

FISTS & FURY

Martial Arts Rules for use with the Game Engine Manual
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INTRODUCTION

"Can't you just give me the stone instead?"

- Grasshopper

Chung looked over the three men he had hired with some skepticism. They were strong, that much was sure, but they weren't particularly talented. They were little more than thugs he had picked up from off of the street. They were coarse and vulgar, walking reminders of what he was trying to escape from.

Still, they served their purpose for hired help well enough. Chung took in a breath, looking over them one more time. "You know what you must do. Smash a few expensive pieces, and scare the old couple inside. They'll pay their fees when properly motivated."

"I don't think the 'old couple' wants to pay you anything," a voice calls out quietly from the far end of the alley. A lone figure, tall and thin, stepped forward from the shadows. "It's not like everyone has cash to spare on lowlifes."

Chung narrowed his eyes, watching the newcomer carefully. The trio of thugs also turned, unsure as to what to do. Chung, though, also stepped forward until he could make out the smooth young face of the newcomer, and see his dark green eyes.

"Maybe you should go find some puppies to kick or something," the man continued, standing confidently apart from Chung's group. "Why don't you just leave these old people around here alone."

"Ah, Ryu," Chung smiled, realizing the identity of his opponent now. "I had heard that you were returning from college. It's a pleasure to finally meet you."

With that, Chung motioned to the three thugs, sending them forward to the attack. The first rushed up only to find his face met with a powerful strike from Ryu's fist. The thug staggered back, bleeding from his now-broken nose.

The second took the chance to throw his own punch, but Ryu easily dodged away from that, ducking back as the final thug flailed out with a poorly-timed punch that only threatened air.

"And here I thought you were supposed to be intimidating," Ryu quipped, just in time to focus his punch into a powerful blow against the second thug, knocking him to the floor.

Easily telling that his thugs were outmatched, Chung snapped his fingers. The trio pulled back warily with the command, but Chung merely smiled. "You've got some skill, boy. It's nice to see a challenge."

Ryu quickly adopted a new stance, narrowing his eyes. "Then we fight, Chung. And when you're beaten, you'll clear out of this neighborhood."

Chung shook his head. "No need to fight today, boy. I'll give you this victory. The old couple seems well-protected," he offers, turning to step away. "But we'll match fists soon enough. I look forward to it."

THE GENRE

The martial arts are about honing the body and spirit into a perfect weapon. Their origins trace back thousands of years to peasants finding new ways to defend themselves against the oppression of tyrants.

In time the martial arts took on elements from religion and philosophy. It grew from a peasant's fighting technique into a disciplined state of being, requiring tremendous effort and focus.

Today the martial arts encompass hundreds of styles and techniques. Along with that, the arts were dramatized in cartoons and grade-B movies released on American shores. The physical mixed with the

metaphysical, and all martial arts become somewhat larger than life.

The martial arts 'genre' spans from realistic films about military special operations, all the way to cartoons about super-powered fighters going head to head in battle. The spiritual theme may drive the story, or it may not exist at all. The genre covers a lot of ground, with only the fighting themes keeping the whole mess together.

Iron Claw tries to strive for a happy medium in the genre, focusing heavily on both the fighting arts, and the disciplines that make them possible.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

This book supplies rules and ideas for creating martial arts campaigns, and for including martial arts into other campaigns. It's a tool for the Game Master to create scenarios and adventures filled with the excitement and mystery of the martial arts.

If the Game Master allows it, the players can use this book to create martial artist characters, as well as boost their other characters with some physical combat arts.

WHAT IS WITHIN

The *Melee Warriors* chapter talks about martial artist characters. It details character creation, new skills and abilities, and other details specific to playing martial artists in a GEM campaign.

The *Kata* details the various types of martial arts, and how they can be created by learning new disciplines. Example kata and moves are included, as well as guidelines on how to create new kata for characters to master.

The *Hand to Hand Fighting* chapter brings out in more detail the combat system. It shows how to use the martial arts disciplines within the basic combat system rules found within the *Game Engine Manual*.

The chapter on *Equipment* explains some of the more conventional 'oriental' weapons often found in martial arts campaigns.

The *Campaign* chapter details the use of NPCs within a campaign, as well as suggest to the Game Master how to craft story-elements to form a martial-arts campaign.

REQUIRED READING

This guide is not a stand-alone product, as is designed for use with the GEM rules system. While it's hoped that the book is a good enough read on its own, it really isn't complete without the *Game Engine Manual*.

The *Game Engine Manual* details the basic rules on role-playing within the GEM system. While the source material presented in this book could still be useful, a lot of the details in how things are accomplished would be a little confusing without it.

MELEE WARRIORS

"You can have a black belt if it soothes your ego, but you still have much to learn."

- Anonymous Sensei

Creating a martial artist is much like creating any other character in the GEM system. The player starts off by creating statistics, then uses experience points to buy up any skills and powers that she wants her character to have.

This chapter discusses those things that make martial artists unique, in both their backgrounds and their unusual abilities. Unusual skills, powers, and other odds and ends are explained here in detail. These rules, though, build on to the rules found in the *Game Engine Manual* itself.

As always, though, a Game Master is the final authority on exactly which rules get included into her campaign. Players should be sure what rules she wants to use before beginning to add martial arts to their character.

STATISTICS

As with other characters, the easiest way to start creating a martial artist character is to get to work on the character's statistics. This will give the player an idea of what the character is going to be like.

Level of Campaign

With some martial arts campaigns falling well within reality and others falling well beyond super-heroic, the first thing a player needs to do is learn what level of power the Game Master intends for her campaign.

Normal Level: Campaigns at this level are at a typical power level. The characters fall within regular human limits for their statistics, even if their martial arts abilities are spectacular to behold.

Example: *The United States Military trains some soldiers into special ops operatives. Though physically very strong, none of the soldiers have superhuman strength.*

Cinematic Level: Some campaigns will have larger-than-life characters with higher than

human statistics. Cinematic characters can perform dazzling physical feats just a bit beyond what star athletes can perform.

Example: *Most of the pulp martial arts films feature fighters with powerful strength and incredible dexterity. They can perform amazing acrobatics and deliver massive damage with the strike of their fist. Look to any of the Jackie Chan or Bruce Lee films for examples of these characters.*

Meta-Humans: Some martial artists have such amazing skill and physical prowess that they venture into the superhuman. These characters are the stuff of comic books, action cartoons, and boys' anime.

Example: *A young boy from another planet falls to earth and is taken care of by a martial arts master. When he gets older, his superhuman strength combines with incredible martial arts skill to make him an awesome fighting super-powered powerhouse!*

Generating Statistics

At all levels of campaign power the two main ways of generating statistics are still valid. They might just have higher numbers and more dice to work with.

For statistic spreads, higher campaign levels will just have a larger about of points to pool statistics from. Normal campaigns are just like typical GEM campaigns. Cinematic campaigns will up that amount a bit, and Meta-Human campaigns will up that amount much more dramatically.

For dice rolling, each campaign level will have a higher number of dice. Normal campaigns use the 'one die and add two' rule found in standard GEM campaigns. Cinematic and Meta-Human campaigns will require a bit more.

Campaign Style	Statistic Spread	Die Roll
Normal	45 points	2 + 1d
Cinematic	90 points	4 + 2d
Meta-Humans	150 points	6 + 3d

Of course, when the player's done generating his statistics, he'll need to get approval from the Game Master for the character. The Game Master may want to tweak the character a little bit to better suit what she desires for her campaign.

SKILLS

Though the skills in the *Game Engine Manual* cover most of the usual skills that a martial artist character will have (aside from the martial arts themselves), there are some that are more unique to the genres covered in martial arts campaigns.

Ceremony (Willpower, Average)

Japanese culture has many formal ceremonies that are still given great attention even in modern times. Most young girls are taught the basics of the ceremonies, but only those who study them intensely can honor their families with their performance.

Fighting Lore (Perception, Difficult)

A skilled martial artist knows not only how to use disciplines himself, but also identify the fighting styles of others. While engaged in combat, the martial artist can use this skill to identify the fighting styles that other combatants are using.

Kanji (Intelligence, Difficult)

The art of Kanji is a style of lettering used in the Japanese language. Each symbol stands for a single word or phrase, meaning that the written language requires intense memorization.

Religion: Buddhism (Intelligence, Easy)

Buddhism is an ancient philosophy of spiritual discipline. It teaches finding 'inner peace' through discarding of some earthly desires. A student tries to attain higher states of being, in both his current life and the next life, through leading a moral and giving life.

Religion: Shinto (Intelligence, Easy)

Shinto is Japan's indigenous religion, and dates back to at least 200BC. It is a complex

mix of ancient folk belief and rituals, with a core belief that spirits inhabit all things, both living and nonliving.

, ; basically animistic religion that perceives the presence of gods or of the sacred in animals, in plants, and even in things which have no life, such as stones and waterfalls.

Sign Language (Intelligence, Easy)

A quiet language used to communicate with the deaf and mute, Sign language has also seen use in espionage roles. The language is 'spoken' by making gestures and hand signals.

Spirit Lore (Intelligence, Average)

It is said that, in Japan, there is a spirit for everything. There are known spirits in everything from trees, cards, and even cell phones! A person skilled in this field can identify a Japanese spirit, and know a bit about its history and power.

SPECIAL QUIRKS

In some campaigns, a martial artist may be blessed or curse with unusual traits. Along with their martial arts studies, they may have one or more advantages or disadvantages that make them unique.

Advantages and disadvantages tweak certain abilities that a character may have. The Game Master, of course, will have any final say about which, if any, of these quirks that she wants to allow within her campaign.

Example: In one martial arts campaign, the Game Master has determined that all the talented martial artists have the 'ki-sense' advantage, allowing them to pick up on the relative power on those nearby. She balances this with the 'marked' disadvantage, giving them each an elaborate birthmark on their face.

ADVANTAGES

Some martial arts campaign will mark talented martial artists are something 'special'. They'll possess unusual talents or abilities that set them apart from the rest of

the world. The traits that are beneficial to these characters are 'advantages'.

Ambidextrous

There are some people who can use their hands with equal dexterity. These ambidextrous characters do not suffer the penalties of using the 'wrong hand' for various items, or while in combat.

Major Advantage (x2): Individuals who are ambidextrous can make equal use of both hands. The 'off-hand' rule does not apply to characters with this advantage.

Example: With Nari's left hand occupied holding onto a priceless artifact, she's forced to use her 'off-hand' to fight in combat. Fortunately, she has ambidexterity, and suffers no penalties for fighting with that hand.

Great Advantage (x3): Not only can characters with this level of ambidexterity use both of their hands equally well, but also use them at the same time! The 'two weapons' rule does not apply to characters with this advantage.

Example: Ami has learned the art of 'florentine', which is the ability to use two swords in combination in combat. Since she is greatly ambidextrous, she suffers no penalties in using the two weapons simultaneously.

Hard Skin

Some people are born with seemingly 'thicker skin' than others. Characters with this advantage can automatically reduce blunt damage thrown against them per attack in addition to any armor that they're wearing.

Minor Advantage (x1): This character has a thick skin, and can reduce one point of damage from any blunt attack thrown against them.

Ki-Sense

Characters with this ability can 'sense' the relative amount of inner power and strength within someone. The character gets a running idea of the relative statistics and skill of another person (in non-specific terms).

Minor Advantage (x1): The character must focus on a single person in line of sight to sense his ki-energy. The character will get a general idea of the power of the person he's studying.

Example: Nari is facing down a suspicious character. After focusing on him, she learns that he's relatively strong, and appears to be quite skilled in using his ki. In game terms, the opponent has high physical statistics, and a few high level skills in combat abilities.

Major Advantage (x2): Characters with this level of ability can sense the 'aura' of those around him. The stronger the aura, the more distant he can sense it.

Example: Ami is in a crowded building, looking for one of the most powerful martial artists in the city. She closes her eyes in an effort to 'feel' him out, trying to get a sense of his presence, knowing that it would be stronger than the others around her.

Great Advantage (x3): This ability is a passive form of the major advantage. The character is always aware of the strength of auras around him.

Example: Vance is 'aura aware', and can instantly and always sense the most powerful ki-auras around him. Without concentrating, he can know the relative fighting strengths of anyone nearby.

Steamroller Punch

Though this character may not be all that strong his punches can deliver more damage than what his raw strength would seem to indicate.

Minor Advantage (x1): Characters with this advantage can strike for one point more punching damage than their strength would normally allow.

Example: Yuri has an impressive strength of nine. This would give him a base punching damage of three points. However, with his advantage, his base punching damage is a powerful four points of damage instead.

DISADVANTAGES

A character that has picked up an unusual advantage has that advantage counter-balanced by some disadvantage. These disadvantages give a type of 'weakness' to a character.

Elemental Tie

Characters that are elementally bound have a difficult time using ki-abilities, or magic, based on any other element. Feats for other elements will be more difficult, depending on how strong the tie to his element is. Note that this disadvantage is only appropriate for campaigns with cinematic arts.

Minor Disadvantage (x1): This character is lightly tied to his element, and all feats from other elements require a one die penalty when attempting to use them.

Example: Berretta is tied to the fire element. In her training, however, she has picked up a few ranks of the Lightning Dragon martial art. When she tries to use the ki-abilities from that school, however, she has a one die more difficult time.

Major Disadvantage (x2): This character is even more bound to his abilities. Abilities from other elements are two die more difficult to perform.

Great Disadvantage (x3): Some who are elementally tied may not, under any circumstances, use abilities from another element. Feats involving other elements are impossible to perform.

Example: James is elementally bound to the element of Lightning. This limitation is so great that he makes no effort to learn anything from the Phoenix Flame kata, because he'll never be able to use half of it's special abilities.

Glass Jaw

Some fighters just can't take certain hits, and will go down in battle much more quickly than others would. These fighters have a 'glass jaw', a worrying combat weakness that can turn an assured victory into an instant defeat.

Minor Disadvantage (x1): A character with a glass jaw takes an extra point of damage

from any blunt punches or kicks thrown at him. With this weakness, the character is much more prone to being knocked out after a handful of punches.

Example: Rei has a minor 'glass jaw', meaning that when he's hit with blunt attacks, he takes just a little bit more damage. His opponent strikes him with a regular punch that would normally do two points of damage. Because of the glass jaw, however, Rei has to take three points of damage instead.

Major Disadvantage (x2): The poor soul with a severe glass jaw has an incredibly difficult time with hand to hand combat. Successful blunt punching and kicking strikes against him will cause an additional two points of damage.

Ki-Blind

Characters with this disadvantage have a very hard time dealing with 'supernatural' energies, and cannot easily harness their mana (or ki), even when trained to do so. Game masters should note that this is only a valid disadvantage in cinematic campaigns.

Major Disadvantage (x2): This character has a severe disadvantage in using any ability that uses mana, particularly cinematic martial arts. Any time the character tries to use such a discipline, it is done at two dice harder than it would be for other characters.

Example: Wu Fei has focused heavily on his physical combat skills, and there is a reason. He is partially ki-blind, and cannot easily use any ki-related abilities. When he attempts to use a first-level Elemental Blast, it is much harder and requires a difficult feat roll instead of an easy one.

Great Disadvantage (x3): Characters with this level of ki-blindness are completely ki-blind and cannot use any ki-related abilities, even if they've learned disciplines that include them.

Example: The warrior Vincent cannot muster his ki to use for any abilities. Though he is a master of the Phoenix Flame, he's completely unable to use the Fiery Strike maneuver, since it requires the use of ki.

Marked

There are some campaigns where martial artists, particular cinematic martial artists, will be 'marked' in some way that will set them obviously apart from others. This makes it very difficult for the martial artists to disguise themselves, a danger if their order is hunted for some reason.

Minor Disadvantage (x1): Though the character is 'marked', the mark is somewhat easily concealed. The character possesses small birthmarks or tattoos that can be hidden under a disguise. These marks make any disguise rolls one die more difficult than normal.

Example: Many members of the Yakuza cover their backs and arms with elaborate tattoos. This mark can be easily hidden under clothing, but anyone seeing the tattoo, and knowing of the Yakuza, can easily identify them.

Major Disadvantage (x2): More severe marks are obvious and much more difficult to hide from the public. The characters are born with very unusual traits that set them very strongly apart from the rest of society. These traits make any needed disguise rolls two die more difficult.

Example: In one campaign, those born with 'ki-awareness' are marked with dimly glowing white eyes. This trait is extremely obvious, and disturbing. From birth, it's obvious just who the 'ki-blessed' characters are.

MARTIAL ARTIST CHARACTERS

Of course, all the options and abilities presented before might be a little intimidating for a new player who just wants to make a character like their favorite martial-arts hero.

To make things a little easier, some of the most common 'packages' have been combined into character templates. A character can simply choose one of the following templates below instead of worrying about buying up abilities and skills.

Example: After watching a grade-B 'urban martial arts' movie, a player wants to model a character on the main hero, a young street-fighter. To do that, he can use the Street-Fighter template below to make the job just a little easier.

Street-fighter

On the back streets of urban decay, a select few youths turn to the martial arts not only to learn to fight, but to learn discipline and courage – traits usually lacking in their own neighborhoods. Street-fighting heroes are fairly common in the grade-B 'street' movies made in droves in the 1970's.

Skill	Level	XP
Karate	2	9
Ju Fan Kickboxing	2	9
Dodge	2	12
Combat: Melee	2	9
Hobbies and Skills	-	11

Martial Arts: Unlike most martial-arts characters, the street-fighter tends to be all about the combat and fighting. They learn a couple of levels of common fighting martial arts, such as Karate and Kickboxing, as well as some more mundane combat skills.

Example: Yo Fat is a typical street-fighter, and has picked up the first two ranks of both Karate and Ju Fan Kickboxing to start off his martial arts training. This reflects his 'crude' style of hard-attack martial arts.

Hobbies and Other Skills: In this part of the martial arts genre, precious few characters have any sort of skills and interests outside of their fighting abilities. A few, though, break the mold and pick up some sports, or show some interests that push their personalities apart from their peers.

Example: Yo Fat, oddly, is a bit of a bookworm, and has picked up skill in astronomy. Most of the time, he passes his nights looking up at the stars. His player gives him two ranks of Astronomy, taking up nine experience points. He keeps the remaining two points of experience for later use.

Military Operations Commando

There are some military men given the difficult task of man-to-man commando missions. As part of their intense training,

they are given the skill of Jujitsu to quickly disarm and disable their opponents.

Skill	Level	XP
Jujitsu	3	18
Combat: Melee	2	9
Combat: Assault Rifle	2	9
Demolitions	1	3
Stealth	1	4
Hobbies and Skills	-	7

Martial Arts: Jujitsu is the 'martial art' of choice for the American military, since it's very adept and disarming and disabling opponents very quickly. Other militaries may have equivalent ranks in 'Karate' instead, since it's an effective offensive martial art.

Example: Yuri is a green-level special operations agent for the Soviet Union. He has learned his basic skills, including the first three ranks of Jujitsu to use in hand-to-hand combat. This skill enables him to take out enemy agents quickly and quietly.

Hobbies and Other Skills: With intense training, it's unlikely that any commando is going to be able to pick up a lot of skills outside of his realm of duty. Instead, they'll likely choose 'hobby' that extends their espionage abilities.

Example: To aid his unit in the field, Yuri has taken up some skill in field medicine, and has two levels of the First Aid skill under his belt. This takes of six experience points, leaving one for future use after later adventures.

Buddhist Apprentice

Isolated from society most of his life, this character has learned the spiritual aspect of martial arts as well as the physical fighting arts. Of course, these warriors tend to be like fish out of water when dealing with the rest of the world.

Skill	Level	XP
Akido	2	9
Kung Fu	2	9
Jujitsu	1	3
Dodge	1	4
Combat: Melee	2	9
Religion: Buddhism	2	6
Meditation	1	3
Hobbies and Skills	-	6

Martial Arts: Though the apprentice has basic skill in a few martial arts, such as the ever-popular Kung Fu, and equal part of his

study is given over to the spiritual aspect of martial arts. In this case, meditation and a healthy teaching of Buddhism are taught with great intensity.

Example: At an early age, Kane was inducted as an apprentice at a Shinto shrine. There he learned the basic fighting techniques of Akido, Kung Fu, and Jujitsu. Along with this, however, he learned the basics of meditation and religion, balancing out his physical and spiritual sides.

Hobbies and Other Skills: Buddhist Apprentices are strongly encouraged to learn about creative art, such as painting and poetry. These arts are to teach the students a sense of inner peace and an appreciation of beauty. Students are encouraged to explore their artistic sides and express their individuality through them.

Example: In between his intense studies Kane is given some time to learn a basic talent at poetry (specifically, Haiku). His player allocates three experience points to gain one rank of this skill. The remaining three points of experience are saved for later.

Fire Warrior

This warrior has begun training in a unique brand of martial arts, giving him a start at his own ki-mastery, as well as making his bare-handed combats both dramatic and cinematic experiences. Fire Warriors are sometimes seen in pulp fiction stories, but have been made more common in anime and video-games such as *Mortal Kombat*.

Skill	Level	XP
Phoenix Flame	3	30
Dodge	1	4
Combat: Melee	2	9
Hobbies and Skills	-	4

Martial Arts: Unlike most starting packages, the fire warrior starts off highly focused on a single art, the 'Phoenix Flame'. The warrior learns enough ranks to gain the dramatic 'Fiery Blast' effect, a cinematic attack that launches a blast of flame at an opponent.

Example: Beretta has entered into the Phoenix Flame discipline, and has dedicated her efforts into master the art of fire. Though

a beginner, she's learned both the Burning Strike and Fiery Strike abilities, adding some of the power of fire to her physical attacks.

Hobbies and Other Skills: Because of the very high focus that this template requires, Fire Warriors don't start off with a high amount of 'free' experience to spend on hobbies and other skills. Usually, the stereotypical fire warrior has almost no outside skills anyway, with fighting being his only interest.

Example: With Beretta's intense dedication and training, she has learned little else from the outside world. Fighting is all she knows. Her player decides to give her a single rank of the Fighting Lore skill, leaving her no experience points for future use.

Modern Ninja

Though the legendary ninjas are now a thing of the past, there are some who believe that, in Japan, there are a number of 'modern' ninjas that have embraced the art of stealth for financial powers instead of political ones.

Skill	Level	XP
Ninjitsu	2	9
Jujitsu	1	3
Dodge	1	4
Combat: Melee	2	9
Combat: Pistol	1	3
Camouflage	2	9
Stealth	1	4
Hobbies and Skills	-	8

Martial Arts: A 'modern ninja' spends his training in both the art-of-stealth as well as a more practical art of self-defense, Jujitsu. Many of his other skills are given over to increasing his proficiency in espionage, and not necessarily to fighting.

Example: Ryu is employed by a large Japanese technology firm as a corporate espionage agent. His job is to infiltrate the technology labs from rival firms and steal information. To aid him, he's learned a few levels of the 'shadow art' and dedicated himself to the ways of a modern ninja.

Hobbies and Other Skills: Unlike just about any other martial artist, a modern ninja is likely going to have a wide assortment of personal skills that fall outside his duties as a ninja. Instead, these skills may help his

'cover', or just help him blend into society at large just a little better.

Example: With the remaining eight points of experience available to him, Ryu's player decides to give him two levels of Computer Operations. This leaves him with two points for later use, as well as a good 'career skill' that fits well within his role as a corporate espionage agent.

Mythical Ninja

The art of the ninja has given its practitioners legendary status. Many believed the legends of super warriors of darkness, able to use their ki powers to assassinate their enemies from the night. Cinematic campaigns may often have ninjas as powerful thieves and assassins.

Skill	Level	XP
Ninjitsu	2	9
Jujitsu	1	3
The Shadow	2	6
Dodge	1	4
Combat: Melee	1	3
Camouflage	1	3
Stealth	1	4
Combat: Ninja-To	2	9
Hobbies and Skills	-	5

Martial Arts: As with the 'modern ninja', most of the training a starting mythical ninja receives are in martial arts designed to help their stealth and self-defense abilities. In addition, mythical ninjas also start some ranks with the more mysterious art of 'The Shadow', which enables some ki abilities.

Example: Chung Fei is a mythical ninja living in 17th century Japan. He has learned some basic combat art, as well as the forbidden art of 'The Shadow' to increase his combat ability.

Hobbies and Other Skills: A ninja maintains a 'normal' life in the lower social castes of Japan. Usually, they are common laborers or outcasts. As such, they'll usually have a point or two of a common working skill.

Example: Fei works as a quiet farmer outside the Imperial City. Fei has two ranks of Agriculture, leaving him with two experience points for later use.

"You were the one who disgraced the dojo. All I did was catch you."

- Bruce Wayne

A martial artist's combat skills come through intense discipline and training. These usually come from study under a dojo. Each dojo, or school, may specialize in a single martial art, or induct students into a handful of martial arts to teach them various styles.

Each style, or Kata, will include a number of disciplines designed to improve a student's skills. The disciplines can build up the strength and speed of a student, or help him focus his inner energies, depending on the nature of the Kata.

Example: Nari has joined under the Wingfang Dojo. This school teaches two martial arts forms, or kata, Jujitsu and Karate. As she attains new ranks in each kata, she will learn new martial arts disciplines to aid her overall combat abilities.

LEARNING MARTIAL ARTS

In simplest terms, martial arts are nothing more than specialized skills. A character learning the martial arts will increase his ranks in various kata, and learn new disciplines as he does.

JOINING A KATA

Depending on the campaign, there might be requirements for training within a specific kata. The sensei, or teacher, of the kata may require a test of strength or character before the student may begin learning any of his kata's disciplines.

Example: Wu Fei is applying to learn the martial art of the Phoenix Flame. To join the dojo, however, he must undergo a trial of Buddhist faith. If he can show wisdom and patience, he will be admitted into the dojo.

Most campaigns, though, will start off assuming that the characters will have access to one or more dojo. Characters can immediately start learning ranks in the kata that the dojo teaches, spending experience as an average difficulty skill.

Example: Mat has signed up to learn Karate from a local private dojo. As a regular student, has access to the 'common ranks' of the Karate kata, and can start learning the kata as a skill.

Cinematic Kata

Some Kata also contain special, 'cinematic' disciplines unique to them. These signature disciplines help define the Kata's style, as well as give the novices something to look in awe over as their masters execute them.

Example: The Kata of the Phoenix has a cinematic discipline called the 'Fiery Strike'. This ability goes beyond the skilled punches and kicks of most martial arts, and instead summons a small amount of energy from the element of fire to damage opponents.

Cinematic kata don't have a lot of place within more realistic settings, so in those settings they'll be quite rare if they even exist at all. The spiritual powers of these kata tend to dominate the feel of a campaign, which may not be what the Game Master wants. As with all things, a Game Master may expressly forbid or restrict the use of any kata that doesn't fit in with her campaign.

GOING UP THE RANKS

A character improves his martial arts skills by going up in the ranks in the art's kata. A kata, effectively, is an average (base three) skill. Improvement in a kata is just like any other skill. The character uses up experience to learn higher ranks.

Example: James is entering the Kata of the Phoenix, and wishes to learn the first two steps. He spends three experience points to learn the first step. He then spends another six experience points to learn level two. This costs a grand total of nine experience points.

Each level of a Kata yields a special discipline, designed to make the character a better fighter. The discipline is often a

special maneuver or stance that enhances the character's fighting ability. Various disciplines will have different effects within combat, depending on the rules for each discipline.

Example: The first rank of the Daikido kata teaches the 'Needle Hand' discipline, which allows the character to change his punching damage from blunt-style to piercing.

Cumulative Disciplines

Most kata will have one or two 'cumulative' disciplines within them. This means that increased training within a kata will improve the discipline's results. Kicks will get stronger, punches will get surer. The more a cumulative discipline is studied, the better that it gets.

Example: At rank seven in the Wrestling kata, the student will have learned 'Grapple' three times. The three ranks of this discipline means that the character gains a three-point bonus for grappling moves.

The 'double plus' symbol (ⓈⓈ) denotes Cumulative Disciplines.

MULTIPLE SCHOOLS

A martial artist can learn from more than one Kata, but only gains the benefits of one Kata at a time. A character can only use the bonuses and disciplines from a single Kata within a single combat round. She can, however, switch styles as she needs with each passing round of combat.

Example: Wu Fei knows a few ranks of both the Phoenix Flame and the Stone Fist Katas. During one combat round, she uses the Hard Punch bonus from her Stone Fist Kata. Next round, she switches over to Phoenix Flame so she can use her Disrupt ability.

What this also means is that the bonuses from one kata do not at all add to the bonuses from another one. Each kata is a different combat style, and the bonuses are unique to that style. A martial arts character only gains cumulative bonuses from one kata at a time in combat.

Example: From Wu Fei's Phoenix Flame kata, he has learned two levels of 'hard punch'.

From his Stone Fist kata, he's also learned two levels of the 'hard punch' discipline. In combat, he can use the two levels from either Phoenix Flame or Stone Fist, but he cannot add the bonuses from the two disciplines together.

DISCIPLINE LIST

The disciplines below are some of the most common of those found within cinematic martial arts styles. Each Kata is built up from these basic disciplines, compiling them into a powerful fighting style.

Burning Strike

While difficult to accomplish, this discipline can change the damage type of any punch or kick into flame damage. The discipline requires an additional level of difficulty on the to-hit roll.

Example: Oni rears back for a series of punches. She decides to burn her opponent with a Burning Strike. Her normal to-hit rolls are average difficulty, but changing them to burns ups the level to a difficult check'.

Chi-Disrupt

This discipline enables a single punching or kicking attack to cause damage directly to the target's mana. It will not damage the target physically, but will harm his inner energies directly. The damage from the strike is the same strength as if it had been a physical attack.

Example: Amy is fighting against a mage. In an effort to disrupt the mage's power, she strikes at the mage's chi. Her punch is successful, and the mage loses some of his mana as his inner energies are disrupted.

Dagger Hand

With this discipline, the artist can change the damage type caused by his bare hands to 'edged' damage.

Example: Priss is rushing at an opponent wearing padded armor. To slice through it, she assumes the 'Dagger Hand' discipline, changing the type of damage she causes with her punch from blunt to edged.

Defense Stance

While using this discipline takes up a combat action, it increases how hard the martial artist is to be hit by one level for the next attack against him.

Example: Seeing a powerful chi-blast coming his way, Rey adopts a defensive stance to better prepare himself for what's coming. When his opponent makes his attack, he'll have a one-die more difficult time hitting Rey.

Dexterity

When a martial artist learns this discipline, he gains a permanent, one point increase to his dexterity statistic. This will affect his Health, and any other abilities related to Dexterity.

Example: Rey has mastered the final level of Akido. With all the effort and training that he's learned, his body has become more agile, giving him a permanent Dexterity increase of one point.

Note: It's a good idea to not allow this more than once with in a kata, as a point-increase in an statistic is a major achievement. Even then, it should be reserved for the highest ranks.

Disarm

The character has been trained to knock weapons, or other objects, out of his foes' hands. The character must successfully strike with a punch or kick, and then opponent must resist a two die per level strength feat to keep hold of the item. The strike does normal punch damage as well.

Example: Oni is attempting to disarm an opponent's sword from his grasp. Oni uses her disarm attack, striking out with two levels of this ability in her kata. This means that the target resist a four-dice strength feat, or drop his weapon.

Dodge

This discipline improves the character's ability to dodge by one point per level studied. This bonus from the discipline can also be used with the Throw discipline.

Example: Amy is attempting to dodge from her opponent's kicking attack. Since she has

learned two ranks of the dodge discipline in her studied kata, she gains a plus-two point bonus to evade the attack.

Endurance

When a martial artist learns this discipline, he gains a permanent, one point increase to his Endurance statistic. This will affect his Health, and any other abilities related to Endurance.

Example: Priss has mastered a high level of a powerful defensive martial art. With all the effort and training that he's learned, her body has become more resilient, giving her a permanent Endurance increase of one point.

Note: It's a good idea to not allow this more than once with in a kata, as a point-increase in a statistic is a major achievement. Even then, it should be reserved for the highest ranks.

Escape

Characters with this ability have been taught how to get out of even the strongest grab or hold. Each level of this discipline makes escaping from holds one die easier.

Example: Tyclone has placed a powerful hold on Oni, trapping her with raw physical power. Normally, this hold would be difficult, but she adopts her two ranks of escape to make the check an easy one.

Fanned Punch

When surrounded by multiple opponents, a skilled artist may 'fan' his punch to strike at all neighboring opponents. This discipline lets the artist hit a number of targets within arm's reach and strike for regular punching damage.

The difficulty of this maneuver starts with the hardest to hit target, and gets one level more difficult per additional target.

Example: Priss is surrounded by three Boomers. She quickly spins, fanning out a powerful punch to try to knock them all back. The hardest to hit target is an average attack roll. The additional two targets knock this up to a hard-level skill roll. She makes her attack, and can cause her bare-handed damage to all of her targets.

▣Furious Kick

Striking fast with the feet is one of the trademarks of a skilled martial artist. Using this discipline, the artist gains an additional, regular, kick attack in a combat round. This discipline can be improved with higher ranks, enabling even more attacks.

Example: Rey launches into an attack. He rushes forward, using his two ranks of his 'Furious Kick' discipline. This enables him to have four regular kicking attacks in one round, instead of his usual two.

▣Furious Punch

Rapid punches are one of the most visually compelling feats a martial artist can manage. Each rank of this discipline in a Kata grants an additional, normal, punch attack within a combat round. This discipline can be improved with higher ranks to gain more punching attacks.

Example: Priss rushes at her attacker with her fists flying. Her three ranks of 'Furious Punch' grants her five punching attacks in the round, instead of just the standard two.

▣Grapple

Characters with this discipline have been taught how to tighten their grapples and holds on an opponent, making it easier to lock someone down. Each level of this discipline adds one to the to-hit roll, and also makes a successful hold one-die more difficult to break free of than normal.

Example: Tyclone is trying to lock a hold against Oni. He uses his Grapple discipline, adding two points to his to-hit roll. He grabs Oni firmly, and will now require a difficult strength feat to break out of the grapple.

Hard Block

The martial artist uses this discipline as a dodge action, counterattacking against any incoming punch or kick. A successful counterattack will cause punching damage to the attacker.

Example: Oni is under attack from a skilled fighter. When the fighter launches two kicks at her, she decides to use Hard Blocks to stop them. With both 'dodges' successful,

she also causes her own punching damage against him.

▣Hard Kick

A sure kick is a more powerful kick. The martial artist can use this discipline to improve his chance to strike his target, by subtracting one point from the attack roll. It also adds one point of damage with a successful strike. This discipline can be improved upon to higher ranks for better accuracy.

Example: Rey wants to add more power to his kick. He has two ranks of the 'Hard Kick' discipline, and, since he is using it, can add two points to his skill for the to-hit roll, and also add two points of damage with the successful kick.

▣Hard Punch

A sure punch is a more accurate punching attack. Each rank of Sure Punch the character has learned in her Kata improves her chance to strike her opponent by one, and increases the damage caused from the strike by one.

Example: Ami wants to add more power to her punches. She has two ranks of the 'Hard Punch' discipline and can add two points to her skill for the to-hit roll, and also add two points of damage with the successful strike.

▣Iron Skin

This passive discipline allows the artist to absorb a single point of damage from any attack harmlessly. This special defense is active whenever the artist is in melee combat, and is using a kata that teaches this discipline.

Example: Fang is in combat, and is using Iron Skin innately as part of his Kata. He is kicked for four points of damage, but two of those points are negated with the Iron Skin, leaving Fang to take only two points of damage.

▣Ki-Focus

This discipline allows the character, as a combat action, to use one point of mana to add to the to-hit and to-damage rolls of any single punch or kick. The maximum

amount of mana channeled per attack cannot exceed the rank of this discipline.

Example: Rey needs to be sure that this attack strikes and strikes hard. She focuses two points of mana into her 'ki', gaining a two point bonus on her skill and damage with the next punch.

Needle Hand

With this discipline, the artist can change the damage type caused by his bare hands to 'piercing' damage. This discipline can also modify attacks from other disciplines.

Example: Rey is striking at a strong opponent, and needs to cut through his iron armor. As she tries to use a hard punch against him, she declares that she is also using 'Needle Hand', which changes the final damage type of the Hard Punch to piercing damage.

Pinpoint Footwork

One of the most amazing martial arts feat to behold, pinpoint footwork allows for incredible feats of agility. Climbing, acrobatics, and other dexterous, non-combat, feats of footwork become one die easier for each level of this discipline.

Example: Jackie needs to scale up a chain-link fence in a hurry. Normally, this would be a hard feat, but with his two ranks of Pinpoint Footwork, Jackie lowers the difficulty of this feat to merely average.

Pummel

This discipline allows a fighter to use both of his hands in a massive punch. This strike causes double the normal damage of a punch, but requires the use of both hands.

Roll

When dodging an attack, the character with this discipline can 'roll' with it, just in case he didn't dodge successfully. Each level of this discipline reduces the damage from a failed dodge by one point.

Example: Amy is about to get punched by a far-too-strong warrior. Worried, she braces to roll with her dodge. The dodge fails, and she's hit. Fortunately, her two ranks of 'Roll' enables her to reduce two points of damage.

Reflex Start

This discipline grants the character a one-point bonus on his initiative rolls. This allows him to react to a combat situation much quicker than normal. Additional levels of this discipline increase reaction speed.

Example: Rey wants to ensure that she gets to attack first in this round, so uses a martial art that gives her two levels of Reflex Start. This gives her a two-point bonus on her initiative roll for that round.

Round Sweep

When surrounded by multiple opponents, it's a good idea to use a single 'sweep' to do damage on as many of them as possible. This discipline lets the artist hit everyone within leg's reach and strike for regular kicking damage. Only one to-hit and to-damage roll is needed for the entire sweep.

Stealth

A martial artist with this ability knows the secrets of keeping himself hiding while moving. He makes less noise and is less obvious when he moves. Each level of this discipline adds one point to the skill of the martial artist whenever he attempts to sneak around.

Example: Ryu wishes to sneak past a few guards within an ancient temple. It will be a hard feat, but he not only can add his stealth skill, but also add his two ranks of Stealth from martial arts. This gives him a huge bonus, enabling him to sneak past the guards without being seen or heard.

Strength

When a martial artist learns this discipline, he gains a permanent, one point increase to his Strength statistic. This will affect his Health, and any other abilities related to Strength.

Example: Pow has mastered a high level of a powerful offensive martial art. With all the effort and training that he's learned, his body has become notably stronger, giving him a permanent Strength increase of one point.

Note: It's a good idea to not allow this more than once with in a kata, as a point-increase

in a statistic is a major achievement. Even then, it should be reserved for the highest ranks.

Stun Strike

This powerful discipline can knock the wind out of an opponent with a successful strike. The target must succeed a 2d endurance feat, or become stunned for the next combat round.

Sweeping Kick

When surrounded by multiple opponents, a skilled artist may 'sweep' his kick to strike at all neighboring opponents. This discipline lets the artist all targets within his kicking reach in a single maneuver.

The difficulty of this maneuver starts with the hardest to hit target, and gets one level more difficult per additional target.

Example: Oni is surrounded by four cheap-ninja. She quickly spins, sending out a sweeping kick to her opponents. The hardest to hit target is an average attack roll. The additional three targets knock this up to a six dice-level skill roll.

Takedown

When the artist uses this discipline, he not only strikes for the damage he would cause in a punch or kick, but also can knock his opponent prone. With a successful strike, the opponent must resist a two-dice endurance feat or be knocked prone.

Throw

When an opponent performs a melee attack, the character with this discipline can opt to throw the opponent to the ground, instead of attempting to dodge. The throw's impact causes normal strength damage to the opponent.

Waxing Strike

This discipline enables the martial artist to focus his energies into a single strike. Each combat round where the artist holds back, summoning his power, adds one dice of damage to the eventual strike. The maximum damage from this discipline depends on the number of ranks learned. The action also requires a successful to-hit roll to pull off.

Example: Flux wants to deliver a final blow to his opponent, and takes two full rounds of combat to build up his power. With his two ranks of Waxing Strike, he launches his strike and connects, adding two dice of damage to his usual punch.

Weapon Accuracy

Some martial arts integrate the use of a weapon into them. Characters with this discipline may take a one-point bonus per level on any to-hit roll involving that weapon, while using this discipline's kata.

Weapon Strike

For those martial arts that integrate the use of weaponry, this discipline will allow for more powerful strikes with those weapons. While using this discipline's kata, each successful weapon strike causes one additional point of damage.

Weapon Florentine

Some combat arts, such as the daisho, require the use of paired weapons. This discipline offsets the off-hand and florentine penalties normally suffered when using two weapons simultaneously.

CINEMATIC POWERS

Though the 'mundane' abilities of martial artists are impressive to the eye, there are also rumored to be secret powers that border on the superhuman and supernatural. Secret teachings can, perhaps, give insights to a martial artist, teaching him how to use his inner chi to do the seemingly impossible.

Of course, powerful energy blasts, regenerating wounds, or other supernatural abilities aren't for every campaign. These 'advanced' abilities fall more into the cinematic, super heroic types of campaigns instead.

A GM may want to design Kata to duplicate the powerful attacks and abilities of the 'martial arts masters' from fantasy and four-color comics. Some of these powers are listed below, but they're not realistic. Including them into a campaign will change the feel of the campaign dramatically.

Aura Strike

With this ability, a punching attack does not do damage physically, but strikes instead at the target's mana. Each level of this ability can damage one point of the target's mana.

Example: Nari is in combat with a wizard. Needing to disrupt his ki, she opts for her two levels of Aura Strike discipline. Each punch that lands successfully causes two points of mana damage to the wizard.

Elemental Blast

A legendary attack, the elemental blast allows the martial to focus his chi into an offensive blast of power. The blast causes 1d damage and can reach 10 meters per level of this discipline.

On the down-side, this discipline requires an average a ranged to-hit roll, and drains one point of mana for each level of the ability.

Example: Flux is using his fire-elemental blast against an opponent. He has three levels of this cinematic power, allowing him to cause 3d flame damage up to thirty meters away. Unfortunately, he misses his to-hit roll, but still uses up three points of his mana.

This discipline is also divided by the elements. A martial artist may learn Elemental Blast – Fire, and Elemental Blast – Water, but must treat the two powers as different disciplines.

Example: Flux has learned three levels of Elemental Blast-Fire, from his studies, as well as two levels of Elemental Blast –Air. The power levels of the two blasts are kept separate, as two separate disciplines.

Elemental Strike

An elemental strike allows the martial to focus his chi into additional elemental damage to his opponent. With a successful punch, this strike causes an additional 1d of damage for each level of the discipline learned within the kata. Use drains one point of mana for each level of the ability.

Example: Flux is in tight melee combat, and uses his second-level fire-elemental strike against his opponent. He hits with a regular punch, and burns one mana. The opponent not only suffers punching damage, but also

takes 1d fire damage from the elemental strike as well.

This discipline is also divided by the elements. A martial artist may learn Elemental Strike – Fire, and Elemental Blast – Water, but must treat the two powers as different disciplines.

Example: Flux has learned two levels of Elemental Strike - Fire, from his studies, as well as two levels of Elemental Strike – Air. The power levels of the two strikes are kept separate, as two separate disciplines.

Force Block

With this cinematic ability, the martial artist focuses his chi to block incoming attacks with pure force. This field will reduce all incoming physical attacks (blunt, piercing, and edged) by one dice per level of the discipline.

The discipline's effect lasts for one round, and requires a one-point drain of mana for each level being used.

Example: Rey is seeking to block an incoming punch with raw force. He has two ranks of Force Block, which enables him to reduce two dice of damage from all physical attacks in the next round. He rolls his 'reduce dice', and comes up with an eight. For the next round, he can negate eight points of damage. This ability expends two points of his mana.

Glide

An unusual discipline, the martial artist can somehow focus his ki energies to glide through the air as if he was nearly weightless. The artist uses a point of mana per round to use this discipline.

Example: Nari is running from a group of warriors and has little hope of beating them. Trapped with her back against a lake, she decides to use her glide ability to make herself as light as air, and then run across the lake for the next three rounds. Doing this requires three points of mana, but she does get away from her would-be attackers.

Nerve Destruction

In a nerve destruction attack an opponent's nerve clusters are struck hard enough to

night-permanently disable them. With a successful punch or kick, this attack causes more severe damage to health.

Each level of this ability causes one point of damage on the victim to suffer a point severe wounding. This damage heals very slowly, at only one point per day, and must be healed first before any other damaged health can recover.

Example: Rei is attacking a member of the Dark Hand. She uses her Nerve Destruction Punch discipline, in which she has two ranks. This causes two points of 'serious' damage to the Dark Hand member's running health.

Regeneration

With this ability, the martial artist can recover damage by focusing his ki energies. Each level of this ability costs one point of mana, but allows the recovery of one dice of damage.

Example: Nari has been badly beaten in a battle and needs to quickly recover as she's fighting. In one round, she focuses her ki to use her two levels of regeneration. She spends two points of mana, but recovers two dice of damage to her health.

Shatter

This is a powerful strike made with both fists. The master uses one point of mana, per level of this power, and can then cause d6 blunt damage for each level. The power still requires the artist to make a successful punching to-hit roll on the target.

Example: Yuri has learned two ranks of the Shatter discipline. By focusing two points his mana, he can attempt a 2d6 punching attack against an opponent in battle. Unfortunately he misses his to-hit roll for the attack, and the mana is spent in vain.

Splitting Shadow

This unique discipline causes confusion in the opponent, by making him believe that the artist is really somewhere else with a chi illusion. This ability forces a perception feat on the opponent, with the feat getting tougher with each level of ability. This ability also drains a point of mana per level of ability used.

If the opponent fails his resistance feat, he spends the next few rounds, equal to the level of the discipline, convinced that the illusionary form is the real one.

Example: Mat is using Splitting Shadow to confuse and disorient his opponent. He summons a two dice splitting shadow attempt, forcing his opponent to make a perception feat to spot the illusion. The opponent fails, and will be distracted by the illusion for the next two rounds.

Stunning Yell

The artist who learns this discipline focuses his ki energy into a yell that disables and disorients his opponent, stunning him. Each level of this ability allows a more powerful version of the feat, but drains an additional point of mana.

When the character yells the opponent uses his endurance to resist against the stunning yell. The feat is as hard as the number of levels of this discipline. If the opponent fails, he is stunned for the number of combat rounds equaling the level of the feat. Lastly, the opponent must be within earshot.

Example: Tien summons a third level stunning yell at his opponent. This drains three points of mana from him. However, this causes the opponent to resist a difficult (three dice) endurance feat. If the opponent fails, he will be stunned for three full combat rounds.

REALISTIC MARTIAL ARTS

Going through this book, it's very obvious that 'realism' in the martial arts wasn't the desired goal in writing it. Even so, it's still possible to simulate real-world martial arts, within reason, using these rules.

Keep in mind, though, this material is just a simulation of the martial arts described. It's not meant to be a totally accurate representation of how a student increases in ability in his school, and more designed just to give an overall feel for the increase in his abilities.

Akido

Akido, as founded by Morihei Uehiba, stresses nonviolent attitudes, rhythm, and balance. The art is designed to redirect the opponent's energies through throws and takedown maneuvers.

Rank	Discipline	Effect
1	Roll	Reduce Damage
2	Dodge	+1 Dodge
3	Throw	Throw Opponent
4	Escape	Escape Opponent
5	Roll	Reduce Damage
6	Dodge	+1 Dodge
7	Takedown	Knocks Opponent Prone
8	Escape	Escape Opponent
9	Dodge	+1 Dodge
10	Dexterity	Permanent Increase to Dexterity

In game terms, the Akido discipline stresses heavily on not getting hit. Martial artists learn how to escape from holds, throw opponents that attack them, and roll with incoming damage. Eventually, their skill at dodging becomes so good that they gain a one point permanent bonus onto their Dexterity.

Daikido

Daikido was designed with the idea of conserving power for more deliberate and careful strikes, balancing the need for action with the assurance of a successful action. A master of Daikido will bide their time until an opening appears and then make a single strike of deadly effect.

Likewise, rather than madly dodging or making a flurry of parries, a master of Daikido will deftly remove themselves from the path of several attacks at once, or fend off many blows with one sweep of an arm.

Rank	Discipline	Effect
1	Needle Hand	Makes Punches Piercing Damage
2	Dodge	+1 Dodge
3	Waxing Strike	Power-Building Attack
4	Iron Skin	Reduces Damage
5	Dodge	+1 Dodge
6	Waxing Strike	Power-Building Attack
7	Iron Skin	Reduces Damage
8	Dodge	+1 Dodge
9	Waxing Strike	Power-Building Attack
10	Strength	Permanent Increase to Strength

This example is very light on attacks, but the attack it gives can be very powerful in the

right hands. Otherwise, it focuses on maintaining defense with dodges and toughened skin.

Judo

A Japanese art, Judo grew out of grappling and katori ryu's weapon techniques in the 15th century. The modern technique has evolved into throws, locks, and pins in an effort to render the opponent unconscious.

Rank	Discipline	Effect
1	Escape	Evade grapple attacks
2	Roll	Reduce Damage
3	Grapple	+1 Grapple attack
4	Throw	Knocks enemy aside
5	Grapple	+1 Grapple attack
6	Escape	Evade grapple attacks
7	Takedown	Knocks opponent prone
8	Roll	Reduce Damage
9	Escape	+1 Grapple attack
10	Endurance	Permanent Increase to Endurance

As with most martial arts, Judo has fragmented into many styles. Only a few still use weapon-skills as a focus, however. Most have adopted the use of grapples and throws to disable an opponent. The example given above is more designed to reflect a more modern style.

Jujitsu

This martial art is a soft grappling style primarily used to disarm armed opponents using as little energy as possible. This martial art is dramatically effective at disabling an opponent.

Rank	Discipline	Effect
1	Grapple	+1 Grapple attack
2	Takedown	Knocks opponent prone
3	Furious Punch	Additional Punch attack
4	Hard Punch	+1 Punch attack
5	Grapple	+1 Grapple attack
6	Furious Punch	Additional Punch attack
7	Grapple	+1 Grapple attack
8	Hard Punch	+1 Punch attack
9	Furious Punch	Additional Punch attack
10	Strength	Permanent Increase to Strength

For realistic military ops campaigns, Jujitsu is highly recommended, as the art is what's taught in melee combat training. It's also very effective at quick strikes and holds, giving a swift advantage to military operatives who learn this kata.

Jun Fan Kickboxing

While Kickboxing has been around for ages, it only recently gained global attention, thanks in large part to Bruce Lee, and his unique brand known as 'Jun Fan'. Bruce Lee developed a powerful offensive martial art, specializing in quick, powerful kicks.

Since his death, the kata has divided into his 'pure' approach, and into another school which borrows elements of Judo and other martial arts. In either school, however, a student is expected to study more than one art aside from the core Kickboxing kata.

Rank	Discipline	Effect
1	Hard Kick	+1 Kick Attack
2	Furious Kick	Additional Kick Attack
3	Hard Block	Counterattack
4	Reflex Start	+1 Initiative
5	Hard Kick	+1 Kick Attack
6	Sweeping Kick	Circle Kick Attack
7	Furious Kick	Additional Kick Attack
8	Hard Kick	+1 Kick Attack
9	Reflex Start	+1 Initiative
10	Strength	Permanent Increase to Strength

The example listed here is designed to give the feel of kickboxing, focusing on powerful and fast kicking attacks to keep opponents at off-balance and constantly getting hit.

Kung Fu

Kung Fu, or 'Hard Skill', embodies a wide variety of martial arts. The school began in early China, and fragmented heavily into many different fighting styles, usually involving powerful offensive strikes of fists and feet.

Rank	Discipline	Effect
1	Hard Punch	+1 Punch Attack
2	Dagger Hand	Makes Punches Edged Damage
3	Hard Kick	+1 Kick Attack
4	Hard Block	Counterattack
5	Furious Punch	Additional Punch Attack
6	Furious Kick	Additional Kick Attack
7	Hard Punch	+1 Punch Attack
8	Hard Kick	+1 Kick Attack
9	Furious Punch	Additional Punch Attack
10	Strength	Permanent Increase to Strength

The kata listed here is pretty generic, focusing on strong kicks and punches. Many variants will replace certain disciplines with others, depending on the individual style of each sensei. The GM may want to make her

own variations of Kung Fu, to suit the purposes of her campaign, or just to add a certain 'style' to each dojo.

One version of Kung Fu taught in Indianapolis, for instance, focused much more heavily on punching attacks and blocks, nearly ignoring kicking attacks.

Karate

Karate was first developed in Japan as a 'weaponless' art called 'te'. This style consisted largely of strong attacks to disable opponents. When the teaching of Shaolin monks came to Japan, it began to change and segment into several offensive techniques.

Rank	Discipline	Effect
1	Hard Punch	+1 Punch Attack
2	Furious Punch	Additional Punch Attack
3	Hard Kick	+1 Kick Attack
4	Hard Block	Counterattack
5	Takedown	Knocks opponent prone
6	Hard Punch	+1 Punch Attack
7	Furious Punch	Additional Punch Attack
8	Hard Kick	+1 Kick Attack
9	Hard Punch	+1 Punch Attack
10	Strength	Permanent Increase to Strength

The kata given here is given as an 'example' style for Karate. Most techniques will use this basic skeleton, but change a bit away from some of the punches to favor a more rounded fighting style. Others will seek to offer more direct and powerful strikes.

'Huang Do', for instance, will almost completely ignore the kicking strikes, favoring even more powerful and repetitive punches.

Ninjitsu

In reality, there is no single school of 'Ninjitsu'. The Ninja of Japan were instead well-versed in several martial arts, as well as high educated in the ways of stealth, poisons, and other skills that enabled them to fulfill their dark missions.

So skilled and secretive were the Ninja, however, that many looked at them with a sense of awe. The school of 'Ninjitsu' was ascribed to them as an attempt to explain their skills of stealth and battle prowess. In truth, Ninjitsu would have to be several

schools, and many high skills, to accurately portray the legendary assassins.

Rank	Discipline	Effect
1	Hard Punch	+1 Punch Attack
2	Needle Hand	Makes Punches Piercing Damage
3	Stealth	Increases Stealth Skill
4	Hard Block	Counterattack
5	Hard Punch	+1 Punch Attack
6	Stealth	Increases Stealth Skill
7	Takedown	Knocks opponent prone
8	Hard Punch	+1 Punch Attack
9	Stealth	Increases Stealth Skill
10	Dexterity	Permanent Increase to Dexterity

Given the description, it may be surprising that there is a Ninjitsu kata at all. However, a 'contemporary' school of Ninjitsu does exist where students learn the 'art of invisibility'. This school teaches stealth, primarily, but also a few weapon skills, as well as basic martial arts moves.

Tae Kwon Do

A martial art geared for offense, Tae Kwon Do is a favorite of private instructors in the United States. The art of hand and foot fighting is based heavily on karate, and modified by an older Korean martial art to create a stronger offensive style filled with quick kicks and punches.

Rank	Discipline	Effect
1	Hard Punch	+1 Punch Attack
2	Hard Kick	+1 Kick Attack
3	Furious Punch	Additional Punch Attack
4	Furious Kick	Additional Kick Attack
5	Hard Block	Counterattack
6	Hard Punch	+1 Punch Attack
7	Hard Kick	+1 Kick Attack
8	Furious Punch	Additional Punch Attack
9	Furious Kick	Additional Kick Attack
10	Dexterity	Permanent Increase to Dexterity

While the form of Tae Kwon Do listed here is balanced between rapid and strong hand to hand attacks, some sensei will tend to favor either the hands or feet as they teach. The Game Master is encourage to tweak this art to add more flavor to her campaign.

Tai Chi

The "Grand Ultimate Fist" martial art specializes in strong attacks as well as passive defense, providing a balance of yin and yang energies. Unfortunately, the origins of this ancient martial art have

become lost to time, but it is believed by some to be the original Oriental martial art.

Rank	Discipline	Effect
1	Hard Punch	+1 Punch Attack
2	Dodge	+1 Dodge
3	Hard Kick	+1 Kick Attack
4	Throw	Knocks opponent aside
5	Hard Punch	+1 Punch Attack
6	Dodge	+1 Dodge
7	Hard Kick	+1 Kick Attack
8	Takedown	Knocks opponent prone
9	Dodge	+1 Dodge
10	Strength	Permanent Increase to Strength

The Tai Chi kata presented here provides a balance between more powerful punches and kicks with more skilled dodging. The martial artist who studies Tai Chi will improve both his offensive and defensive abilities in balance.

As with most imported martial arts, Tai Chi has splintered off a bit into different schools. The Game Master may want to vary a few steps of the school to reflect the changes that individual sensei may have made in their own teachings.

Wrestling

Wrestling, as a martial art, dates back into prehistory. Ancient Greeks used to have organized contests of wrestling between the strongest warriors of their city-states. In all that time, the very basics of wrestling haven't changed all that much.

Rank	Discipline	Effect
1	Escape	Escape Opponent
2	Grapple	+1 Grapple Attack
3	Throw	Knocks enemy aside
4	Escape	Escape Opponent
5	Grapple	+1 Grapple Attack
6	Takedown	Knocks opponent down
7	Grapple	+1 Grapple Attack
8	Escape	Escape Opponent
9	Grapple	+1 Grapple Attack
10	Endurance	Permanent Increase to Endurance

As listed here, wrestling involves skilled grapple attacks, as well as increased skill to avoid being grappled. Unlike other martial arts, wrestling doesn't cause too much physical damage, but is an excellent way to disable and 'pin down' an opponent.

CINEMATIC ARTS

Though the real martial arts are impressive enough, there are stories about priests and students with abilities that could be called super-human. In their dojo, they pass on the knowledge of unusual techniques that bestow incredible powers onto the martial artist.

Of course, these arts aren't for every campaign. If the campaign is slipping into the 'super-hero' or 'pulp fiction' realm, though, the use of cinematic martial arts may fit right in.

Stone Fist Kata

The Stone Fist Kata is all about strength and power. The artist maintains a slow speed, focusing on the strength and effectiveness with his punches. Ki energy is focused on the powerful 'shatter' and 'force block' abilities, giving a good mix of offensive and defensive abilities.

Rank	Discipline	Effect
1	Hard Punch	+1 Punch
2	Iron Skin	-1 Blunt Damage
3	Hard Block	Counterattack
4	Shatter	+1 Die Blunt Damage
5	Force Block	Damage Reduction
6	Iron Skin	-1 Blunt Damage
7	Shatter	+1 Die Blunt Damage
8	Force Block	Damage Reduction
9	Shatter	+1 Die Blunt Damage
10	Strength	Permanent Increase to Strength

Shatter: This is the key offensive ability in this kata. The character learns to focus his ki energies into creating a powerful blunt attack. A master of this kata can cause three dice of blunt damage to his opponent.

Force Block: Though the Iron Skin does some to reduce incoming damage, it doesn't compare to the active 'force block' discipline. A master of Stone Fist can use his ki to negate two dice of incoming damage in a round.

Phoenix Flame

One of the more showy combat arts, the Phoenix Flame is a cinematic art based on the element of fire. Students learn to focus their ki energies into attacks that burn their opponents along with each punch.

Rank	Discipline	Effect
1	Hard Punch	+1 Punch
2	Burning Strike	Flame Damage
3	Furious Punch	Additional punch attack
4	Fiery Strike	+1 Die Flame Damage
5	Hard Punch	+1 Punch
6	Furious Punch	Additional punch attack
7	Fiery Strike	+1 Die Flame Damage
8	Hard Punch	+1 Punch
9	Fiery Blast	Ki-Energy Attack
10	Strength	Permanent Increase to Strength

Fiery Strike: This is the 'fire' version of the elemental strike discipline. A master of the Phoenix Flame kata will be able to deliver two dice of flame damage when he focuses his ki energy at a target.

Fiery Blast: This discipline is the 'fire' version of the elemental blast discipline. Students of the Phoenix Flame art learn this at only high levels, but can strike with a small, one die burning blast at range.

The Shadow

A subtle art designed around stealth instead of fighting, the Shadow focuses on dodging and hiding rather than advancing any attacks. A student will learn the art of illusion, as well as some ability to disrupt the ki in others.

Rank	Discipline	Effect
1	Stealth	+1 Stealth
2	Dodge	+1 Dodge
3	Aura Strike	Mana Damage
4	Splitting Shadow	Illusion
5	Aura Strike	Mana Damage
6	Stealth	+1 Stealth
7	Dodge	+1 Dodge
8	Aura Strike	Mana Damage
9	Splitting Shadow	Illusion
10	Dexterity	Permanent Increase to Dexterity

Aura Strike: This attack is most handy against other cinematic artists, as it is a direct attack against the mana of the opponent. A master of 'The Shadow' can strike down three points of mana with each successful punch, seriously wounding the inner ki-balance of an opponent.

Splitting Shadow: This is an illusion designed to confuse opponents into seeing multiple copies of the student. A master can generate two of these illusory copies,

demanding two dice perception checks from opponents that wish to strike him.

Lightning Dragon

This kata is centered mostly on dramatic effect, using a few forms of ki-mastery and speed to boost a student's ability in combat. A student training under this kata will learn to use very fast punching combinations while saving up his efforts to deliver very powerful electric attacks against his opponents.

Rank	Discipline	Effect
1	Reflex Start	Increased Initiative
2	Lightning Blast	Ki-Energy Attack
3	Furious Punch	Additional punch attack
4	Dodge	+1 Dodge
5	Reflex Start	Increased Initiative
6	Lightning Blast	Ki-Energy Attack
7	Furious Punch	Additional punch attack
8	Dodge	+1 Dodge
9	Lightning Blast	Ki-Energy Attack
10	Dexterity	Permanent Increase to Dexterity

Lightning Blast: This ability is the 'electrical' version of the Elemental Blast discipline. When this kata is mastered, the martial artist can deliver a powerful 3d energy bolt into his opponents.

Turtle Shell

The kata of the turtle shell is all about defense and taking in damage, using both physical training and ki mastery. The martial artist studying this kata, however, learns few attack disciplines.

Rank	Discipline	Effect
1	Iron Skin	Damage Reduction
2	Force Block	Damage Reduction
3	Regeneration	Recover Health
4	Hard Punch	+1 Punch Attack
5	Iron Skin	Damage Reduction
6	Hard Punch	+1 Punch Attack
7	Force Block	Damage Reduction
8	Regeneration	Recover Health
9	Iron Skin	Damage Reduction
10	Endurance	Permanent Increase to Endurance

Force Block: Though the Iron Skin does some to reduce incoming damage, it doesn't compare to the active 'force block' discipline. A master of Turtle Shell can use his ki to negate two dice of incoming damage in a round.

Regeneration: this is, perhaps, the most powerful ability taught by the Turtle Shell kata. Students can focus two points of their inner ki energy to recover 2d6 of physical damage.

ADVANCED ARTS

Any true martial artist knows that study does not end with the achievement of a black belt. A true master will continue to train and learn, developing his skills well beyond the ranks of the common student.

In particularly high-powered campaigns, a game master may decide that the tenth rank of a martial art only opens the door to a new, 'advanced' kata, where more specialized training may be allowed.

Higher Ranks

One way to handle advanced ranks is to simply build upon the existing martial arts, and add another ten ranks to the list, symbolizing levels of mastery. The experience cost for this, however, would get extremely high, and cause the martial artist to focus intensely in those studies.

Example: Rey has mastered Karate, and is seeking to learn the advanced skills within that Kata. The game master creates an additional ten ranks within the Kata, building on what's already present. When Rey attempts to learn the twelfth rank, however, it will cost her a hefty 36 experience points!

One way to make this cost worth the effort is to add some of the cinematic disciplines to these high ranks, even if the campaign normally avoids them. After all, the martial artist is moving into legendary ranks already, so a legendary move wouldn't be too out of place.

Example: At Rey's 12th rank, she learns her first level of the Elemental Strike – Fire discipline. The discipline is unheard of to most students, but her mastery status has unlocked the doors to legendary powers.

KATA CREATION

Of course, this book doesn't even come close to capturing all the various martial arts styles that exist in the real world, never mind all the martial arts that have been shown in the cinema through the years. Sooner or later, a player or Game Master will want to create a new martial art to reflect a different style from those presented here.

Mechanically, kata creation is fairly straightforward. The Game Master will stack together a group of disciplines to form a new martial art. Characters can then go through the new art just like any of the martial arts given in the book.

A Game Master should keep in mind, though, that mechanics are only part of creating a new martial art. She should give every effort to defining a 'feel' to the art to add more than just a group of powers to her campaign.

THE BASIC THEME

Every martial art has a theme and purpose associated with it. The art can focus on disabling armed opponents, quickly striking an enemy, improved wrestling, or seeking a way to tap into inner ki abilities.

When designing a kata, it's a good idea to have the purpose of the kata in mind first. The Game Master should decide what students of the kata are seeking to learn in the discipline, and how the discipline is likely to take shape.

Self Defense

Many of the current real-world martial arts are centered around self-defense. In these arts, the martial artist isn't trying to so much defeat her opponent, but is instead trying to protect herself from attack.

Martial arts geared to self defense, such as Akido, will have increased dodging ability along with a number of takedown and throwing moves.

Example: Akido is a martial art designed for self-defense. A student learns how to better throw off and escape an attacker as she improves in her ability within the school.

Because of the skills learned, Akido is a popular choice for self-defense courses in the United States.

Quick Attack

Many popular martial arts, such as Karate and Jujitsu, are designed around quick and strong attacks. The martial artist learning these disciplines will focus his power into beating his opponent as quickly and efficiently as possible.

These types of martial arts will have a number of maneuvers designed to improve kicks and punches, making them both faster and more powerful. Takedown and stunning moves are also likely to be found within these disciplines.

Example: Karate is a popular attack discipline designed to maximize the harm the student can cause with his fists and feet. In the United States, it's commonly taught as a self-defense course, under the idea that a good offense will present an even better defense.

Balance

Many martial arts will seek to find a balance between the offensive (yang) and defensive (yin) abilities. These arts are to give a sense of balance within each student, as well as give him a variety of options if combat is forced upon him.

Balanced martial arts will not generally have a lot of strength in one field, but will often give decent ability in dodging and escaping, balanced by improving one style of offensive fighting, such as hard punches.

Example: Tai Chi presents its students with a balance of dodging and throws along with hard punches and kicks. A student in this discipline has a well rounded set of combat skills, giving him offensive and defensive options for dealing with opponents.

Cinematic

Sometimes, a Game Master isn't looking for a realistic approach to martial arts at all. What she wants instead is to mimic the special powers and abilities of certain martial-arts movies. The martial artists in her campaigns are going to nearly fly, use energy attacks, and can regenerate their health from heavy damage.

Cinematic styles are pretty common in pulp fiction, but often involve only one or two 'cinematic' abilities. These abilities are added to more mundane abilities such as 'hard punch' to make formidable cinematic warriors.

Example: The Phoenix Flame kata is designed around showy flame attacks. Students not only learn how to punch more effectively, but also to channel their ki into forming powerful fire-based attacks.

Collecting Thoughts

When the Game Master has a basic purpose in mind, she should look over all the various disciplines available to get an idea on how the kata is going to take shape.

More than that, though, she should also think about the 'fiction' aspect of the kata, and how this martial art was formed, who teaches it, and how it works into the campaign. More suggestions on this is given in a later chapter, but it's a good idea for a Game Master to have those things in mind before she starts writing up the mechanical details for her new martial art.

Example: We'll begin designing a martial art that we'll call 'Iron Claw'. This art is a relatively new cinematic style taught by some village priests to selected sons once a year. We want the style to focus on sharp, powerful punching attacks, which gives the martial art its name.

HONING SKILLS

Even most cinematic martial arts abilities tend to focus on improving existing melee combat skills. Depending on the martial art, improving punching, kicking, throwing, and dodging skills takes on a high priority.

Most times, the cumulative disciplines will show these gradual improvements. A martial art will have three or four ranks of a cumulative discipline where the art is most focused, and often a couple of ranks in another discipline to further increase the artist's capabilities.

When using the cumulative disciplines, though, the Game Master should spread out

the bonuses through the kata, and make advancement and improvement nice and even.

Example: Our Iron Claw martial art focuses on powerful sharp attacks with fists. We'll spread out three ranks of 'hard punch', placing an improvement here at ranks two, five, and eight. We'll also spread out two ranks of 'Waxing Strike', and place those at ranks three and seven.

Some martial arts specialize in unique moves, such as 'needle hands', or 'sweeping kicks' to make them more effective. One or two of these abilities is usually enough for each kata, and goes a long way to help give the martial art its own flavor.

Example: The help Iron Claw live up more to its name, the first rank of the art will be dedicated to the discipline of "Dagger Hand". This edged strike discipline helps Iron Claw live up to its name as well as provide an interesting ability.

CINEMATIC POWERS

For cinematic martial arts, those with unique powers, the Game Master is going to need to add cinematic disciplines through the kata's ranks.

Most cinematic arts will only have one major cinematic power attached to them, and possibly a second power if there's room for it. Like cumulative regular disciplines, though, cinematic powers should be spread as evenly as possible through the kata's ranks.

Example: The Iron Claw kata has the dreaded 'Nerve Destruction' attack which causes severe wounding damage to an opponent. The kata has three levels of this discipline, which are spread out to the fourth, sixth, and ninth ranks.

It's very easy to get carried away with cinematic powers. A Game Master should keep in mind that cinematic attacks shouldn't exceed three dice (at least, not in the first ten ranks of the kata), and other cumulative abilities shouldn't exceed that level of power either.

STATISTIC INCREASES

Several of the example martial arts given in this book include permanent statistic increases for characters. Usually, these statistic boosts are reserved for masters of a particular kata, and are placed within the highest possible slot.

When designing a Kata, a Game Master should keep in mind just how powerful and useful a statistical increase can be. These increases are meant to reflect the intense training a character undergoes to learn his art, as well as reward the character a bit for mastering that art.

Example: In the Akido kata, the student can gain a permanent one point bonus to his dexterity once he has mastered all of Akido's standard teachings.

A kata should keep the statistic increases to a bare minimum, either keeping them to the maximum rank of the kata, or not even including them at all. Giving a kata more than one statistic increase within the discipline can be extremely unbalancing.

Example: For our new 'Iron Claw' discipline, we decide to give a single statistic increase at the maximum rank of '10'. A student of the Iron Claw discipline will gain an additional point of strength as his reward for mastery.

WRITING IT ALL UP

When she's done creating a kata, all the Game Master needs to do is write it up with enough detail for her campaign. How much detail the kata is given for this write-up, of course, depends on how heavily the history and background of the art is going to play

within the campaign. Usually, though, one or two paragraphs will be sufficient.

After that, of course, the ranks of the kata need to be explained. All that's needed here is a small table which lists the discipline learned at each stage, just like all the kata given so far in the book.

The Iron Claw Kata

This forgotten cinematic style is taught by select few sensei. These Tibetan immigrants have relocated to a remote immigrant village in California, and guard their art from outsiders. Named after the combat stance the artist starts off in, Iron Claw specializes in waxing a martial artist's strength to deliver crippling blows to opponents.

Rank	Discipline	Effect
1	Dagger Hand	Punches can deliver edged damage
2	Hard Punch	+1 punching attack
3	Waxing Strike	Build up attack
4	Nerve Destruction	+1 Nerve Damage
5	Hard Punch	+1 punching attack
6	Nerve Destruction	+1 Nerve Damage
7	Waxing Strike	Build up attack
8	Hard Punch	+1 punching attack
9	Nerve Destruction	+1 Nerve Damage
10	Strength	Permanent increase to Strength

Nerve Destruction: Masters of the Iron Claw discipline learn the very destructive art of nerve destruction. At three ranks, the martial artist can deliver three points of wounding damage to his opponent. Unlike regular wounds, these wounds can last for days, crippling the health of the victim.

HAND-TO-HAND FIGHTING

"Stop *trying* to hit me and hit me!"

Combat is probably one of the most complex aspects of any role-playing system. When the complexities of martial arts are thrown into the mix, however, things can get a little more difficult to keep track of.

A Game Master needs to keep in mind that the martial arts disciplines presented in this book build onto the existing combat system. There are new modifiers, and a couple of odd abilities here and there, but most of the rules from the *Game Engine Manual* still remain at the core for combat.

THE ATTACK ROLL

An attack roll, or 'to hit' roll, is a feat roll made whenever one person is trying to strike another. The basic mechanics for a 'to hit' roll are explained in detail in the *Game Engine Manual*, but, for the purposes of martial arts, they're expanded upon here.

Melee Attacks

Most martial arts attacks start off with simple melee attacks. In general, a melee attack is an average feat roll against his strength statistic. The player wants to roll two dice under the character's strength to successfully hit the opponent.

Example: Wu Fei is trying to punch a villain. He rolls two dice, trying to get a score of less than his strength of seven. He winds up rolling an eleven, and misses his target.

Melee Skills

Few fighters go into battle without some skill in fighting. The standard melee combat skills from the *Game Engine Manual* still apply. Their values add to the character's strength score, whenever the character attacks with the appropriate weapon.

Example: Wu Fei has learned two levels of skill in Combat: Bare Hands. Again, he rolls an eleven. His strength plus combat skill is only a nine, however, which means that the punching attack has still missed.

- Morpheus

Discipline Skills

A martial artist can further increase his odds of hitting by learning a kata which has disciplines that increase his fighting ability. Abilities such as 'Hard Punch' and 'Weapon Accuracy' will increase his odds of hitting.

Example: Wu Fei has learned six ranks of Karate, which gives him two levels of the 'hard punch' discipline. He rolls his attack again, once again rolling an eleven. His strength plus skill is a nine, but his two ranks of 'hard punch' add on as well, giving him a total of an 'eleven' to hit. This time, he succeeds in striking his foe.

CAUSING DAMAGE

Of course, the main point of trying to hit someone is to cause them some physical harm. In many ways, causing damage under the martial arts is similar to how it's presented in the *Game Engine Manual*. Some disciplines will give bonuses to this damage, however, as explained below.

Bare Handed Damage

When a character attacks someone with his fist, he causes 'bare-handed' damage. By default, bare-handed damage is equal to the character's strength, divided by four, rounded up to the next whole number. Normally, this damage is considered blunt damage.

Example: Wu Fei has a strength of seven. Whenever he is forced to fight bare-handed, he causes three points of damage with his raw punch.

Kicking damage is a bit more powerful than punching damage, causing one third of the character's strength in damage, rounded up. Like punching damage, kicking damage is considered blunt damage normally.

Example: Wu Fei's strength of seven also allows him to cause three points of damage with his feet in a kicking attack.

Discipline Damage

Several disciplines, such as 'Hard Punch', will increase the amount of damage that a bare-handed attack will cause. The bonuses to damage are added to bare-handed damage every time that the character decides to use the appropriate martial art with his attack.

Example: Wu Fei has six ranks of the Karate kata, which gives him two levels of the 'hard punch' skill. These two levels add to the damage of his raw punch, increasing it from his three points of damage to five points.

Melee Weapon Damage

Weapons add, tremendously, to bare-handed damage. The amount of damage a melee weapon causes is equal to the bare-handed damage the character can do normally, plus the indicated damage listed for each weapon. The damage type is determined by the weapon as well.

Example: Wu Fei is carrying a Bo Staff into battle. This staff causes 2d6 of blunt damage, in addition to his three points of raw physical strength. In one attack, he rolls his 2d6 and gets a nine. Added to his raw strength, this attack causes a total of twelve points of blunt damage.

A character can increase this damage even more by learning a martial art that has the 'Weapon Strike' discipline included, so long as the character is using the appropriate weapon for that kata.

Example: Wu Fei has learned a weapon martial art for the Bo Staff. At three ranks into the art, he has learned one level of 'weapon strike' with the staff. He causes an additional point of damage whenever he strikes a target with the staff.

DEFENSIVE MOVES

In combat, even a determined martial artist is going to try not to get hurt. The rules for evasion and dodging still apply to skilled marital artists, but they can be expanded upon if the martial artist has learned the right disciplines.

DODGING

A standard dodge roll is a dexterity feat. The difficulty of the feat is determined by the speed of the incoming attack. Faster attacks, such as bullets and arrows, will be harder to dodge than typical melee attacks.

Attack Type	Difficulty	Dice
Slow Trap	Easy	1
Melee Attacks	Average	2
Thrown Weapons	Difficult	3
Arrows, Bolts	Hard	4
Bullets, Projectiles	Amazing	7
Energy Weapons	Inhuman	9

If the player succeeds in his dodge roll, then the attack will miss, regardless of the attackers' attack roll. If the dodge attempt fails, the attacker can then make his attack normally.

Example: Wu Fei is attempting to dodge an incoming sword attack. Wu Fei has a dexterity score of six, and must roll two dice under it to succeed his dodge. He rolls a nine instead, so the attacker can make his to-hit roll normally.

The Dodge Skill

Characters can improve their ability to dodge by picking up the dodge skill. The value of this skill adds to the character's dexterity score when he attempts to make a dodging feat.

Example: Wu Fei has learned two ranks of the dodge skill. He tries to dodge the melee attack again, and rolls a nine once more. This time, his dodge skill of two adds to his dexterity of six. His target number is an eight, so the nine is still a failed dodge attempt.

Dodging Discipline

Several martial arts also teach a dodging discipline, which further enhances the dodging ability of the student. The bonuses gained from a kata with abilities such as 'dodge' add to both the character's dexterity statistic, and base dodge skill.

Example: Wu Fei has learned two ranks of the Tai Chi martial art, which gives him one level of the dodge discipline. This adds to his dexterity of six, and his dodge skill of two, to get a grand total of nine. He rolls a nine again to dodge an incoming melee attack,

but now he makes it thanks to all his training.

BLOCKING

Typically, a blocking move is just another form of dodge. The character is using his dexterity to block an incoming melee attack. For most cases, a blocking move will follow the same rules as a dodge.

Example: In hand to hand combat, Nari is attempting to block an incoming punch with her own hand. Since this is an incoming melee attack, this requires an average dexterity feat roll, and takes up Nari's dodge action for that round.

Some special disciplines will require a blocking maneuver instead of a dodging maneuver, since the character is physically stopping an incoming attack, instead of just avoiding it.

Example: Nari is using her 'hard block' discipline to stop an incoming melee attack. This discipline requires a blocking feat, and takes up a dodge action. When successful, though, the block winds up causing punching damage to the would-be attacker.

USING KATA

Of course, all martial arts moves fall within various kata. The kata will give various bonuses and ability to make the martial artist much more formidable in melee combat. Disciplines within a kata will increase the number of attacks a martial artist may have, increase his damage, or even give special powers.

As a general rule, a martial artist can only use the disciplines within one kata per combat round. That means he can't immediately switch styles in mid-motion to take advantage of abilities within another kata.

Example: Wu Fei knows the Tai Chi and Karate kata. During a single combat round, he opts to use his knowledge of Karate. He must stick to the abilities from Karate for that entire combat round. In the following

round, however, he can switch styles to Tai Chi to take advantage of the disciplines within that kata.

Mixing Kata Bonuses

Though it's been mentioned before, it bears some repeating here. The cumulative bonuses from one kata do not add to the bonuses of another kata. Each kata is a different style, and their bonuses are unique to themselves.

Example: Both Tai Chi and Karate teach the 'hard punch' discipline. However, these are two different fighting styles, and their bonuses do not add together in any combat move.

The only exceptions to this rule are the permanent statistic bonuses given by some martial arts. These one-time bonuses are permanent to the character himself, as if he had increased the statistic through spending experience normally.

Example: After years of training, Wu Fei has finally mastered Karate and has gained an additional point of Strength, raising that statistic from seven to eight. That statistic increase is permanent, and not just present for when he's using the Karate kata inside of combat. Once he masters Tai Chi, he can raise his strength statistic yet again to a hefty nine.

GAME MASTER'S ROLE

As always, the role of the Game Master in dealing with combat is to make sure things are fair and fun for the players. With martial arts, there is a little more for the Game Master to keep track of, particularly with various kata, but the key to the game is to keep it simple.

The other thing that a Game Master should remember is that the martial arts in this book aren't meant to be terribly realistic. The idea is to present the right 'feel' for each martial art, and not the exact style as it's presented in reality.

"Ah, a fellow 'chucker, eh?"

- Michelangelo

It's believed that martial arts began as a way for peasants to fight back against armed opponents. Religious temples out of favor with governments would often teach their students to defend themselves and their shrines through special combat disciplines.

Still, there are some who will enter the martial arts with the idea that a weapon will still be helpful for them. A number of exotic oriental weapons have been created, and some students have even managed to learn to combine martial arts fighting with weapons use.

WEAPONRY LIST

Though the ideal martial artist learns to avoid the use of weaponry, many people cannot think of martial arts campaigns without including the exotic weapons of the orient. Presented here are a few of those weapons.

Weapon	Range	Damage	Accuracy
Bo Staff	-	2d B	-1
Bokken	-	2d B	0
Daikyu	30/60/120m	2d P	-2
Gomuyumi	10/20/40m	1d P	-1
Jo Staff	-	1d B	0
Katana	-	3d E	0
Katana (Daisho)	-	3d+2 E	+1
Naginata	-	3d E	-2
Ninja-To	-	2d E	-1
Nunchaku	-	2d B	-1
Sai	-	1d P	-2
Shuriken	15/30/60m	1d E	0
Wakisashi	-	2d E	0
Wakisashi (Daisho)	-	2d+2 E	+1

Bo Staff

The Bo Staff is a long, finely shaped wooden staff, standing about a meter and half tall in height. The simple weapon is a favorite of monks and peasants, and often doubles as a large walking stick.

Bokken

The Bokken is a wooden blade shaped and weighted to match a katana. It is a training

weapon but when swung with enough force can inflict serious damage.

Daikyu

Created for horsemen, the Daikyu is a large bow reaching seven feet and requires two hands. Its grip is closer to the bottom allowing it to be fired from horseback.

Gomuyumi

The small 'rubber bow' is a small training bow used for getting students used to the weight and resistance of larger bows. Though not designed for combat, it is effective in a pinch.

Jo Staff

The Jo staff is a short, well-made wooden staff, standing under a meter in height. The weapon sees more use defensively, often hidden in plain view as a simple walking stick or cane.

Katana

A standard Katana is a long curved blade, usually held by two hands unless someone is specifically skilled in using the weapon.

Though modern times may see replicas of Katana commonly made, in Feudal Japan, a Katana was more than a weapon, it was a status symbol. Strict rules of conduct regarding the weapon's use were demanded, and breaching them would be cause for seppuku.

Katana (Daisho)

Few weapons define oriental combat in the way that a Katana does. A true Katana is a rare find, a masterwork given over to a samurai, along with the Wakisashi. The heavier blade is of exceptionally fine balance and quality, making it deadly in the hands of a master.

These Katana are more than weapons for the Samurais, they are part of his honor and identity. These weapons are usually named, and often considered magical in nature (even if they are not). These works are often

passed down from generation to generation, and can gain reputations even exceeding those who wield them. For a Samurai, losing a weapon such as this can be a terrible disgrace, demanding that the weapon be recovered, and those who have taken it be duly punished.

Naginata

This weapon is a long bladed pole-arm. It is light and strong, and primarily used by horse-riders who need long reach in their battles.

Ninja-To

The Ninja-To is so named because it is the favored weapon of the ninja. It is similar to a light short sword in weight in balance. The weapon's hilt is usually hollow, to allow for small items, such as poison, to be contained within. Needless to say, in feudal Japan, openly carrying a Ninja-To is a death wish.

Nunchaku

This classic martial arts weapon consists of two or three short sticks tied together with chain or rope. The weapon is good for delivering blunt blows, but much better suited for disarming an opponent's blade. Using nunchaku makes any disarm rolls one die easier than normal.

Sai

The Sai could best be described as an oversized rounded fork. The prongs of the weapon are designed to catch an opponent's sword and easily parry it away. The 'striking' part of the weapon is the sharpened center prong, used for stabbing.

While using a Sai, a character will have all parrying attempts made at a one die easier level than normal.

Shuriken

The 'throwing star' of the ninja is used light a dagger, and causes damage in a similar way. Because it's light and easily concealed, though, a warrior can carry many shuriken without encumbering himself.

Wakisashi

The Wakisashi is a short curved blade, about the same size as a short sword, and is a favorite of most oriental style weapon-artists.

The blade is light, easy to use, and very effective.

As with the Katana, the Wakisashi in modern times has seen a renaissance through reproductions. In Feudal Japan, however, the blade had social significance. While rules were not as strict regarding them as they were with the Katana, it would be rare that anyone other than Samurais or noble warriors would carry one openly.

Wakisashi (Daisho)

For the Samurai, the Wakisashi given to them is a reminder of the strong honor codes that he must live by. Few Samurai make use of the Wakisashi in combat (unless they've learned Daisho). Instead, these finely crafted weapons are more important ritually.

When a Samurai's dishonor forces him to commit seppuku, it is this blade that is used. The Samurai ritually commits suicide to atone for his sins.

Non-Samurai of great renown may also receive the finer Wakisashi (thought not a Katana) as rewards for exceptional service to their lords.

WEAPON MARTIAL ARTS

Though the overwhelming majority of martial arts focus on the use of hands and feet, some schools have applied some of the same principles to the use of weapons as well. Students learn to look at the weapon as an extension of their body, and quickly increase their skills in the combat arts.

Kendo

Kendo is an ancient art of fencing, usually practiced with bokku, then fought with a warrior's katana. It is a quick fighting style, dedicated to focusing on more sure and powerful strikes with the blade.

Rank	Discipline	Effect
1	Dodge	+1 Dodge
2	WA: Katana	+1 Accuracy with Katana
3	WS: Katana	+1 Strike with Katana
4	Dodge	+1 Dodge
5	Takedown	Knocks Opponent Prone
6	Dodge	+1 Dodge
7	WA: Katana	+1 Accuracy with Katana
8	WS: Katana	+1 Strike with Katana
9	Dodge	+1 Dodge
10	Dexterity	Permanent Increase to Dexterity

Kendo is a 'light' art, meaning that even though it focuses on improving weapon technique, it does so by relying on dexterity and nimble moves rather than brute force.

Daisho

The daisho is the art of two swords, and was historically taught only to Samurais. The kata requires the use of the wakisashi and katana. The katana is the main weapon, held in the true hand of the wielder, and the wakisashi is the secondary weapon, held in the off hand.

Rank	Discipline	Effect
1	Weapon Florentine	May use katana and wakisashi simultaneously
2	WA: Katana	+1 Accuracy with Katana
3	WS: Katana	+1 Strike with Katana
4	Dodge	+1 Dodge
5	Dodge	+1 Dodge
6	WA: Katana	+1 Accuracy with Katana
7	WS: Katana	+1 Strike with Katana
8	Dodge	+1 Dodge
9	WA: Wakisashi	+1 Accuracy with Wakisashi
10	Strength	Permanent Increase to Strength

As given here, the Daisho discipline focuses heavily on accuracy with the two weapons, as well as deliver more sure strikes with the katana. A healthy amount of combat dodging is taught as well, to aid in the samurai's defense.

Kyudo

The 'art of the bow' has fallen a bit by the wayside since the introduction of the firearm, but an effective bowman was highly soft-after by Japanese lords for hundreds of years. A Kyudo bowman, however, would

learn meditation and beauty, seeking the grace of an arrow's flight rather than it's destructive power.

Rank	Discipline	Effect
1	Ki-Focus	Add ki to to-hit roll
2	WA: Daikyu	+1 Accuracy with Daikyu
3	WS: Daikyu	+1 Strike with Daikyu
4	WA: Daikyu	+1 Accuracy with Daikyu
5	Ki-Focus	Add ki to to-hit roll
6	WA: Daikyu	+1 Accuracy with Daikyu
7	WS: Daikyu	+1 Strike with Daikyu
8	WA: Daikyu	+1 Accuracy with Daikyu
9	Dodge	+1 Dodge
10	Dexterity	Permanent Increase to Dexterity

Of course, the key component of Kyudo's strength lies in its ability to teach accuracy to its students. Though the effectiveness of a student's strength in strikes is also improved, a true master can perform amazingly accurate shots from extreme range.

Hwa Rang Do

This encompassing Korean martial art focuses on ki energy, punches, and the use of weapons. While the art itself is very offensive in nature, it is often accompanied with teaching in Buddhism as well as healing.

Rank	Discipline	Effect
1	Ki-Focus	Add ki to to-hit roll
2	WA: Bo Staff	+1 Accuracy with Bo
3	WS: Bo Staff	+1 Strike with Bo
4	Hard Punch	+1 Punch attack
5	Ki-Focus	Add ki to to-hit roll
6	WA: Bo Staff	+1 Accuracy with Bo
7	WS: Bo Staff	+1 Strike with Bo
8	Hard Punch	+1 Punch Attack
9	Ki-Focus	Add ki to to-hit roll
10	Willpower	Permanent Increase to Willpower

Different sensei of Haw Rang Do will often favor different weapons, though staves of various types are preferred. A game master may want to vary the flavor of Haw Rang Do a little bit by changing the weapon studied to a Jo Staff, quarterstaff, or even bokken.

"A handful of fighters on a leaky boat are going to go off and save the world?"

- Sonya Blade

With the basics of creating martial arts characters, and the rules for running them now covered, it's time for the Game Master to start focusing on creating her martial arts campaign.

Martial arts campaigns generally focus on simple good-versus-evil issues, with brave heroes standing up to minions sent by shady and mysterious organizations bent on evil intent. These evil powers range from simple street gangs to ancient demons bent on returning to the world to conquer it.

Typical martial arts campaigns will focus around the destiny of the heroes, and their goals of defeating foes that, at first, often seem too powerful to be defeated. Regardless of the level of the campaign, a Game Master should encourage campaigns based on heroics, honor, and lots of hand-to-hand action.

THE BASICS

Though some campaigns may just use martial arts as 'just another way of fighting', most will find martial arts require a bit more detail and care needed for their inclusion. When deciding to include them into her campaign, a Game Master should look over the martial arts rules, and also have a pretty solid concept in how she's going to include them into her game.

Martial Arts in Different Genres

While martial arts may fit into most campaigns pretty easily, there are some genres which nearly demand at least some characters to have martial arts skills.

Soldiers of Fortune: Military soldiers and 'freelancers' often learn a bit of the combat arts as part of their training. The quick efficiency of their melee combat can make them very effective in dealing with enemy troops during 'black ops' missions.

Example: A small team of elite soldiers have been dispatched to the Mid-East to

terminate a rogue Russian scientist before he completes work on a nuclear device. The soldiers are to go in quietly, and keep the use of firearms to a minimum, since firepower might tip off the scientist to their presence.

Streetwise Adventure: In modern urban settings, it's not uncommon to find a few martial artists dealing damage to gang-bangers. These types of campaigns tend to be 'realistic' and a bit gritty as the heroes have to deal with the seedier side of modern cities and the violence that sometimes erupt within them.

Example: In south Chicago rival gangs are dueling for neighborhoods. Lei had avoided dealing with them for some time, until one gang decides to ransack his father's shop for not paying up his 'protection money'. Now Lei finds himself fist to fist with the gangs, delivering justice and vengeance with his fist and feet.

Pulp Fiction: The novels of the 1950's were filled with cinematic martial arts. The heroes would all be highly trained in kata forbidden by the communist authority. Pulp heroes would go up against one evil super-natural plot after another, as well as defend their schools from Mao's hordes.

Example: One of Mao's generals has located ancient and magical treasures of the lower mountains. The treasures are guarded by a small Shinto shrine, and are entrusted to one of their youngest just as the Red Army starts to lay siege.

Oriental Fantasy: Where magic wizards plot against shogun, and fantastic spirits seek to expand their powers in the physical world, the warriors skilled in the combat arts may be the only ones called upon to keep the peace.

Example: An ancient Chinese demon has escaped through a portal. The Emperor has selected his best warriors, expert martial-

artists all, to find the evil demon and send him back to the darker nether-realms.

Not the Right Feel

Though martial arts always means increasing the action of combat, it may be a bit overwhelming for some campaigns to include too much of it. Some aspects of martial arts, as explained in this book, just won't work for the feel of certain campaigns.

Of course, this may be exactly what the Game Master intended. Sometimes, the 'fish out of water' campaign can work well for a martial artist, depending on how the Game Master sets it all up.

Realistic Campaigns: For campaigns that have a heavy emphasis on realism, such as military ops, or 'urban violence' campaigns, it's strongly recommended that no advanced and no cinematic abilities get used. Adding the supernatural 'ki' powers could dramatically upset the overall feel of the campaign.

European Fantasy: Though combat is very common in stock fantasy, it's almost always handled with sword, armor, and magic. A martial artist will seem quite a bit out of place in such a setting, and would very likely not have any sensei around to help him improve his abilities.

Example: A lone monk has wandered across the world and encountered the Black Forest. He is alone, and unable to improve his skills in the martial arts since he has no access to a teacher. Worse yet, because of his fighting abilities, he's believed to be possessed by a demon!

Public Exposure

Another guiding force in a campaign is the public exposure that martial arts have received in the world.

Scarce and forgotten: Martial arts are either new or forgotten in this campaign. The average person has never even heard of them. It is extremely hard to find a teacher to improve abilities, or the characters might be on their own to develop new martial arts skills. In general, a martial artist may only pick up a couple of ranks in a discipline before topping out.

Legendary: Martial arts exist, but they're rare. Only a select few are allowed to train under masters, and they must prove themselves in strenuous tests before they're accepted. A martial artist is a rare person, and can inspire awe when they display even modest skills.

Social Caste: In feudal settings, martial arts studies were often associated with a person's social class and status. More wealthy nobles would have access to certain dojo, while the 'forgotten' castes would, often illegally, study under other dojo. Each dojo would be very insular and closely knit, and seldom would anyone be able to move between them.

Example: For many years in Japan, the martial arts were recognized as 'peasant fighting'. The noble Samurai would be trained in their own of fighting. Because of the strong social stigmas, and the intensity of the Japanese caste system, few, in any students would ever learn martial arts from different social castes.

Open Dojo: With the coming of martial arts to the United States, the arts were at last opened up to a large audience. Anyone could learn any of the arts that were imported. Those a good amount of the spiritual side of the martial arts were not brought over, the interest and popularity of martial arts ensured easy access to any student that wished to learn them.

Example: As part of an elementary school curriculum, some students will learn the basics of both Judo and Karate. Though advanced study would require more dedicated practice, exposure to the martial arts, and the availability of teachers, is very high for these students.

CREATING THE DOJO

Many martial arts stories center heavily upon the 'dojo', or school where the students hone their fighting ability through training. For a campaign, a dojo can provide a common point for members of a party, as well as provide convenient hooks for coming adventures.

Origins

A Game Master might want to start looking at a dojo by looking at how it was founded. What a sensei was hoping by creating the school will give a very strong impression on how the school operates.

Religious Teaching: When Mao took over China in the 1950's, he declared many of the religions and philosophies of China illegal and detrimental to the state. Rather than risk arrest or even death from Mao's army, many sensei immigrated to the United States and opened up their dojo in an environment that stresses freedom of religion.

Generations: Often times, sons will open dojo to carry on their father's teachings. Each son will open up his own dojo, passing down their father's art, while often given the kata a bit of their own flavor.

Kata

Every dojo will teach one or more martial arts (or 'kata' in this book). The Game Master should assign which kata that any of her dojo will specialize within, and try to keep the various arts within a common theme.

Self Defense: Most modern American 'dojo' specialize primarily in self-defense martial arts techniques. These usually focus on Jujitsu, Karate, and Tae Kwon Do. It would be rare for any of these dojo to focus on ki balance, and they certainly would not have any of the cinematic kata.

Spiritual Kata: Some kata lend themselves pretty heavily to the Buddhist and Shinto teachings. These kata would include ki-balance disciplines (such as ki focus). Most dojo of cinematic arts heavily focus on the honing of the spirit as well as physical combat.

Accepting Students

Not all dojo are always available to the general public. Many traditional dojo have strong religious or cultural tenants bound to them, and a prospective student may need to prove his worth before taking any steps along a dojo's kata.

Caste Status: In Japan, social caste determined everything, even the martial arts that someone could study. Peasants couldn't

study alongside the wealth. Those who were 'forgotten', either the poor or scandalized, often were forbidden to study at all. A dojo could carefully scrutinize the background of any prospective student before allowing them to join.

Example: The ninja came not out of the total shroud of secrecy, but out of the arrogance of the social elite. They created an entire caste of the forgotten, people willing to serve in secret, for whom honor had already forsaken. A ninja was not well thought of, perhaps, but it was better than being forgotten, and more than one lord would quickly bring a ninja into their employ in tough times.

Religion: Many martial arts formed through disciplined religious teachings. A dojo would require very strict adherence to their religious philosophy before they would allow a student to enter their ranks. Faith was as important to the student as much as any amount of training could be.

Example: Many Tibetan martial arts dojo also served as Buddhist religious shrines. A student would dedicate his life to becoming a monk, learning not only the arts, but also receiving intense training in his religious faith.

Sensei

Every dojo will have at least one sensei. The sensei is the head teacher of the dojo, and is also the grand master of the martial art studied there. A sensei, in traditional schools, will command a great deal of respect for his wisdom as well as his martial arts skills.

Some dojo, particular ones with more than one kata, will have more than one sensei. In general, there will be one 'grand sensei', who acts as a leader and teacher for the others, training them even as they train the regular students.

Importance of the Dojo

With the basics of the dojo in mind, the Game Master needs to decide just how much the dojo is factor into her campaign. Obviously, the more that the dojo will be a part of each adventure, the more detail

needs to be written up about its sensei, students and staff.

Simple Instruction: Most self-defense courses in modern times don't have long traditions or histories associated with them. Students generally just learn the arts, and that's just about it. A Game Master may want to write up the sensei and one or two other 'rival' students, but not really want to give a lot of detail for the school in her campaign.

Traditional: For most campaigns with a serious martial-arts feel, a dojo will be a focal point for the characters. The sensei will be a fatherly figure, offering advice and wisdom, as well as martial-arts teachings. Things that affect the dojo will personally affect any of the students.

For these campaigns, a Game Master will want to write up a bit of information on the dojo and its history as well write up the more detailed information on its sensei and kata. Enough information should be given that the dojo provides some strong background for the campaign's setting.

Focus of Legend: On some occasions, particularly in fantasy China or Japan, a dojo may be the centerpiece of a village. It, and the martial arts that it teaches, will have the setting and campaign center heavily upon them.

Each sensei and student should have some amount of written material for them, and the dojo's connections to the rest of the campaign should be detailed, since that's where most of the campaign's adventures will be coming from.

DESIGNING THE NPCs

A martial arts campaign not only focuses on the heroes that the players control, but also on those forces that are under the control of the Game Master. A martial artist character will have adversaries, family members, romantic interests, and bit actors populating his world, providing challenges and background to the campaign.

A good Game Master will take some time and effort to design the foes and friends that the characters are going to know and face.

THE BIG BOSS

Of course, one of the things that define a hero is the nature of the villains that he opposes. The villains create the conflict, and drive the campaign along on its way, often forcing the hero to take action and follow his ultimate destiny.

The main villain of a campaign, though, is not someone that the hero will usually see, at least not early on. True villains will let minions and lieutenants deal with most impediments so that they can keep focused on their own agendas. It's only when the hero threatens that agenda directly when a main villain will get involved with him personally.

The Schemer

A classic villain is one that doesn't dirty himself with the physical action and day-to-day work of his plans. Instead, he makes the schemes, and crafts intricate webs. They stay out of eyeshot of the heroes, for the most part, but the tangled webs do trap the heroes quite often, as well as drive the campaign.

Example: An ancient demon, long ago sealed by Chinese sorcery, is anxiously awaiting the day of his release. To prepare for that day, he has enlisted special and determined warriors to locate ancient artifacts. Those unfortunate enough to have such artifacts are to be silenced forever.

The Toughest Fighter

In many martial art films, particularly the combat-heavy ones, the main villain of the campaign is also the toughest physical fighter. He represents the greatest hand-to-hand challenge that the martial artist must meet. The climax of these campaigns usually centers on the heroes battling it out man-to-man against the main villain and his closest henchmen.

Example: Gregor is the leader of a large gang operating in the south side of Chicago. He rules them because he is the strongest, and his minions fear and respect him. Once Gregor is defeated in combat, though, his gang will fall apart, having lost faith in their leader's fighting abilities.

Origins

No matter how the villain goes about his schemes, he's going to have to come from somewhere. A villain's origins can give a great deal of insight into what has driven him to villainy, and what keeps him there.

Example: Born poor near the city of Gary, Indiana, Gregor quickly turned to crime in a quick-attempt to 'better' his life. His justifications were the usual ones, blaming those 'well off' for all of his hardships. This convenient attitude, though, was taken to a new extreme, as Gregor strives to attain power in the underworld to further spite those he sees as 'putting him down'.

Goals

The main reason that heroes get involved in the fight is that the goals of the villain somehow force their way upon them. Most forms of 'evil' aren't evil just for the sheer heck of it. They often usually have something more specific in mind, and a main goal to achieve.

The goal of the villain is basically his version of how the campaign should naturally end, provided that those pesky heroes don't get into his way. The campaign scenarios (as explained above) should be based around the villain trying to achieve that goal.

Example: Gregor's ultimate desire is to have 'underworld' control of the Gary-Chicago border neighborhoods. The people of those areas may vote for mayors, but he wants to be the one in real charge. To that end, his gang collects 'protection' money, runs gambling and drugs, and often targets would-be rivals and quietly eliminates them.

Power

The true power of the villain will usually be a bit shrouded in mystery. Martial arts villains, though, tend to be incredibly powerful compared to the heroes – at least, initially. Part of the heroes' quest is to gain enough strength to defeat these villains.

A fighting villain will need power pretty much on par with all of the heroes, combined. These villains lead through their power and ruthlessness, and present a deadly physical danger to anyone that

stands in their way. Challenging a main fighting villain should be a daunting challenge at the end of the campaign.

Scheming villains won't need much raw physical power for their plans. After all, that's what they have minions for. Their skills and experience may be focused in other areas more related to how they bring their own plans to bear.

Writing up the Villain

When the Game Master has in mind what she wants as a major villain, she should jot down his abilities and powers for when the heroes finally confront him in combat.

Statistics: It's probably a good idea to generate a villain's statistics in the same way that the characters will. From there, the Game Master can raise the physical statistics for a fighting villain, or the mental statistics for a scheming one.

Example: Gregor has reasonable intelligence, and is charming enough, but his only 'stand out' traits are his massive physical strength and hulking endurance. We'll leave the other statistics at about five or six, but raise his strength and endurance to eight and nine, respectively.

Skills: A main villain should have a robust set of skills. Of course, some of them should fall into his role as a villain, and how he keeps up any criminal organization that he has.

Example: Gregor is a combat menace, with a high skill at Melee, Pistols, Rifles, and Knives (a six in all of those skills). He also knows a small bit about petty crimes, as well as having a few leadership, intimidation, and organizational skills.

To help round out the villain, particularly if he's a schemer, the Game Master should give a few hobby-related skills that don't directly tie into his nefarious ways. This detail goes a long way into shaping the type of person that the villain is, and gives him some depth.

Example: Though Gregor is a bit of the simple type, he has acquired a taste for some of the finer things in life – namely, expensive cars, and he enjoys maintaining them in his

own garage. He has a high driving and mechanics skill (rank six each), and spends as much time with these cars as he does in physical training.

Martial-Arts: A fighting villain in a martial arts campaign is, of course, going to know some martial arts. A more scheming type of villain, though, may only know the basics, or not have any martial arts training at all.

In general, a fighting villain will have mastery or near-mastery of a few arts. 'Going against an evil master' is a common theme in martial-arts movies, and can make the final hand-to-hand fight in a campaign a daunting, and exciting, challenge.

Example: A physical fighter, Gregor studied at a local Karate school until he had mastered that art. From there, he studied and mastered Tai Kwon Do. When those complete, he's looking for another hard-combat art to study under, when he's not out tinkering with his expensive cars.

hENCHMEN

Usually, a main villain isn't going to be the one to dirty his hands with running his organization. Instead, he'll hire a group of close associates to manage the dirty work for him. These 'henchmen' lead the day-to-day operations of the main villain's operations.

Example: Since Gregor is living a bit of the high-life, a lot of his 'enforcement operations' are handled by an inner circle of fighters. These are fighters that he's personally appointed to keep the rest of his organization running smoothly.

Level of Power

Henchmen are the key 'bad guys' that the characters will face in a campaign, and should always present a challenge when faced off in combat. A direct fight with a henchman should always be a bit of a risky proposition for the characters.

To pull this off, a Game Master should generate a henchman in the same way, and with the same level of power, as the characters themselves. As the characters get

more powerful, the henchman will keep up right along with them.

Example: Michael is a long-time friend of Gregor and has been employed as one of his inner henchmen. The Game Master makes things easy on herself, though, and opts to use the 'Street-Fighter' template to put him on equal footing with the players' characters.

Introducing the Henchman

A henchman usually shows up in a campaign when the heroes start to interfere with the villain's plans. They're often sent along to see just what's going on and get the evil plans back on track.

Example: After the heroes have disrupted some of Gregor's protection rackets within Hammond, he sends out Michael to see just what's going on. Michael is charged with getting the rackets going again, as well as put down the upstarts that are interfering with business.

Long Term Motivations

A henchman may be very loyal to the boss he serves, but he might just have his own desires and agendas to consider. A henchman may be a lot harder to deal with than a thug for more reasons than just their combat ability. Their own schemes and plans may make things complicated not just for the heroes, but for the main villain as well.

Greater Ambition: One common flaw with henchmen is that they often tend to want to rise through the ranks too quickly. They get their eye on the prize, and start thinking about replacing their own boss eventually. A henchman with such ambitions may see the heroes as a threat to him, much more than as a threat to his employer.

Example: Another one of Gregor's henchmen, Chung, has designs on Gregor's job. He sees himself both more cunning and more capable than his boss, but is not quite sure yet in how to take his employer out of the picture. Of course, he might get the heroes to do his bidding for him, instead of getting in his way all the time.

Doubts and Uncertainty: Of course, not all henchmen may be all that comfortable with what the main villain is doing. The reasons that brought them into the fold may not sound quite as appealing as the darker plans start to unfold. With doubts about the cause, the henchmen may start looking for his own way out of the plot.

Example: When a protection raid goes wrong, some of Michael's thugs accidentally outright kill an elderly store-owner. This outright murder has shaken his morality, and he begins to question the life of crime that he's been a part of.

Henchmen in Combat

Though a henchman will be as combat capable as any one of the players' characters, a henchman is not likely to want to fight alone – particularly if the odds are going to be stacked against him.

Though a henchman will often remain in battle, he will usually have the aid of his thugs to help balance things out. He may, though, just opt to leave the combat entirely, if there's no real reason to stick around.

Fighting to the death doesn't often enter into a henchman's role unless the stakes have been raised to great levels. Even though a main villain might disagree, henchmen don't often consider themselves expendable.

THUGS

Most of the time, a character isn't going to fight henchmen or main villains. Instead, they're going to have to go through an army of anonymous, poorly-skilled thugs. These are the mundane fighters and hired-help that are supposed to keep the evil plans of the main villain going. They're simply the cogs in the machine, the anonymous faces that are simply just 'following orders'.

One on one, they're not going to be much of a threat to a character, and they more-or-less exist to traumatize innocent victims and then get the snot beat out of them by the characters.

Example: Chung has recruited his own group of about twenty thugs to serve as his

own personal gang. The thugs aren't very skilled, and usually just go around intimidating the local shopkeepers for their 'protection' money.

The Challenge

Thugs aren't meant to be much of a challenge in one-to-one fights. Instead, a henchman will send out a small number of thugs for the hero to work his way through.

Of course, thugs at the beginning of a campaign may be totally unskilled and ineffective at fighting, but as the campaign goes on, new groups of thugs might prove just a little more formidable.

Being a Challenge: As campaigns continue, the power levels of a thug will increase bit by bit. They start off 'easy', and wind up being more and more difficult opponents. As the campaign goes on, though, the increased skills of a character will balance out the challenge.

Easy thugs are those that are quickly gathered to fight. They tend to be fairly stupid and unskilled. A starting character shouldn't have too much problem dealing with a typical thug.

Typical thugs are those that will feature most often in the campaign. More than likely, they've got a small amount of fighting discipline, though probably not any real martial arts training. These are most suitable for characters with a few adventures under their belt.

Hard thugs are rare, usually showing up near the end of the campaign, and are meant to be dispatched by skilled characters. These are the thugs that make up the main villain's bodyguards.

Example: Since Mat has had a few adventures in the campaign, Michael decides to send some of his more promising thugs to go deal with him now. Mat won't be facing many 'easy' thugs anymore. Now he has to deal with those typical for the rest of the campaign.

Statistics: If a thug were bright, then he wouldn't be a thug. In general, most of a thug's statistics and skills are geared to some

short term fighting. A game master should keep their statistics around average, possibly dropping their intelligence and willpower a bit to raise up their strength and endurance.

Example: A regular thug serving under Michael isn't hired for brains, but for brawn. On average, they have strength of seven, and an intelligence of four. The rest of their statistics sit at five each.

Skills: The Game Master shouldn't spend much time going over skills for a thug, since they're not likely to come up within a campaign. All that really matters is what their fighting ability is going to be, such as their ranks of martial arts, melee combat, weapons skills, and dodging.

Skill	Easy Thug	Typical Thug	Hard Thug
Martial Arts	None	Level 2	Level 4
Dodge	2	4	6
Combat: Melee	1	3	5
Combat: Melee Weapon	None	1	2

To make this a little easier, though, the table above can be used as a guideline for giving out skills to thugs. The Game Master should still mix these values up a little bit, though, to keep battles fresh and interesting.

Gear: Thugs aren't usually well equipped. Easy thugs won't have much more than clothes and possibly a knife. More advanced thugs may gain some modest armor and weaponry for battle, depending on the nature of the campaign.

Example: The thugs in Gregor's regime aren't usually given any unusual equipment. A few have knives, some wear leather jackets. Those who work directly for Gregor, though, carry guns and often wear street flak-vests.

Thugs in Combat

Thugs are raw fighters, and seldom do much more than fight or obey simple orders from the henchmen that command them. They're not brilliant strategists, or all that clever when it comes to actually fighting.

A Game Master should view a thug as disposable. They're there to do a little harm, and then get beaten by the skilled heroes.

After all, the henchmen and the main villains are the real challenges for the heroes to face.

When thugs are supposed to be dangerous, they show up in large numbers. Two or three thugs might be an interesting fight for a character. Five or six will start to get worrying. Ten or more, and the hero should know that he's in serious trouble.

Example: Nari has stumbled onto one of Gregor's drug operations. It's guarded by twenty thugs, but no henchman seems to be around. Still, if Nari alerts all of the thugs to her presence, she'll have an extremely tough time dealing with them all.

SENSEI

If a dojo is important to the campaign, then it's only natural for a sensei of the dojo to be just as important. A sensei is often more than just a teacher of martial arts, but also serves as a father figure, offering advice and insight for his students.

Instructor: Currently, in the United States, there aren't many sensei that follow the traditional mold. They merely teach the physical combat arts, and that's the limit of the sensei's relationship. Most American self-defense courses are like this.

Example: When Nari first learned about the martial arts, she joined up a Jujitsu course offered by her university. Though she did learn the art, her instructor didn't know her from any other student, and there were never any ties developed.

Traditional: Beyond the traditional self-defense courses, many sensei of today follow traditional beliefs and have a sense of responsibility to their students. They are to be respected as a father in a family, and will often develop strong bonds with promising students.

Example: David has joined a small dojo that specializes in Karate. The sensei is a Japanese immigrant who looks on protectively over his students. It's not uncommon for the sensei to hand out advice to them, though his efforts are

focused on keeping them on the 'spiritual' path of his teachings.

Skills

Any sensei should be a complete master of the martial art that their teaching. Along with that, they should have a strong skill in teaching as well.

Traditional sensei would likely have high ranks in meditation, and likely some artistic skills in poetry and painting. More 'contemporary' instructors focus much more heavily on athletic pursuits.

Example: David's instruction is a quiet Shinto priest, and has mastery of Karate and Akido. He also has high skills in teaching, meditation, and knowledge about his own Shinto religion.

Role in the Campaign

Though the relationship between a character and his sensei may be strong, the role of the sensei can sometimes be vital to the flow of the campaign as a whole. A sensei can provide a valuable 'hook' for adventures, as well as provide a strong NPC for characters to interact with.

Historical Link: Many times, a traditional sensei will have his own adventuring history filled with enemies and secrets. Sometimes, these secrets will return to haunt him, and affect the students of his dojo.

Example: Fong has been a sensei for nearly twenty years. When he first took over a school, though, it was because he replaced a sensei who had become a scandal. The man he had replaced has now returned, seeking revenge on the sensei and the dojo for his shame.

Family Ties: The sensei and his dojo have been connected to a characters' family for several generations, and the ties remain strong even now. Events that affect the family call the dojo into action.

Example: For four generations, the Chan family have been the prized students of the Phoenix Flame dojo. Out of a sense of loyalty to his family friends, when the character is threatened by a gang of thugs, the sensei grants advanced training.

FAMILY BONDS

Blood ties are very strong in martial arts campaigns. A son will typically inherit the obligations, status, and honor of his family from his father. Enemies can carry down the bloodlines, and friendship and loyalties can last down generations.

Family Obligations: Often times, a character will be tied to some duties or responsibilities because of promises made long ago by his family to their friends. Because of this, the character may be honor-bound to fulfill obligations that he had no part in making.

Example: Two feuding families have decided to make peace. As part of the peace arrangement, a newborn daughter and newborn son are betrothed to join the two families as one. Of course, the children aren't told until they're teenagers, and they don't exactly get along that well.

Enemy Legacy: The character's family has been feuding with a rival family for generations. The old family enemy has returned, determined to end the feud with lethal certainty.

Example: The Fang clan has been tormenting certain families in China for several generations, going back to the day when a small group of heroes banded together to prevent the Fangs' ascension. The Fangs have been plotting revenge on the families, and now challenge a new generation to fierce combat.

ROMANTIC INTERESTS

The opportunity for romance in a martial arts campaign is pretty common, but it's very rare that a romance will stray far from the very basic clichés found within the genre.

The Lover, the Victim: More often than not, a romance is little more than a way for a villain to have a 'trump card' to play against the hero, and drive the campaign to the climax by kidnapping or even killing the love interest.

Example: Wu Fei has interfered with the Demon's plans one too many times. In an

attempt to break him, the Demon sends his henchmen to murder his beloved Shin. This plan dramatically backfires, however, as Wu Fei's determination to destroy the Demon and his minions become completely steeled.

Comrade in Arms: Though uncommon in most martial arts movies, a relationship could form from members of a adventuring party. After serving side by side for weeks, a pair could discover their interest in one another deepening.

Example: Kyong Kim and Ryu have been involved in fighting off Chung's thugs for several weeks. When Ryu is severely injured in one battle, Kyong realizes at last that she doesn't want to live without him, and that she's in love with her comrade in arms.

Destined: One cliché found in martial arts films is the idea that a hero is destined to wed someone well outside of his station. The two could be star-crossed, and the hero must prove himself through his adventures to be worthy of her attention.

Example: James is an outside, a gaijin in the world of Japan. He has fallen in love with a noble girl, seemingly hopelessly outside of his station. But when her house is attacked by a group of shadow-ninja, James acts on his feelings and rushes to her defense.

THE STORY-LINE

The martial arts campaigns tend to be a bit black and white as far as the 'good versus evil' style goes, they'll usually still fall within the basic structure of a regular anime series. A campaign will have the origin story, a build up with various henchmen, and then finally a major climax with the main villain at the end.

The Main Plot

Every campaign begins around the main plot. This usually involves the main villain trying to attain his goals in one fashion or another, and how the characters are supposed to stop him. The players don't need to know all the details of the grant plot right away, of course, but the Game Master needs to keep it in mind to keep her campaign going in the right direction.

Example: Gregor's desires to control the underworld of the Chicago-Gary area involve wiping out his rivals, and getting his hands into various aspects of criminal activity. Eventually, he wants total control of the underworld for himself, a scheme that will rot away at the light of the cities as well.

Introduction

The first week of the campaign should have the characters getting together and facing the threat of the main villain for the first time. The usual idea is that the heroes lives are interrupted rudely by the main villain's schemes, giving them an immediate reason for fighting.

Example: The heroes are all friends a local high school in Gary, Indiana. Though the school has always had a bad reputation, it isn't at all prepared for a full-fledged gang battle to take place as Gregor takes an opportunity to wipe out one of his rival gangs. The heroes are caught in the crossfire as their school is destroyed around them.

Weekly Sessions

For most of the campaign, the adventures will center on the hero stopping one of the main villain's immediate plans. Usually, there will be a henchman involved in overseeing them, and a few thugs in place to keep the heroes busy.

Example: Chung has set up a cocaine distribution center in an old warehouse. By destroying it, the heroes can severely wound Gregor's income. Chung, though, is expecting a fight, and has prepped security around the warehouse.

Settling Scores

Every few weeks, the players should get a serious chance to deal with a henchman once and for all. There are many reasons that this could happen, but it gives the players a tremendous sense of accomplishment if they can finally take down one of the thorns in their side.

Example: When the heroes finally confront Michael at his apartment, the two sides are placed into a deadly face-off. Rather than commit murder, however, Michael instead drops his gun and surrenders to the heroes,

giving them information in how to hurt Gregor's operations even more.

Final Battle

Eventually, either the heroes will reach the main villain to confront them, or the villain himself will be ready to eliminate them once and for all. This final showdown is the climax of the campaign, and the moment when all the chips are down, and the characters will have to give everything that they have to win the day.

Example: With his drug labs smashed, Gregor has decided that he's had enough of the heroes. Knowing that they'll strike against his home directly, he gathers his remaining thugs and henchmen, and even dares to kidnap one of the heroes' families as insurance. The heroes have to rescue their loved ones, and put down Gregor once and for all.

Ending the Campaign

Once the climax is over, part of a session should be the 'finale'. This is basically the in-character reward session, where everyone thanks the hero, discuss the challenges faced in the campaign, and decide just what they're going to do with their lives now.

Example: With Gregor's death, his crime operation has fallen apart. Though the still isn't a safe place, it is safer, and the contributions of the heroes have given some light to the darkness. Slowly, each hero returns to 'normal' life, but can never leave behind fully the thoughts of their heroics.

Of course, out of character, the end of a campaign is a good time for a game master to get a feel on how she did in entertaining the players. She should get feedback on how the campaign went, and what her strengths and weaknesses were as a Game Master.

Those Pesky Roman Numerals

Even though the campaign is over, the adventures of the martial artists more than likely aren't. One main villain may be down, but there can always be another one lurking around the corner, laying down his own schemes.

The Game Master may want to make a 'sequel' campaign taking off from where the last one had finished. The martial artists, of course, will be a bit more powerful, and may be ready for a slightly different flavor of challenge.

Example: With Gregor out of the way, Chun assumes control of some of the underground. In his new role, however, his purpose has become clear. He seeks control of more high-level criminal activity, and a higher-class of clientele. He also has a score to settle with some of the heroes.

Designing a sequel is just like designing any other campaign, with the exception that much of the 'set-up' has already been done. The Game Master might find setting up a sequel a little easier, since she'll know what to expect from her players and the characters that they've played.

New Enemies: Of course, each campaign has to start with a threat, and a sequel is going to need some new enemies. A new set of enemies should present new challenges, even if they're somehow connected to the ones from the previous campaign.

Example: Chun has decided to not waste much time with the 'lower class' of thugs, and has instead been training his underlings in more skilled fighting and in industrial espionage. Rather than being brutal street-thugs, Chun's thugs are graceful and quick thieves several times more dangerous.

New Allies: With a new campaign comes the possibility of new friends and allies to help out the heroes. The new campaign is also probably the best time to introduce new players and characters, since they won't be interrupting the flow of the campaign.

Example: An assassination attempt on one of the older heroes is thwarted by the timely introduction of a corporate spy, one who has had to defend himself and his company from Chun's advances. With a common enemy, the two men quickly make an uneasy alliance.