterless *samurai* (q.v.).

**ryu (**pl. **ryuha):** *Japan*. A school or body of martial arts. Most ryuha teach multiple styles. See *Ryu* (p. 12).

**salle:** *France*. A martial-arts school, typically for fencing (pp. 156-159) or Savate (pp. 193-194).

**samurai:** *Japan*. A Japanese noble warrior in service to a lord.

**sensei:** *Japan*. A title of respect for a teacher, properly given *after* the name he asks his students to use (e.g., "Peter-sensei," not "Sensei Peter").

**sifu:** *China*. A title of respect for a teacher. Also transliterated as "shifu."

**stop hit:** An attack launched into an oncoming attack with the intent to preempt it. See *Stop Hits* (p. 108).

**technique:** Training at one specific attack, defense, or other action covered by a skill.

**Triad:** *China*. A secret society, originally with benevolent aims but more recently tied to crime.

**wuxia:** *China*. A genre of martial-arts cinema based on the exploits of the *xia* (q.v.), commonly featuring over-the-top action, wirework, and magic!

**xia:** *China.* A Chinese knight-errant. See *Xia* (p. 8).

# Bibliography

Described below are works that the authors found useful, sprinkled with inspirational reading and viewing for gamers using ***Martial Arts.*** This list is hardly exhaustive – there are *thousands* of excellent martial-arts books and movies!

## *Books (Nonfiction)*


Amberger, J. Christoph. *The Secret History of the Sword* (Unique Publications, 1999). This collection of articles on swords and dueling through history is valuable for those who wish to make swordfights seem more "real."

Anglo, Sydney. *The Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe* (Yale University Press, 2000). Outstanding coverage of the titular subject. Considers martial arts as they were, not as lesser versions of modern arts. Covers armed, armored, and unarmed combat equally.

Capo Ferro, Ridolfo (Jared Kirby, editor). *Italian Rapier Combat* (Stackpole Books, 2004). A translation of a highly influential rapier manual from 1610, well-illustrated and full of authentic tactics and details.

Cuyler, P.L. *Sumo: From Rite to Sport* (Weatherhill, 1979). Excellent source on Sumo traditions and history.

Draeger, Donn F. and Smith, Robert W. *Comprehensive Asian Fighting Arts* (Kodansha International, 1969). The authors recorded everything they could on Asian fighting arts – including styles that have since become nearly extinct. Some assertions are suspect or unsourced, but the book is truly comprehensive. Get the 1997 reprint.

Fairbairn, W.E. *Get Tough! How to Win in Hand-to-Hand Fighting* (D. Appleton-Century Co., 1942). No-nonsense fighting techniques developed for WWII combat. Reissued by Paladin Press in 1979.

Green, Thomas A. (editor). *Martial Arts of the World: An Encyclopedia* (ABC-CLIO, 2001). This excellent two-volume martial-arts encyclopedia overlooks no major style or geographical location, although some arts get relatively little hard detail.

Lee, Bruce (John Little, editor). *Bruce Lee Library* (Tuttle Publishing, 1997). A seven-volume collection of writings, letters, and notes by Bruce Lee, assembled from his personal library and organized topically. Highly recommended.

Lee, Bruce. *The Tao of Jeet Kune Do* (Ohara Publications, 1975). Bruce Lee's reflections on Jeet Kune Do and martial-arts philosophy.

Mol, Serge. *Classical Weaponry of Japan* (Kodansha International, 2003). An excellent, well-illustrated resource on obscure Japanese weapons, with weapon names in both kanji and English.

Musashi, Miyamoto. *A Book of Five Rings* (The Overlook Press, 1974). A translation of *Go Rin No Sho* (1645). Many read the master swordsman's reflections on swordsmanship as a philosophy of combat and even business.

Oyama, Masutatsu. *This Is Karate* (Japan Publications, 1972). Kyokushin founder Oyama's text on karate and his style. Extremely complete, with lots of "showoff" techniques and practical instruction.

Salzman, Mark. *Iron & Silk* (Vintage, 1987). A Westerner learns kung fu in China. A good look at a modern, cross-cultural master-student relationship. Made into a movie (dir. Shirley Sun, 1990).

Twigger, Robert. *Angry White Pajamas* (Quill, 1997). A writer takes the Yoshinkan Aikido Tokyo Riot Police course. An excellent account of harsh civilian martial-arts training.

Vegetius (M.D. Reeve, editor). *Epitoma rei militaris* (Oxford University Press, 2004). A translation of history's most comprehensive treatment of Roman military training and tactics – which was a powerful influence on the development of Western martial tradition from its 4th-century publication until the 19th century. Also called *De re militari.*

Zabinski, Grzegorz, with Walczak, Bartlomiej (translators). *Codex Wallerstein* (Paladin Press, 2002). A translation of the famous 15th-century sword, dagger, and wrestling manual.


## *Books (Fiction)*


Cherryh, C.J. *The Paladin* (Baen, 1988). A young warrior forces an old master to accept her as his student – an interesting play on Trained by a Master.

Gemmell, David. *Against the Horde* (Ace, 1988). An aging warrior goes to battle one last time. Features a Weapon Master and psi-enhanced martial arts. Reissued as *Legend* in 1997.

Murphy, Warren and Sapir, Richard. *The Destroyer* (1971-present). A series of 110+ trashy adventure novels. Chiun's Sinanju is an example of an "ultimate style." Good fun! William Murray penned many later titles. Published by Pinnacle, followed by Signet, then Gold Eagle, and most recently Tor.

Perry, Steven. *The Man Who Never Missed* (Ace, 1985). This and the rest of the "Matador Series" (*Matadora, The Machiavelli Interface,* etc.) blend science fiction with cinematic martial arts – including Sumito, an "ultimate style."

Zahn, Timothy. *The Blackcollar* (DAW, 1983). Elite commandos use martial-arts weapons and techniques in a guerilla war against aliens.


## *Comic Books*


Hama, Larry. *Nth Man, the Ultimate Ninja* (Marvel, 1989-1990). Ultimate ninja John Doe confronts an insane supervillain during World War III and its aftermath. Cinematic ninja action mixed with super-powers and militaria.

Koike, Kazuo and Kojima, Goseki. *Lone Wolf and Cub* (Dark Horse Comics, 2000-2002). A 28-volume comic (originally a Japanese manga) set in Tokugawa Japan. Follows the adventures of samurai-turned-assassin Ogami Itto and his young son, Daiguro. Features almost every samurai trope – and most ninja tropes, too.

Miller, Frank and others. *Daredevil* (Marvel, 1964-present). Daredevil is a blind martial-arts master who contends with ninja, a supervillain Throwing Art expert, and other martial artists. Created by Stan Lee, but look for Miller-era comics (1979-1982). The spin-off comics and movie are of uneven quality.

## Movies

*36th Chamber of Shaolin* (Chia-Liang Liu, 1978). This Gordon Liu kung fu classic has a horrible plot but some of the best Shaolin training sequences ever made.

*Above the Law* (Andrew Davis, 1988). This Steven Seagal action flick plausibly combines gunplay and martial arts in a modern setting.

*Adventures of Robin Hood, The* (Michael Curtiz, 1938). Features a Basil Rathbone vs. Errol Flynn fencing duel, plus cinematic archery!

*Batman Begins* (Christopher Nolan, 2005). This *Batman* remake sets a quest for the master (with an interesting turn), ninja, and a revenge quest against a superheroic backdrop.

*Big Trouble in Little China* (John Carpenter, 1986). An overconfident trucker gets entangled in magic and martial arts in San Francisco's Chinatown. First American attempt at a *wuxia* film is a mixed bag, but fun.

*Bruce Lee: A Warrior's Journey* (John Little and Bruce Lee, 2000). This documentary on Bruce Lee's life and his unfinished final film, *Game of Death,* has great footage of Lee in action – both in "cinematic" form and demonstrating his true skills.

*Dirty Ho* (Chia-Liang Liu, 1979). Groundbreaking kung fu comedy, with death-touch, proxy fighting, and a gullible thief dragooned into helping a master with a secret.

*Drunken Master II* (Chia-Liang Liu, 1994). Outstanding nonstop action and drunken-style kung fu. Possibly Jackie Chan's best work – although *every* Chan movie should be considered inspirational for comic games!

*Duellists, The* (Ridley Scott, 1977). Two Napoleonic officers are locked in an *affaire d'honneur.* Features duels with sabers and smallswords, and even one on horseback. Based on a Joseph Conrad story.

*Enter the Dragon* (Robert Clouse, 1973). Bruce Lee's influential final film introduced many common "action movie" tropes. Also check out *The Big Boss* (Wei Lo, 1971), *The Chinese Connection* (Wei Lo, 1972), and *Return of the Dragon* (Bruce Lee, 1972) – the first two of which are *both* sometimes called *Fists of Fury.*

*Fatal Flying Guillotines, The* (Raymond Lui, 1977). Cheesy kung fu action, unlikely weapons, bad acting, and poor dubbing make this worthy viewing for those running silly campaigns!

*Hero* (Yimou Zhang, 2002). A story of assassination and philosophy – told and retold several times as lies and deceptions are unmasked. Features beautiful *wuxia* action.

*Karate Kid, The* (John G. Avildsen, 1984). A bullied teen gets tutored in karate by an Okinawan master (played brilliantly by Noriyuki Morita).

*Kill Bill: Vol. 1* and *Vol. 2* (Quentin Tarantino, 2003 and 2004). Tarantino's two-part homage to kung fu, revenge, samurai, and the Hollywood Western. Volume 1 features a samurai-movie swordfest and a killer schoolgirl. Volume 2 features an Ancient Master, cinematic martial-arts training, and a Western-style brawl.

*Kung Fu Hustle* (Stephen Chow, 2004). Gangster-wannabes trigger an escalating war between martial-arts masters. Mixes kung fu with dancing! The equally fun *Shaolin Soccer* (Stephen Chow, 2001) combines kung fu with soccer.

*Once Upon a Time in China* (Hark Tsui, 1991). Features Jet Li as Wong Fei-Hung. This movie and its many sequels (especially the first two) feature great martial-arts action set amidst Chinese nationalism and Western colonialism in late-19th century China.

*Ong-bak* (Prachya Pinkaew, 2003). A Thai villager – and Muay Thai and Krabi Krabong expert – uses flying knees and elbows to punish religious-artifact thieves.

*Raging Bull* (Martin Scorsese, 1980). This searing look at mid-20th century pro boxing features brutal fight scenes. Required viewing for a contender campaign!

*Rocky* (John G. Avildsen, 1976). A young boxer (a well-cast Sylvester Stallone) struggles for an unlikely title shot. Great training sequences. The sequels are formulaic.

*Seven Samurai, The* (Akira Kurosawa, 1954). Seven *ronin* help poor villagers defend themselves against bandits. A classic plot – and a fine example of how to assemble an "adventuring team" with diverse martial-arts experience and backgrounds.

*Silent Flute, The* (Richard Moore, 1978). A young seeker – accompanied by a blind, flute-playing master – sets out to defeat a legendary foe. Bruce Lee collaborated on the writing. Originally released as *Circle of Iron.*

*Spartacus* (Stanley Kubrick, 1960). A slave is trained as a gladiator before leading a revolt against Rome. Great training sequences, a famous gladiatorial duel, and an inspiring transition from a contender theme to a quest/war story.

*Swordsman II* (Siu-Tung Ching and Stanley Tong, 1991). A powerful warlord emasculates himself to achieve mystical powers. The heroes must use their own cinematic skills to stop him. Magic-heavy *wuxia* action ensues.

*Three Musketeers, The* (Richard Lester, 1973). This film and its sequel, *The Four Musketeers* (1974), feature excellent swashbuckling action.

## Television

In addition to fictional works like those below, mixed martial arts tournaments are becoming more common television fare.

*Cowboy Bebop* (Hajime Yatate, 1998). This anime series includes an ex-gangster and bounty hunter who's a Jeet Kune Do expert. The martial-arts action has both style and verisimilitude. *Cowboy Bebop: Knockin' On Heaven's Door* (2001) has two of the best animated martial-arts scenes ever made.

*Green Hornet, The* (George W. Trendle, 1966-1967). Notable mainly as Bruce Lee's first major Hollywood break: as Kato, the Green Hornet's kung fu-using sidekick.

*Kung Fu* (1972-1975). David Carradine as Kwai Chang Caine, a Chinese monk exiled in the Wild West. A classic, full of "Shaolin wisdom" and kung fu action.

# INDEX

With rare exceptions, *weapons* are *not* listed in this index. Instead, they have their own alphabetical glossary. *See Weapons* (pp. 212-226).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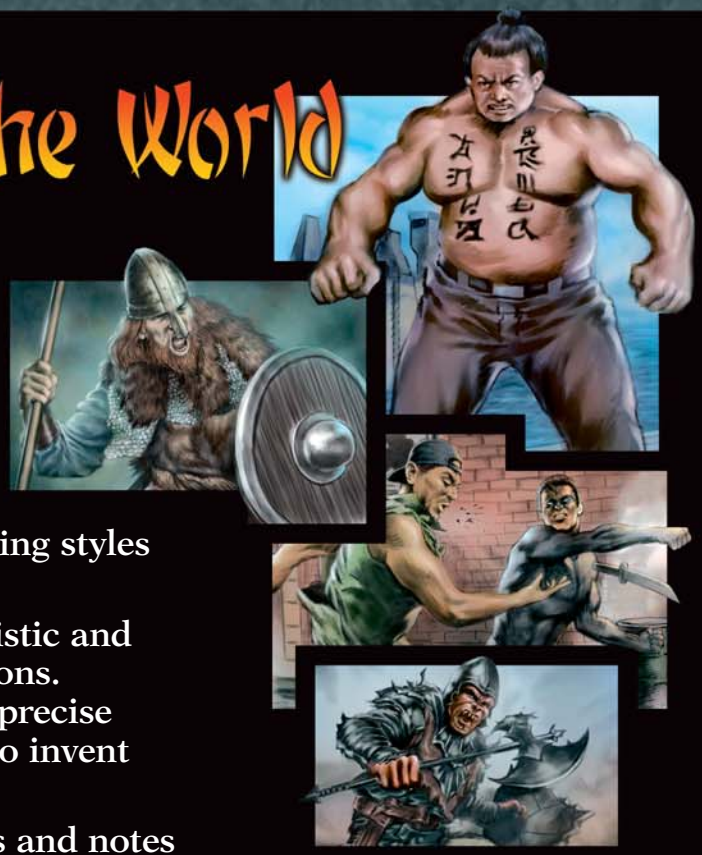
# Fighting Around the World



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