

BASIC COMBAT SYSTEM

Most role-playing scenarios contain at least the threat of violence. Combat is the way most player characters die and it is one of the most complicated—and exciting—parts of gaming. When the GM determines combat has begun each second is played out individually and exactly what a character can do—and when—is specifically spelled out by the rules.

This chapter is the Basic Combat System. It's still pretty complicated but it contains only a fraction of the rules and flexibility (and balance) of the Advanced Combat System. When learning the rules, this limited section will be useful to keep things under control. When everyone is ready for a greater challenge (and more rewarding strategic combat) you can move up to the advanced rules.

Basic Flow of Combat

Combat begins when the GM says it does. This could be the result of a surprise attack; a mutual decision of two armed, hostile groups meeting each other head on; or the moment when someone says something really stupid in the king's throne room.

When the GM determines that it's time to go to combat movement (where every second counts) the GM will tell the players to "Roll Initiative."

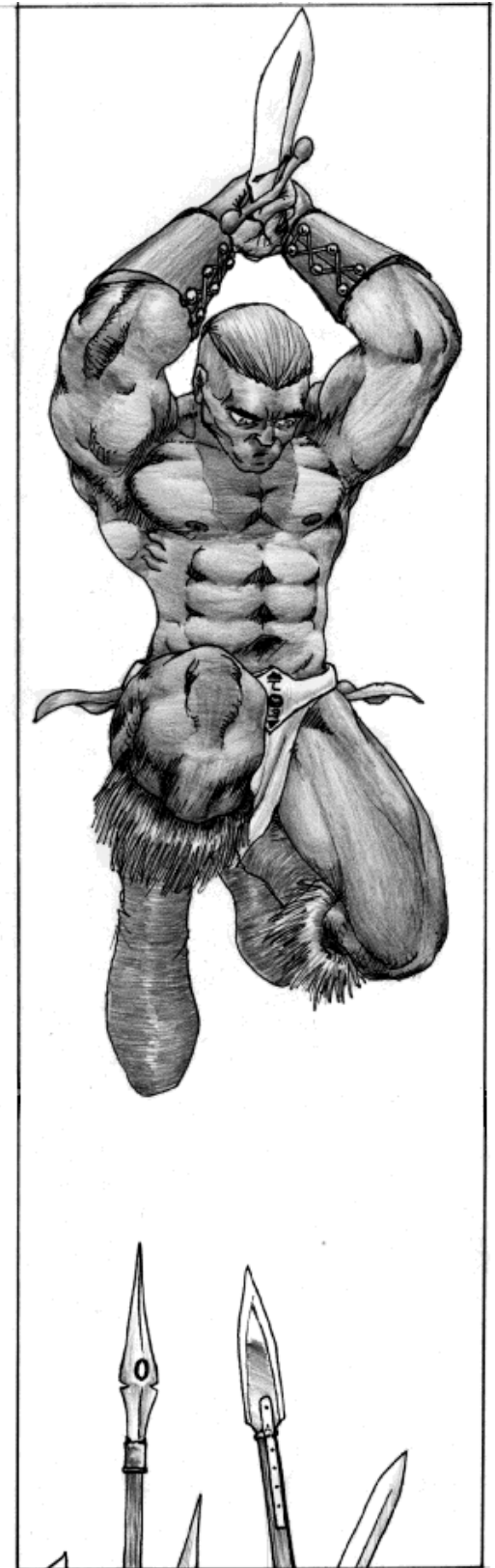
The process of rolling for initiative determines who goes first and when everyone else gets to act. Faster characters will tend to go before slower ones and a really fast person may be able to take all kinds of actions before anyone else gets to respond.

Once the order of initiative is determined for everyone in the fight, each player, in turn, declares his actions ("I ride towards the goblin king and take his head off with my mighty axe!"). Generally a person whose turn it is gets to take all the actions he's allowed to before the next guy gets to go. In some cases, though, another character may get to act out of turn in response ("I block his strike." Or "I stab him on the way in as he charges me.")

The number of actions a character gets to take is determined by his Reaction Speed (REA) score. In essence, a character "buys" actions on his turn: blocks cost 3 REA, strikes cost 5, running around usually costs 8. A character with a 13 REA could block 4 times in a round (for a total of 12 but couldn't do anything else. If he's hit five times in a round he won't even have a chance to block one of them—too bad.)

When a character strikes or blocks he makes a skill roll against his weapons skill (usually at some negative modifier). If he makes it by enough, he hits or blocks successfully.

When a character is struck (or shot, or falls for damage) he makes a Constitution (CON) roll to see how well he took it. If he really blows his roll even a little damage can take him out—if he takes a lot of damage, he's in real trouble.



Initiative

Okay, you're surrounded by guards in the chambers of the *Monarch of the Seven Lands* and one of your good buddies has just told the Overlord of All He Surveys that he can stuff his sacred law where the sun don't shine. Things are gonna happen fast.

The GM says "Make Initiative rolls," and everyone rolls against their REA. The GM also rolls for any NPCs (or groups of NPCs if he wants to simplify it). When he asks you, you call out what you made or missed it by. If you made it by 4 you'd say "Plus four." If you missed it by six you'd say "Minus 6." If you missed it by nine you'd say "Forget it, I'm going last." (of course someone else might have missed their roll by 10 so you'd better tell the GM the roll anyway).

The GM makes a chart for each round. The example below shows what such a chart might look like in a fight that is just beginning it's second round. Guess what happened to Thug 2 in the first round . . .

Combatants	Round 1	Round 2
Fred	+0	+3
Sid	+3	+2
Nancy	-1	+0
Thug 1	-5	+4
Thug 2	+1	--

Of course, the GM's chart probably won't have the pretty graphics but you can see that each character in the fight is listed (here the intrepid heroes Fred, Sid, and Nancy fight two thugs).

Now, the GM takes the character who made it by the most and calls for him to go first (in this case for round 1 it's Sid with a +3). Once that person has gone the GM moves on down the line to the person who was next most successful (Thug 2, in this case, with a +1) and when everyone has had a chance the second (called a round) is over and everyone left rolls again for the next turn.

Here we can see that in the second round (the second second of combat) Thug 2 is no longer rolling initiative—that's probably because he was subdued in round 1 (or gave up, or escaped or otherwise isn't in the combat anymore).

The term *turn* refers to one person's chance to act and the term *round* refers to an entire second. Another way to put it is: during a round everyone gets their turn to act and then the round is over.

Buying Actions

Alright, you've carved your way through the Imperial Shock Troopers to reach the despised Galactic Warlord himself. Now what do you do? Well—it probably involves firepower.

Actions come in three types: short actions, medium actions, and long actions. The difference is this:

A Is For Advanced:

The sidebar sections marked with a large capital A are peeks into the advanced combat system.

You don't have to use them—you can decide to ignore the "intermediate rules" or you can include them in your game, as a stepping stone to the advanced rules.

If a rule description seems confusing or incomplete (we've worked hard to make sure it doesn't, but sidebars don't provide *that* much space) then flip to the page in the advanced rules where it's discussed.

* * *

Being surrounded in a deadly, volatile standoff wasn't my idea of a good Saturday night—but complaining wasn't going to help at this point.

Karg held his sword at one of Raligs' thug's throats. The big man kept shooting looks my way—waiting for a signal.

Behind him Ralig's gorgeous assassin pointed a crossbow—probably loaded with some exotic poison bolt—at Karg's kidney. In her other hand was the crossbow's twin, pointed unerringly at me. But she wasn't strong enough to keep both weapons up indefinitely. I watched the tremors in her arms.

I held a sword to Ralig's gut and his hands were up—but over my shoulder I could hear scraping sounds of his other arms-man as he crouched like a cat—ready to charge me from behind if I moved.

In the doorway, with his crossbow pointed at no one in particular was Alestron—the bounty hunter and onetime friend of mine. He had an easy, slack grin as he waved the weapon theatrically.

"Ace," he said, "you always did like pressure."

* * *

Action	Basic REA Cost	Notes
Short (block)	3	A short action can be taken out of turn
Medium (attack)	5	A medium action can only be taken on your turn or in response to a long action..
Long (run away)	8	An enemy can respond to a long action with a medium or Short action.

What that chart means is that when someone attacks (medium action) you can block (short action) but you can't "strike back instantly" (which is a medium action—and if they're attacking it's not your turn). When someone tries to break and run (long action) you can hit them on the way out (a medium action, but since they made a long action, it's legal).

The most complicated question involved here is who gets to respond to someone else's long action. There is a section in the advanced combat section which goes into detail about this—but to put it simply: only a character whose directly affected by the long action. If someone charges you, you can stick them; your buddy can't. Likewise, if someone breaks from a large melee and runs away, the person who was fighting with them can strike them on the way out . . . but everyone within range doesn't generally get to. The GM is the final arbiter of who can respond, though. Also: someone who can respond can respond at any point they choose to—so they can hit you up close . . . or when you just start moving.

Types of Actions

There are a few basic action types and each has some special rules. In the advanced rules there are many more (and may variations on these). As these stand, they're pretty complete but if you're into tactical combats where a lesser opponent can beat a better one by virtue of tactics then you may want to move to the advanced list.

Action Type: Medium
To Hit Roll: AGI or Martial Art. Kicks hit at -1 to the roll.
REA Cost: 5 for a punch
6 for a kick
Damage: Base HTH damage for a punch, Base HTH damage +2 for a kick
Martial Arts may add to damage.
Common Modifiers: -1 to hit for each point of target's AGI above 10 (AGI - 10 is the "AGI Bonus").
Important Notes: Can be blocked or dodged.

Unarmed Strike in HTH Combat

If you don't have a weapon, you have to use your hands or feet. Most people can punch twice a second if they don't do anything else (that cost 10 REA) and slightly fast people can kick and punch (that cost 11 REA). Kicks hit a little worse than punches and they cost more REA but the +2 damage is often worth it.

All HTH (Hand-To-Hand) attacks do *base damage* plus some number. Base damage is a measure of your power from size and strength. The number is a character's STR - 10 plus one for every point of Mass above 2. This is the formula:

$$(STR - 10) + [(BLD / 5) - 2] +$$

Modifiers (Martial Arts)

A: Too Fast To React:

Sometimes a character can move so fast that his target can't react. If you make your *initiative roll* by 5 or more than a specific target, you can take a long action that affects him and he *doesn't* get a medium action in response—but he can still block. This is a handy rule to have when your fast character has to charge across a room towards a slower one with a weapon.

* * *

Two Key Concepts:

Two concepts that are explained in the rules—but perhaps not emphasized enough are AGI Bonus and Block Rolls. While you should read all of the basic rules before you understand these completely, discussing them here will help you along.

AGI Bonus: Fast people who are highly agile and mobile are hard to hit . . . even if they don't dive for cover or parry blows. For each point of AGI above 10 your character has, opponents get -1 to their to-hit rolls.

This "AGI Bonus" can go away if you're surprised, held in place, or struck from behind. Generally though, a high AGI gives you some defense even if you don't specifically "dodge" or block.

Block Roll vs. To-Hit Roll vs. Damage Modifier Roll:

In combat your opponent makes a to-hit roll . . . and you get to make a roll to block his strike. The more your attacker hit by (if you fail) the more damage he does on his Damage Modifier roll. Okay.

A normal man (10 STR, 10 BLD) does exactly 0 points of base damage with a punch and 2 points with a kick. That's okay—on a good hit he can actually hurt someone but generally he'll want to use a weapon if he's serious.

As another example, a character with a 12 STR, 12 BLD and Level 2 Karate (+2 damage) does $2 + 0 + 2$ (karate bonus) = 4 damage with a punch and 6 with a kick.

Ex1: Awakened from sleep, Guldridge the barbarian sees a slim form above him wielding a flashing knife. Not having his axe handy, he takes a punch at it. The barbarian has no special hand to hand combat skills and an AGI of 12, a STR of 13 and a BLD of 13. The assassin has an AGI of 13!

Guldridge hits on a 9- roll because he's at -3 due to the target's speed and agility. He rolls a 7 and hits by 2 (remember what you hit by—it's important for damage). Guldridge's base damage is 3 (for STR) +1 for BLD (his Mass is 3). He hits for 4 points of base damage.

Action Type: Medium
To Hit Roll: AGI or Weapon Skill
REA Cost: 5 + Swing Cost for first strike in a turn 5 + Back Swing cost for additional strikes in the same turn.
Damage: Base HTH damage plus weapon modifier
Common Modifiers: -1 to hit for each point of target's AGI above 10 (AGI Bonus).
Important Notes: Can be blocked or dodged.

Weapon Strike Description:

Weapons are just like punches and kicks except that they do A) more damage and B) they often do *penetrating* damage. Penetrating damage is how sharp things (like knives) or small fast things (like bullets and arrows) do damage. It's usually worse than impact (blunt) damage and is fully explained in the damage section.

HTH Weapons have three important statistics: *damage bonus*, *swing*, and *back swing*. Damage bonus is what they add to base HTH damage. Swing is how much extra REA the first strike of a turn costs the user and *back swing* is how much extra REA all subsequent strikes in the same turn cost.

Damage bonus is simple: a standard broad sword does +6 *penetrating* damage. In the hands of a normal man (base damage of 0) it does 6 points of damage each swing. An axe does +8 *penetrating* damage with each swing and a staff does +5 *impact* damage per hit. So the question: why would anyone want to use anything but an axe? The answer is that you hit more often and block better with the other weapons (the staff blocks considerably better than the sword—but its damage isn't as severe).

A broadsword has a swing of +1 and a back swing of +2. That means that for the average swordsman the first strike costs 6 REA and the second costs 7. To hit twice with a broadsword you'd have to have a 13 REA (and then you couldn't block or move). On the other hand, if you're an expert (Level 3+) swordsman your skill subtracts from the REA cost of

The amount you *made your roll by* is the amount your target has to block by. The amount you made your roll by minus the target's AGI bonus is the Damage Modifier.

To put it in perspective:

- The amount you made your skill roll by (regardless of what your chances to hit actually were) is the amount your target has to beat or equal on his block roll. So if you have a 14- skill roll and your opponent is at -3 to be hit and you roll an 11 you hit by 0 but your opponent has to block by 3.
- The amount you add to your damage roll is based on what you actually hit by. In the example above you just add 0 to your damage roll (you add what you hit by).

A : The Right Cross:

When a boxer wants to drop an opponent he'll throw a right cross, a left hook, an uppercut, or other "power punch." You can too. For the untrained man this might be a classic "haymaker" or "bolo punch."

The cross may only be thrown *once per turn*, it does Base HTH damage +1, and it leaves the target at +1 to be hit and -1 to block until his *next turn* in the next round

Drawing A Weapon:

If you don't have your sword out, it's a 5 REA medium action to draw it (this applies to guns as well). If you've got Level 3 or 4 skill with a weapon you can "quick draw" it by making a skill roll. If you make the roll it comes out for 0 REA. If you blow the roll you pay the 5 REA and just haul it out normally.

A : The Full Strike:

A full swing is a maximum strength strike with a weapon—it's slower but it can add the punch you need to drop a tough opponent. Any character may do a Full Swing: the cost is 3 extra REA and the blow gets +2 to Base Damage.

each swing. At Level 3 a swordsman gets -1 to swing and -2 to back swing: he can swing a sword as easily as punching! Compare to the ax: +2 swing, +4 back swing (yow!). Granted, higher skill levels will reduce the cost of the ax but it's never as fast as the sword.



NOTE: If a weapon is sharp and does penetrating damage, all the damage from the strike—including the character's base damage is treated as penetrating.

Action Type: Medium
To Hit Roll: COR or weapon skill.
REA Cost: 5 for a shot (bows must be drawn—see Bow skill)
Damage: Entirely dependent on the weapon.
Common Modifiers: -1 for every 2 full points of the target's AGI above 10.
Important Notes: Cannot be blocked. -4 to be dodged.

Shoot Weapon / Arrow: Guns are pretty simple to use: pick a target and roll to hit. You usually aren't at any big negatives to hit (range, size of target, speed of target, visibility, etc. are covered in the advanced rules). You can even fire twice.

Double tapping with a handgun is the term for squeezing off two shots at once. When this is done, make two rolls to hit for a single 5 REA medium action. Both rolls are at -2 (less if you have Level 3+ Firearms skill) and that's the last time the gun can be fired that turn. You *cannot* double tap twice in a turn firing 4 shots for 10 REA.

You can also *aim*. Aim involves taking an additional action for a better chance to hit. It's very popular with people who either don't hit all that well or can't afford to miss. Once you aim and fire you lose aim (even with laser guns or weapons that don't kick). Aim lasts until you shoot. Then you have to spend another action to aim.

Action	Plus to Hit
3 REA	+1 to skill roll
5 REA	+2 to skill roll
8 REA (<i>long</i>)	+3 to skill roll

Note that the 8 REA +3 aim is a long action—your target gets a chance to respond (best done when your opponent is at range and doesn't have his own ranged weapon). You cannot get more than +3 through aim but you can take two 5 REA medium actions for +3 if you have the REA to spare (three 3 REA actions won't work though). Note that, because of the way the combat system works, this costs a total of 10 REA (2 more than the single 8 REA long action), but your target doesn't get a chance to shoot back. If this is confusing, check out the explanation of Long actions a couple of pages ago.

* * *

"It's just like the one he used in the TV series," the man behind the counter said, handing me the faux ivory-handled katana sword.

"Really?" I asked, trying to keep the mirth out of my voice.

"Yes," he said. "Real blade too."

"Folded metal—twenty folds?" I asked. It wasn't atomically possible—but he didn't know that.

"Stainless steel," the man said. "But be careful—you could take someone's head off with that. For real, I mean."

"Oh, yeah," I said. Oh yes indeed.

You a fan of the show?" he asked.

"Sort of," I said. "I had one like this but I lost it recently—and I'll need another one for tonight."

Outside, I sheathed the blade and tucked it under the trenchcoat. The show got it almost all wrong—public misinformation. But the bloodlines used swords—they were right about that . . . and I had an engagement tonight; and a modern, insultingly carved, cheap fake katana like this would have to do.

* * *

Reloading:

Reloading a gun is a 5 REA action if the gunman has Level 1 or 2 Fire Arms skill. It can be done for 3 REA at Level 3, and, with a roll, it can be done instantly at Level 4. This assumes magazines of ammunition or speed loaders—for a bolt action rifle or six shooter and no speed loaders, load one bullet at a time for 5 REA.

Drawing Guns and Bows:

Like HTH weapons, it's a 5 REA medium action to draw a gun (0 REA at Level 3+ with a quick-draw roll). Drawing and loading *arrows*, on the other hand, depends on the skill of the user.

Action Type: Medium
To Hit Roll: None.
REA Cost: 5 REA
Distance Moved: 1/9th
Sprinting move or 1 yard

Step (Turn, Retreat): In combat a character may simply wish to take a step towards or away from a combatant. This action may also be used to turn ninety degrees or more (you can turn less than 90 degrees once in a turn for nothing if you take a move or striking action). It can also be used in an attempt to get away.

A step costs 5 REA and moves the character one-yard (really fast characters may move farther, though). The only tricky note is the retreat: you only go half as far as normal stepping back. This means that you can't strike someone and then "step back" out of range. If you use a 5 REA medium action to step away from an opponent you're at -1 to be hit on his next attack—but that's all. Two medium actions used to step back will put you out of range unless he takes an action to step forward.

Action Type: Long
To Hit Roll: None.
REA Cost: 8 REA the first turn, 5 REA thereafter.
Distance Moved: Running, Walking or Sprinting (depending)

Full Move (Charge, Run Away):

A full move is slightly tricky. It's a long action, which means that if you use it to run up to someone (into combat range) they can attack you on the way in. If you decide you've had enough in a hand-to-hand fight and decide to flee they can hit you on the way out.

However, after the first turn of movement—if you stop accelerating, continued moves only cost 5 REA . . . but it's still *long*. So even though you pay like a medium action people can respond if your move affects them.

Also, in the basic rules, you have to come to a stop to strike anyone (in the advanced rules striking as you run by is an option).

When a character starts moving from a standing stop he can go straight to running speed (unless the character was *totally* stationary and unaware). After one second of running, the character can accelerate to sprinting speed. Keep in mind that going from running to sprinting speed costs 8 REA the next turn—it's accelerating.

Also remember: decelerating *doesn't* cost REA at all. A character can come to a complete stop at any time on his turn (at least under the basic rules). Some weird situations like characters on horseback and falling characters aren't covered here. If you encounter one of these and want to read up on the official solution, go to the advanced rules.

Ex1: Johan is trying to get away from several people in a large field who are spread out (how he got in this situation is beyond explanation). He decides to start running on the first turn: this is a long action which costs him 8 REA but since no one is near him—or has a ranged weapon—the GM rules no one can respond. He accelerates to his running speed (see the REA table). On the second turn he wants to keep moving but he doesn't see any reason to accelerate. He only pays 5 REA and he keeps going at a flat speed. If he gets near anyone, though,

Getting Up:

A fall, a powerful blow, or a blown AGI roll on wet ice can knock down a character.

Getting up is either one 8 REA *long* action or two 5 REA medium actions. If the GM rules that a character only falls to his knees then he can get up with a single 5 REA medium action. For characters that can rapidly leap to their feet, check out the Acrobatics skill.

* * *

Leyland ran for all he was worth. The dark stone of the underhall flew by around him—the thing behind him was silent and he didn't look to see if it was gaining.

Ahead—then right—then left at the crossroads—the up the stairs. He hoped to hell he was right. If he wound up at a locked grate or a dead end . . .

Jasmine was up there waiting for him. She might get a shot off with the crossbow as it climbed the stairs. The shot might kill the six foot tall thing covered with slime and with no even vaguely human features that was mere paces behind him. Might. Things didn't look good. He cut right, digging in his pouch as he sprinted. He was fast—legendarily fast—for a man.

In his pocket were the marbles. He said a silent prayer to the God of Thieves, Fools, and Children. And decided not to look—instead he released the small glass spheres and leapt. His stride carried him skimming over the stones and landing without breaking stride. He heard nothing—no fall—no howl.

Damn! He snapped a single desperate look back over his shoulder . . . and stopped. The thing was there, its thick feet amongst the marbles where it crouched, staring, enchanted at the colored bits of glass and making cooing sounds.

* * *

they'll be able to react to him coming by since the action is still long.

Later Johan decides to kick the speed up to sprinting and that turn the acceleration costs him 8 REA. Now, though, unless he stops, he'll just pay 5 REA per turn until his endurance runs out.

Action Type: Short
Roll: Weapon skill roll +/- the listing for block.
REA Cost: 3 REA.

Block (Parry Blow, Use a Shield):

A block is a defensive action that can be done with a weapon or barehanded (although only highly trained fighters can block weapons barehanded). When someone rolls to hit, they remember the amount they made their roll by.

To successfully block you have to make your block roll by as much or more than they made their to-hit roll by. That means that a hit where the to-hit roll was made by 10 is a whole lot harder to block than one where the to-hit roll was made by 0.



NOTE: Characters are at -1 to be hit per point of AGI above 10. This negative modifier *isn't* counted for purposes of blocking. An attacker who strikes a target with a 19 AGI and makes his skill roll by 10 only hits by 1 point but the target must make a block roll by 10 to deflect the attack.

If you don't play with the above rule then characters with high AGI's and good blocks will rarely, if ever, get hit because they'll never be hit by enough to give them a tough block roll.

If you attempt to block a bladed weapon barehanded you roll at an additional -4. If you attempt to block a blunt weapon you roll at -3. The GM can make allowances for armored characters (see the advanced rules)

Action Type: Short
Roll: AGI or Level 2+ Acrobatics. Roll is at -4 against ranged weapons.
REA Cost: 5 REA (3 at Level 3+ Acrobatics)

Dodge: Sometimes you can't afford to be hit at all—even to block—or someone's shooting at you. In this case you may choose to dodge instead of blocking. The action works the same way: make an AGI roll by more than a hand-to-hand attack hit by and it misses.

Against a ranged attack (a bullet) your roll is at -4. So, if your attacker makes his to hit roll by 2 you have to make an AGI roll by 6 to dodge successfully. Dodging ranged attacks is usually a last ditch resort.

A: Striking While

Moving:

A move action doesn't necessarily have to end before you can swing or shoot at someone. It's a lot more difficult to hit someone in mid-stride though. The rules are advanced—but you can use 'em with the basic game if you want to:

A character with enough REA to make move and strike action can declare a strike at someone "as he passes them." The rules (in the basic game) are as follows:

- The move and attacks are all declared as one move (i.e. I run past the guard and strike him).
- The attack is at -2 to hit.
- It is at an additional +2 to be blocked or dodged.
- Strikes from hand weapons are at a -2 Damage Modifier (for damage purposes treat them as though they hit by 2 less than they actually did—minimum of 0).
- If the target gets to declare a response *before* the attacker's blow lands—if he gets a response at all (the attacker may be 5 or more initiative points faster).

Martial Arts Blocks:

Under each Martial Arts Listing are the letters U B S. These stand for Unarmed, Blunt, and Sharp. The numbers in the columns are used for determining the character's chance of blocking an unarmed attack, an attack from a blunt weapon, or an attack from a sharp/bladed weapon.

This is more-or-less an advanced rule (computing different blocks against different types of attacks is a little complicated) but it is essential to martial arts masters who may be able to defend themselves against knives and swords.

Grabbing and Grappling Actions

Sometimes you don't want to hurt or kill an opponent. You might want to stop him from running, take something away, or maybe—because he's really fast—hold him in place so you can get an accurate strike off.

When you try to do this you are grabbing or grappling with him. Grabbing is the only action covered in the basic combat section and it involves just reaching out and getting a grip on your target. Once grabbed, your opponent can't dodge or run and is much easier to hit (you can also *grab an arm* to tie up a weapon or take something).

Grappling is more complicated and is covered in the advanced section—but it is more like wrestling than just grabbing. You and your target may fall down; you may get him in a headlock; or the two of you may just wrap each other up tight. Grappling is something that happens closer together—when someone is grabbed they can still use weapons (in the advanced game they can't use really long weapons, but most swords can still be used). In a grapple almost all weapons hurt rather than help (one of your hands is used to hold the useless weapon when it could be used to wrestle with your opponent).

How formidable your character is at grappling is determined by two scores: *offensive grapple score* and *defensive grapple score*. These scores are a measure of how big, strong, and trained your character is. When you hit with a grab you use your offensive score against the target's defensive score and you roll on the resistance chart described at the beginning of the book.

When you try to break a grab (get someone's arms off you) you use your offensive score against their offensive score . . . that seems a little weird because when you hit you matched offensive score against defensive score but that's the way it works for *grabs*. For grapples, on the other hand, when you are trying to break out, you match offensive score against defensive score . . . but that's covered in the advanced section.

The formula for grapple scores is:

Offensive Score: (Str-10) + Mass + Martial Arts Bonus + 2
Defensive Score: (Str-10) + Mass + Martial Arts Bonus

Why is your offensive score always 2 (or 20% if your basic grapple score is above 20) higher than your defensive score? We worked it that way so that a normal man would have a 12- chance of getting a grip on an equal—but against an equal opponent you would have a fifty-fifty (10-) chance to break the grip.

* * *

Jay Nine held the energy long-arm across his chest like an old fashioned rifle. It was set to scatter fire—if the trigger was pressed it would emit a storm of hundreds of fragments of stabilized plasma solitons. In terms of firearms it was pretty much the ultimate weapon—he liked carrying it—but he was afraid he was going to have to use it.

The woman and her dark companion worked on the console. The ship they had come in was smashed into the Urside Orbital's solar grid—there was no real way to dock with the station if they didn't want you to.

He heard her voice over the tight-link: "We're working on the virus. They think we're trying to negotiate. This is where they're going to storm us. Get ready."

"Hey Romeo," he called to the muscled humanoid in a slick black combat suit. It—he—had some kind of exotic weapon and he stood motionless, watching the entrance. "Take the left doors."

The AS-pod, the Abandon the Ship before it goes down and everyone on it is burnt to ash pod was unlocked and waiting for them; a bulkhead between them and salvation. He watched the screens as the virus worked. Not much longer now.

"That's right," she said. "Either you meet all of my demands or I drop the orbital on the York² Metropolitan Grid. Millions die." She winked at Jay—it was slated for splash down in the Atlantic—traumatic . . . but not as bad as she was claiming.

She listened to something on the other end, shaking her head in agreement. Her hands brought the gun up in a smooth, fluid motion.

Jay Nine felt the door go. It just vanished in a thunder clap and burning mist spilled through into the large empty chamber followed by a hailstorm of light.

Action Type: Medium
To Hit Roll: AGI or any martial art that adds to Grapple at any level.
REA Cost: 5 REA
Damage: 2/5ths Base Damage with a squeeze (none for a normal Grab). Round down (minimum of 0).
Common Modifiers: -1 to hit for each point of target's AGI above 10.
Important Notes: Can be blocked or dodged.

Grab: The basic grab move is simply taking hold of the clothes, hair, or limbs of a target and holding him, more or less, in one place. It's a great thing to do when you don't want to strike or kill a target or you do and you can't get him to stay still long enough to get a good shot off.

To make a grab attack, roll to hit, and if you're not blocked or dodged, you must successfully make a Grapple roll. If that happens, you've got him until you let go or he makes a Break Grab roll.

When grabbed, a character cannot dodge or move (dragging characters around is covered in the advanced section) but may block normally. Most importantly, you lose your AGI bonus against being hit (the -1 per point of AGI over 10 you subtract from other's chance to hit you). If you are grabbed, the character grabbing you gets *no* AGI bonus against being hit by you either.

Once a target is grabbed, as another 5 REA medium action the attacker can choose to squeeze (for 2/5ths base damage—not much unless you're real strong) or to pick up the opponent. The amount you hit by (important for damage—see below) is determined by what you originally hit by . . . but a new roll for damage is made each time the attacker squeezes—so the damage can be different each time.

To lift someone you must either have a STR - 10 which is equal to or higher than their Mass or make an STR roll at -2 per point their STR - 10 is lower than the target's mass. Once lifted, a target is at +5 to be hit (in addition to receiving no AGI bonus).

If you're bigger or stronger (or both) than an opponent with a weapon, you may want to grab their arm—and perhaps take the weapon away. To do this, roll to *grab their arm* at -2 to hit. If you do hit, and make a grab roll, they lose the use of anything in that arm unless they break the grab. Then, after grabbing them, you may make a 5 REA action to wrest the item away from them. If you make the second roll, you now have hold of whatever they were carrying.

Action Type: Medium
Roll: Offensive grapple vs. opponent's offensive grapple on the resistance chart.
REA Cost: 3 REA

grab effects.

Breaking A Grab: Breaking a grab is a 3 REA *medium* action. This means that if you're grabbed you can only try to break out on your turn. When declared you get to roll on the resistance table comparing your offensive score to your opponent's offensive score. If you make the roll you break the grip and immediately lose all

Jay ducked. Somehow, instinctively, he went sideways and down. The access bank behind him ceased to exist.

He rolled across the floor trying to see through the fiery haze. Something slammed into the wall above where he lay. The gun was military grade and the particle beam punched through the wall rather than killing Jay with the collateral damage. The bulkhead to the AS-pod seemed miles away now—through hell.

Jay fired back, blindly. He didn't know if his friends were alive or dead. He didn't know if he was hurt or not. He just fired. On maximum output the long-arm could sustain fire for four seconds before shutting down.

Galaxies of light coiled out of his barrel towards the open doorway. He saw armored figures, illuminated somehow by his fire, evaporate under his onslaught.

Four seconds. Still firing he rolled to his feet. Three seconds. A hellishly bright lance of light traced a melted-metal trench inches from his feet. He felt his flesh cook through the protective clothes.

Two seconds. The gun in his hands hummed like a tuning fork. He ran. They might predict that he would head towards the pod—they might cover it with their fire. He didn't care.

Somewhere, in the back of his head, he knew he was abandoning his friends—leaving without them even if they were still alive. He didn't care. The world was an inferno of collapsing metal, melted steel, and sheets of fire. He felt the gun cut out on him and he dropped it in his mad dash for the pod.

Goodbye, he thought silently to his friends as he threw himself through its mouth. He thought he could hear them back there—screaming and firing . . . maybe screaming and dying. He depressed the close the button and the sound went away.

Damage

You've just run a cyborged-up assassin through the chest with a metal rod. He's still coming. You emptied your .44 super-magnum into his face. He's not stopping. The question your asking yourself at this point is: "How do I do damage?" It's explained here.

All attacks have a base damage: with a fist it's your character's base damage. With a sword or club it's your character's base damage plus some number. With a gun it depends on the caliber of bullets you fire. The base damage is sort of a measure of the weapon's power.

But a hit with a weapon isn't always the same: a shot in the arm won't kill as readily as a shot in the chest (or brain stem). Even a well-placed shot can be rendered ineffective by bad luck. A "damage roll" handles this.

After you hit someone in combat you'll make a damage roll. A damage roll is like any other roll except that you add the amount you hit by to it. The higher the roll plus the amount you hit by, the greater the damage you'll do.

Impact Damage

For *impact* damage you'll use this chart below:

Impact Damage Table Roll + to-hit Modifier																		
Damage Multiplier	0	1	2-3	4-5	6-7	8-9	10-11	12	13-14	15	16-17	18-20	21-25	26-29	30+			
	1pt	.10x	.25x	.33x	.50x	-3	-2	-1	1x	+1	+2	+3	1.5x	1.75x	2x			

Across the top of the chart is the amount you rolled plus the amount you hit by. Along the bottom is a modifier for the *base damage* of the weapon. As you can see, higher numbers along the top produce more damage along the bottom. Here's an example:

Ex1: Private detective Jack Duncan is creeping along a dark corridor in a supposedly deserted house. A man wearing a ski mask tries to hit him from behind. The man has a club and does a total of 6 points of *base damage*. Remember: that means that the thug's *base damage* plus the club's damage adds up to 6.

Now, the thug rolls to hit Duncan. The thug has a 13- to-hit roll and Duncan, unaware, is at no negative to be struck (he also doesn't get a chance to block). The man rolls a 9, hitting by 4.

"What kept you, Jay?" she asked, amazed. "I didn't expect you to stand and fight with them! You go hero on me?"

She twisted the release lever then, and the artificial gravity fell away as they dropped into their re-entry descent.

* * *

Advanced Fire

Some weapons fire bursts of rounds when the trigger is pressed, others (shotguns) fire multiple pellets at once (a few do both but that's so complicated we don't really want to get into it).

All these rules are covered under the Advanced Rules. Until you're using them, just treat an automatic weapon as one that can hit one target for 2x normal base damage or two targets for 1x base damage for a single 5 REA action (roll to hit each target separately—you only get aim against the first target).

For scatterguns, just treat them like single hits for the listed damage (there's a chart at the end of this section) but their penetration factor is 1/4th normal.

This will work for everyone but the

A: Waiting:

Sometimes, when you're the fastest person in a combat turn, you don't *want* to go first. You want to wait and see what happens. Well, you can.

You can wait to take your turn whenever you want but the catch is this: when someone else (whose turn it is) declares an action, they get to take it *before* you get to interrupt them. So if two people are holding guns on each other and one waits the other can declare a fire action and the first (the faster one) can't "decide to fire first." After the second guy's action, though, the first guy can take the rest of his turn. You may, of course, still block or dodge—but your opponent gets in the first shot.

The GM (who is running the thug) rolls on the impact damage table and rolls a 12. The 12 he rolled plus the 4 the man hit by comes to a total of 16. Looking on the chart that's +2 to the damage. The base damage is 6, plus 2 is 8. Duncan is hit on the head for 8 points of damage and goes down clutching his head (the effects of this 8 points on Duncan are discussed in the next section).

Now, as you can see the result of a 13 – 14 is 1x or exactly equal to *base damage*. A result of a 15 gives a +1 and a result of an 18 gives +3. Above 18 (and below 8) you start multiplying (and dividing) base damage. What happens if someone's base damage is 4. Then a result of an 18- 20 does 7 points of damage . . . but a result of a 21 – 25 does 6 (4 times one and a half is 6). It'd be better to hit by less. Not so:

If a “lower result on the chart” yields more damage, use that result.

Additionally, if the *base damage* is above 20, then the results of +1 to +3 (and –1 to –3) become +10% to +30% (and –10% to –30%). You should figure all of these numbers out ahead of time to save time during combat. When you pick up a weapon, do the math for it then and write it on the character sheet (there's a section at the bottom).

Impact damage is pretty simple and straightforward. Penetration damage is a little bit trickier (but not much).

Ex1: **Make a Chart!** The character sheets come with tables for Impact and Penetrating damage. Below is part of one that's been filled out for some of the weapons the character carries. This guy has a *base damage* of 3 and carries a heavy club (+7 damage) to whack people.

Impact Weapons Damage

	0	1	2-3	4-5	6-7	8-9	10-11	12	13-14	15	16-17	18-20	21-25	26-29
	1pt	.10x	.25x	.33x	.50x	-3	-2	-1	1x	+1	+2	+3	1.5x	1.75x
Punch	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	6	6
Kick	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	8	9
Hvy Club	1	1	3	3	5	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	15	18

Ex2: Here's another example. In this case we're dealing with a super hero who has a STR of 35 (he can bench press a ton!) and a Mass of 30 (he weighs 405 lbs.). When he hits his base damage with a punch is 25 + 4 = 29 points. Oh yeah, he carries a magical hammer that adds +9 to his base damage (or +45% since his base damage is above 20 as per the Increasing Base damage sidebar) .

Impact Weapons Damage

	0	1	2-3	4-5	6-7	8-9	10-11	12	13-14	15	16-17	18-20	21-25	26-29
	1pt	.10x	.25x	.33x	.50x	-3	-2	-1	1x	+1	+2	+3	1.5x	1.75x
Punch	1	3	7	10	15	22	24	26	29	32	35	38	44	51
Kick	1	3	8	11	16	25	27	29	32	36	38	41	48	56
Mjolnir	1	4	10	14	21	32	35	38	42	46	50	55	63	74

Energy Damage

Damage from fire or lightning uses the impact damage table. Damage from things like lasers and particle beams uses the penetration damage system. The GM must determine how even stranger attacks fall into place (a “plasma bolt” might use the impact damage table but do 400 points of base damage).

Increasing Base Damage

As discussed above, HTH weapons add to base damage. This means that a man with a base damage of 2 (12 STR) who has a broadsword (+6 penetrating) does a total of 8 damage. Easy, right?

But what if the man has a 35 STR. Granted, he's not really human (he can bench press a ton) but does the sword do a measly +6 points? What if his STR is 200? If you just add the 6 damage straight it doesn't make sense for a really strong person to use a weapon . . . and that's not very realistic.

The answer is a little confusing (this only applies to high STR characters). The rule is this:

Weapons or actions (kicks) which improve base damage add +5% instead of +1 if the original base damage is above 20.

That would mean that if someone has a STR of 35 (25 base damage if their BLD is 10), he would do 33 points of damage with a broadsword (instead of the 31 a straight +6 would add). A guy with a 110 STR (100 points of base damage) would do 130 points when he's armed with the sword (and it's penetrating).

Why is this confusing? Because on the *damage chart*, a result of +1, +2 or +3 (and the negatives) alters the damage by +10%, +20%, or +30%. That's a quirk of the system: additives *before* damage mod rolls add +5%. Afterwards they add +10%.

Penetration Damage

Penetration damage is worse, since it happens *inside* the target. It uses a different table (with higher multipliers) and it tends to be considerably more debilitating.

The differences between penetration damage and impact damage are these:

- If you hit a target by 4 or more with a penetration attack the amount you hit by effectively *doubles*!
- Penetration damage bleeds and does not heal as fast (bleeding is an advanced rule—but you can go look at it if you care to). A character who is punched in the jaw may be sore the next morning but the “same amount” of damage from a small knife wound can take days to heal.

The part about the amount you hit by doubling is the important part. The theory is this: an arrow wound to the arm is painful, bloody, and pretty nasty. The same arrow, penetrating to the same depth in the torso is often deadly.

When you hit a target by 4 or more the hit is considered *vital*. That means some important organs were in the vicinity of the hit. That means the amount you hit by doubles: a hit by 4 is treated like a hit by 8 on the chart. A hit by 10 acts like a hit by 20! A hit by 3, however, is still a hit by 3.

Here’s the chart

Penetration Damage Roll + to-hit Modifier

Damage Multiplier	0	1	2-3	4-5	6	7-8	9-10	11	12-13	14	15-16	17-18	19-25	26-30	31-35	36-39	40+
	1pt	.1x	.25x	.33x	.5x	-3	-2	-1	1x	+1	+2	+3	2x	2.5x	3x	4x	8x

Ex1: Here’s a chart for some weapons. The guy with the sword (+6 damage) has an 11 STR and BLD (*base damage* of 1—for a total of 7). The guns are 9mm (*base damage* 6) pistols and a hunting rifle (*base damage* 31).

Weapon	0	1	2-3	4-5	6	7-8	9-10	11	12-13	14	15-16	17-18	19-25	26-30	31-35	36-39	40+
	1pt	.1x	.25x	.33x	.5x	-3	-2	-1	1x	+1	+2	+3	2x	2.5x	3x	4x	8x
Sword	1	1	2	3	4	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	14	18	21	28	56
9mm pistol	1	1	2	2	3	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	12	15	18	24	48
.30-.06	1	3	8	10	16	24	26	25	31	34	37	40	62	78	93	124	248

From looking at this example you can see several things: that when the base damage is above 20 (as is the case of the rifle) the +1, +2, and +3 columns become +10%, +20%, and +30%. Another thing you can infer from this is that, since you need a decent shot from a hunting rifle to kill something like a big deer, they must have about 70 damage points—that’s about accurate!

Weapons Charts:

In the back of the book are several pages of different weapon charts including HTH weapons (with some advanced weapons like flails and tangle weapons), bows, and hand guns.

see The
Weapons
Chart

The GM should make it known what weapons are available to the characters for any given game.

Here's a play example:

Ex3: Baron Renault is in a duel with his half-brother. Both carry swords which have a base damage of 6 (broadswords) and both brothers have STR's of 11 so they do 7 points of *base damage* with each strike.

The baron loses initiative and his brother strikes first. His brother rolls to hit and hits by 3. The baron makes a blocking roll but only makes it by 2—he fails to block and the blow lands. The roll for damage for the brother's strike is an 8 . . . plus 3 goes to an 11. Since swords are penetrating we look on the penetration chart and see that an 11 is -1 point of damage. The baron takes 6 points. He's hurt but he pulls through (makes a great CON roll) and strikes back. He hits by 4.

The brother tries to block but misses his block roll. Now Baron Renault hits by 4 which is exactly the number needed to score vital damage. He doubles this number to 8 and adds it to his damage roll.

He gets a truly amazing damage roll of an 18 . . . plus 8 goes to 26! That's 2.5x damage. The baron strikes his wicked half brother for 18 points of damage and the brother goes down! This is pretty much being run through the chest.

Overkill—Super High to-hit Rolls and Penetrating Damage

The nature of the game makes very accurate characters with penetrating weapons lethal. An expert gunman can easily drop someone—even someone tough—with one shot.

This isn't good for some gamer's play style. When trying to make the game play like the movies we realized that good shots had to have ample stopping power or, instead of cinematic battles, gunfights would become attrition wars.

If you're playing a game where you want the players to get in a lot of gunfights but not get perforated you can do the following:

- Assign *impact* damage rolls—instead of penetration damage rolls for all Heroic characters.
- Require a hit by 7 in order to score a vital hit (i.e. a hit by 6 is still a hit by 6 but a hit by 7 adds 14 to the damage roll).
- Give everyone +10 damage points—this is a good solution since weapons are still deadly but the important characters will have a margin for error.
- Wear a lot of armor (the realistic answer). As you'll see below, armor converts penetrating damage to impact damage and then reduces that (if the character has enough armor).

Armor

Once you've hit someone it is time to determine damage. Since, on the way to the fleshy person you actually *want* to injure, you'll have to go through the armor they're wearing we'll examine that first.

Damage Reduction and Penetration Resistance

Armor has two statistics: *damage reduction* and *penetration resistance*. They're both related: penetration resistance is usually two times the armor's damage reduction.

see The
Armor
Chart

In the back of the book are armor and shield tables. Check them out to outfit your character. Here's a sampling so you get the idea:

Armor	Armor Value	STR Min.	Stealth Neg.
Light Leather	2 / 4	9	-0
Heavy Leather	3 / 6	10	-1
Chain Mail	3 / 10	12	-4
Padded Chain	5 / 10	12	-4

Damage reduction is a measure of how much of a physical blow the armor absorbs. If a strike does 8 points of damage and you have armor with a *damage reduction* of 3 (heavy leather armor) then you'll only take 5 points. If your armor's damage reduction is greater than the damage done by a weapon, the blow simply bounces off.

Penetration resistance is a measure of how hard the substance is to cut. Remember: there are two types of damage—impact and penetration damage. If a weapon is sharp or bladed (or is a bullet) then it does penetration damage. If it's blunt then it does impact damage.

If the *base damage* of a weapon blow is less than or equal to the armor's penetration resistance then the damage is calculated as impact damage even though the weapon is sharp. Why? Because even though the weapon is sharp or pointed it won't cut the armor.

Ex1: Sir Alexander is wearing plate mail, which has damage reduction of 6 and penetration defense of 12. This is recorded as 6 / 12 (penetration resistance always comes last). A 12 STR man wielding a broadsword (8 points of base damage) strikes him. The blow will be treated as impact damage against Sir Alexander because his armor protects him.

The actual damage the blow does turns out to be 10 points (the *base damage* is 8—but the hit was good and actually did 10—see the damage section). Since Sir Alexander's armor absorbs 6 points of that, he only takes 4 points. A solid hit but not enough to bring him down (Alexander's a tough guy).



NOTE: It seems to be a common mistake to subtract penetration resistance from the damage done by a penetrating weapon. This is incorrect. Only damage reduction subtracts from damage—both impact and penetrating.

Wound Types

Let's say you're in a fight with a big guy in black armor. You chop his arm off . . . he keeps coming. You chop a leg off . . . he keeps coming. You whack his other leg off and instead of dying he starts taunting you. It's time to start applying some realistic effects of damage!

There are two basic concepts of damage: damage points and wound type. Damage points are a measure of how much physical abuse you can take. A normal man has 10, an elephant has about 500. You can take 5x your listed damage points before you are absolutely, irrevocably, dead.

But you'll probably be dead long before that time (or at least unconscious) if you get shot or stabbed badly. The amount of damage you take in any one hit is considered a wound and there are four different types of wounds.

Kevlar Weave and Armor Saves

Kevlar is a modern bulletproof cloth which is light enough to wear around but can prevent someone's shots from penetrating your body. A very light kevlar vest might have the following statistics:

Damage Reduction: 4
Penetration Resistance: 16

This means that while it only sucks up a few (4) points of damage, it will stop a .44 magnum (15 points) from penetrating.

Unfortunately, against an M16 round (18 points base damage) it's pretty worthless.

In the advanced rules, though, while it wouldn't *automatically* stop the .44 shell it would have a chance to stop the M16 bullet.

That chance is called an armor save and it's a roll you make when you're hit to try to convert penetrating damage into impact damage—even if the base damage is higher than your armor's penetration resistance.

On the flip side, you have to make the roll as well when you're hit by an attack whose base damage is less than your armor's penetration resistance—the armor can fail.

The armor save is probably the most complicated part of the advanced rules and we aren't going to explain it in this sidebar. You can look it up when it becomes important.

Sub Minor Wound

Range: From 1 point to *less than* DP / 3

Effect: None unless the target is already hurt.

Common Visual Effects: bruises, small cuts, scrapes.

Any time you take even a point of damage, it's a wound. But that doesn't mean much: a healthy man who takes one point of damage won't be slowed down at all. Just record the damage taken and get on with it.

Minor Wound

Range: From DP / 3 to *less than* DP

Effect: Likely to stun or daze the target.

Common Visual Effects: Welt, swollen black eye, shallow stab wound.

A minor wound is what you could expect from a good punch to the face: you feel temporarily disoriented; your eyes tear-up; it hurts. When you take a minor wound you must make a CON roll on the damage effects chart (listed below). Depending on what you make or miss your roll by you could be stunned for an instant, dazed for several seconds, knocked down, or even knocked out . . . If you make a good roll, though, you might not be affected at all.

Major Wound

Range: From DP to *less than* DP x 2

Effect: Usually unconsciousness, possibly death.

Common Visual Effects: Bullet wound to the chest; expert, powerful, karate kick to the face; stab with a knife to a vital area of the chest; any decent cut with a sword.

A major wound is usually quitting time. Most targets will be dropped immediately and will be unconscious for a while (if not dying). A good hit with sword or a shot with a medium caliber gun will produce a major wound. Again, you roll on the damage effects chart and see what happens—but it's a lot worse than a minor wound.

Critical Wound

Range: Greater than 2x DP

Effect: Usually internal damage or death

Common Visual Effects: Any likely mortal wound.

If you take 2x your damage points in a single shot you're almost always going down. That's the equivalent of a shot in the face, a sword blow to the head or being stabbed in the heart. Characters with a high CON have a reasonable chance of surviving if medical attention is available (the chance of instantly dying is generally low in JAGS) but the fight is over.

From the section you just read it seems like even if you have 10 DP, taking ten 1pt wounds is nothing to worry about: after all, each wound is,

Condition Level

by itself, sub-minor. Not so. Wounds (even small ones) add up. That's why there's something called *condition level*. Condition level is a measure of how much total damage a character has taken. It works like this:

Another Explanation:

Here's a "short and sweet" description of the wound types for you to refer to:

- Less than 1/3rd of your DP is a **Sub Minor Wound**. For a man with 10 DP (average) that's 1 or 2 points.
- From 1/3rd to less than 1x your DP is a **Minor Wound**. For a man with 10 DP that's 3 to 9 points.
- Damage from 1x DP but less than 2x DP is a **Major Wound**. For a normal man with 10 DP that's 10 to 19 points.
- Damage equal to 2x or more DP is a **Critical Wound**. For a normal man that's 20+ points.

A : Worse Than Critical

As a dirty little secret of the advanced rules it's possible for a wound to be worse than critical. Each "Minor Wound" number of points you take above the Critical Wound number gives an additional -1 to the CON roll a character must make when he takes a hit. This means that a normal man with a CON of 10 has a "Minor Wound" number of 3. If he takes 29 points of damage that's above the 20 points necessary to make it a Critical Wound and the amount it's over is his Minor Wound 3x—he must make his CON roll at -3 (he's really likely to die!).

* * *

You don't usually think of having your head cut off as a minor wound—just a scratch, really.

I picked it up and turned it so I could look around: about as hard as the sobriety test when you're 'faced.

The punk with the sword was still there—he hadn't fled yet. Weird. Worse, he was just examining me. My luck—I run into a guy who doesn't use fire arms—and isn't scared by a Exo-Vampire.

* * *

Condition Chart

Condition Level	Total Damage Taken	Description
Normal Condition	Less than DP / 3	Character is basically fine
Hurt Condition	Damage Points / 3 +	Character may be bloodied, bruised
Injured Condition	Damage Points x1 +	Character is staggered or unconscious.
Serious Condition	Damage Points x2 +	Character is probably dying.
Dead	Damage Points x5	What you'd expect from the name.

Now, take all of that in and look at the *effects of each condition level*.

Wound Increase List

Condition	Wound Increase	Shock
Hurt	Sub-Minor Wounds become Minor Wounds	Shock has no effect
Injured	Minor Wounds become Major Wounds.	Shock Prone characters are automatically unconscious
Serious	Major Wounds become Critical Wounds. Sub-Minor Wounds become Major Wounds	Characters who are <i>not</i> Shock Resistant are automatically unconscious.

See how wound types increase as your condition level worsens? If you're at hurt condition (which means you took damage equal to a minor wound but less than a major wound) and then you get hit for one measly point of damage you still suffer the *effects* of a minor wound! You're badly hurt enough that even a light tap can have an adverse effect.

What about shock? Under the character creation rules (first chapter) there are rules for making your character Shock Resistant or Shock Prone depending on how you design him . . . this is where it has effects.

Now, you may note that the number for hurt condition is 1/3rd DP, the same as the number for a minor wound. It's the same for injured condition and major wounds (and serious condition and critical wounds). If you take a minor wound you're *automatically* at hurt condition (unless you've had cybernetic alterations or something weird). If you take a major wound *you are automatically at injured condition*. That's the way it works. . . but you're also at injured condition if you take a bunch of small wounds that *add up* to your total damage points.

Ex1: Bobby Tarandon, an amateur boxer, has 15 damage points (15 DP). His minor wound score is 5. His major wound score is 15. His critical wound score is 30. His hurt condition score is also 5 (injured condition happens at 15 points and, you guessed it, serious condition happens at 30 points).

He is hit in a street fight by several different people for a total of 9 points of damage. That's above his minor wound score of 5. Now, every time he's hit—even for one point—he has to make a CON roll on the minor wound table (see below).

How to Lose A Fist Fight

In battles where characters aren't getting run through by swords or mowed down by machine guns, this is how most fights will end:

- You take a couple of minor and sub-minor wounds. This may knock you around a bit but it probably won't drop you unless you're unlucky.
- You reach Injured condition as a result of total damage.
- Someone hits well and scores a minor wound—this (because of your condition level) becomes a major wound and you drop.

Of course, it might not happen like that. You could be hit for a minor wound and fail a CON roll *really* badly and drop right away.

If you have a high CON (or you're just lucky) you could fight on beyond Injured condition.

If you're just really tough (lots of DP) then even a good hit by an opponent might not do a minor wound—then, if you don't win, you probably won't go down until you're at Serious condition.

If he gets shot (later) for 18 points of damage, that's a major wound. It also blasts him into injured condition (since he has now taken more than 15 points of damage). If he gets hit for 6 points from a club what would normally be a minor wound goes to a major wound (it gets worsened one level) and Bobby is likely to drop!

Damage Effects Table

This is the table you check after making a CON roll. Find the type of wound you took and read across to the column with the amount you made your CON roll by. That's the effect you suffered. Simple, huh?

Take a look at the Damage Effects Chart:

Damage Effect Table Wound	No Effect	Stunned	Dazed	Unconscious	Internal Damage	Dying	Dead
Minor	+3 or More	+2 to +0	-1 to -3	-4 to -5	-6 to -10	Nil	Nil
Major	+8 or More	+7 to +5	+4 to +3	+2 to -1	-2 to -3	-4 to -5	-6 or worse
Critical	10 or More	+9 to +7	+6 to +5	+4 to -0	-1 to -3	-4 to -5	-6 or worse

Okay, now, if you just took a Minor Wound—that's damage greater than or equal to 1/3 of your DP and less than one times your DP—and you made your CON roll by 2 then you've been stunned by the blow. What does that mean? Read on . . .

Wound Effects

The effects of damage (listed across the top) range from No Effect to Dead. Both of those are pretty self explanatory but all that stuff in the middle has specific meanings which are explained below.

None: No effect, the target shrugs off the blow. Keep track of the damage points, though as a number of such insignificant blows can add up.

Stunned: You are temporarily disoriented. Your eyes tear-up, you feel groggy for a second . . . In short, you're stunned. The effects are:

- You lose 5 REA recovering. If you have 3 or more points left on the round you're hit you lose 3 – 5 from your remaining REA and suffer the rest of the effects until the end of the round. Otherwise, if you've spent all of your REA (or just have 1 or 2 left) you suffer the rest of the effects until you get to go on the *next* round. During that round you lose 5 REA immediately and suffer the rest of the listed effects until your turn comes—then you've recovered and get to act normally.
- You block attacks at -1 while you're stunned.
- If you were making a *long* action and got stunned the action still happens normally—you pay *after* the action completes (so if you were running away and you get stunned as you turn to go, you still get to run—you just lose the REA after your move stops.)

* * *

Erin had the plasma-hammer going—I could feel the heat from the other side of the ridge. It was three hours into the night cycle and the front looked like sunrise.

Seconds counted in this and I came over the top pouring laser fire on targets I didn't take time to aim at. On the comm-link Erin was bellowing and firing. Clouds of plasma rose from the tight beam of hellfire coming from the close-combat assault weapon.

I could see right away that the rest of the squad was dead. The wave of Horde had been boiled to component sub-atomic elements by the hammer but it hadn't been fast enough to save his mate and, swarming out of the three tactical worm-hole gates, the Horde kept coming.

I watched their molecularly thin claw tips tear up the rock. As he swept left to right they poured in from the left, trying to reach him.

I set my laser to wide-beam and slammed into the ground beside Erin. He blew it and one of the brown, fleshy Horde hurtled itself under the arc-light of the plasma hammer. I felt it puncture the armor around my leg.

Ex1: Harry Lazano, a middle manager at a technology company, gets into a fight with someone from the marketing department and punches them in the nose. Lazano hits for 4 points of damage and causes a minor wound to the marketing scum's face (the author works for a technology company as an engineer . . .)

The marketing person has 11 REA normally and spent 3 in an unsuccessful attempt to block. He's got 8 points left when Harry lands his blow—enough to hit back with. However, since he was stunned, he loses 5 REA and then only has 3 left (enough to block with) but he blocks at -1. The next turn, though, the guy will be un-stunned and acting normally (well, not quite—because he took 4 points of damage . . . but cumulative effects are explained a little later).

Ex2: After blocking once, Bobar—a warrior—charges towards an invading Easterner. The Easterner sees the huge, unwashed lump of muscle hurtling itself at him and tries to stop him with a quick sword thrust. Too bad, though, Bobar is only stunned. However, Bobar has a 13 REA and has spent 3 for the block and 8 for the move: he only has 2 left and the stunned effect doesn't stop him in his tracks (abort the long action).

Since Bobar has 2 REA left (a pretty useless number) he doesn't pay the REA on this turn—but at the beginning of his next turn he only has 8 REA ($13 - 5 = 8$) to spend . . . and he blocks at -1 until his turn to go comes up.

What if Bobar had somehow had 3 or 4 points left in a turn that he was stunned? The answer is that Bobar gets un-stunned without paying the full 5 REA—he gets off easy because the game system rounds up (and assumes that paying 3 or 4 is basically just like paying 5 REA).

Dazed: You've taken a heavy hit—you could be staggering around for a few seconds. When a character is dazed it's similar to being stunned but a lot worse:

- The character loses 8 REA in the same fashion that stunned costs 8 REA. If the character has only 5 to 7 REA left in a turn in which he becomes dazed he pays that amount.
- If the character has 1 to 4 REA left, that goes away—but it does *not* count towards the next turn of being dazed (see the example).
- After one turn of being dazed (either the turn you were hit or the turn thereafter—whenever you first pay the 8 REA) you get a CON roll at the beginning of the round to recover on that round. If you make it, you act normally that round—otherwise you're dazed until the next second when you get to roll again.
- Dazed characters are at -2 to block and -2 to strike.
- Dazed characters move at half speed.
- A Dazed character is at half Grapple Score for purposes of grabbing or breaking grabs.

I killed it without thinking—the wound hurt so bad you wouldn't believe it for about a second before the suit cut in and amputated—so the toxins wouldn't get me.

As the leg switched to robotic I fired high. You can't stop—you can't even pause. All that training for aim was out the window. I'd had enough—I put my last atomic grenade dead center in one of the grayish worm-holes. In synchronization, they winked out. Ha!

"Erin," I managed. Next to the hammer even the tight-beam communicator was full of static. He fumbled to shut it down.

"Yeah?" he said. He sounded almost laconic as he struggled to keep the thundering weapon under control. His right arm was in robot-mode. The suit had taken his right foot too. The scars on his armor suggested it might be even worse.

"We got to get out," I said. "They hit the Westminster Command Complex. Charon high-command was wiped out sixty-three minutes ago. They opened worm-holes and unleashed the Horde on the station."

"Crud," Erin said.

He looked at me and I could see where the suit—capable of vivisectioning the human body to keep it alive—had cut down into the right half of his brain. Whatever was left of him had been capable of firing the hammer—and that was all that mattered.

"Erin, buddy," I said, not sure what else to say. "How long does the suit say you . . . have . . . uh . . ."

"Suit says I'm fine," Erin said. "Unlimited action."

"But . . . your brain . . ."

"Hey," Erin said smiling, "we're infantry."

* * *

- As an optional rule a dazed character must make a CON roll (another one) or fall down. The GM can ignore this as it tends to slow down play.
- A dazed result will stop a *long* action immediately (the REA for the action is, instead, spent on the Daze).

Ex1: Louis Makloff (12 points of REA), a muscled Super-Mart attendant, charges towards a costumed criminal (who was sold a faulty television that they refused to take back) who is in the process of using his sonic beam to wreck the housewares department.

The super villain turns the sonic beam on Louis who is dazed by the damage. The super villain can choose at what point along Louis's path to open up with the sound beam—he decides to play with Louis and let him get close before zapping him. He shoots Louis at about 2 yards range. The dazed effect causes Louis to *lose the results of the long action—the REA is wasted*. But, because the villain let him get close, he's just about where he wanted to be. The villain *could* have stopped him just as he started moving.

Louis spent 8 REA (to pay the daze off) to move and has 4 left—not enough to attack with, and he can't block. The beam stops his movement immediately (terminates the long action) and leaves him gasping for breath and disoriented.

At the beginning of the next turn, Louis makes his CON roll to recover and makes it! He acts normally that turn. The villain has turned away, back to his systematic destruction. Louis slips the loaded shot gun out from under his coat: "Hail to the king, baby!"

Ex2: A character goes first in a round and spends all but 4 of his REA on attacks. He is then hit and dazed. He loses the 4 REA and suffers the dazed effects—but *next turn he also has to pay 8 REA and suffer the dazed effects*. The turn after *that*, he'll get a roll to recover.

Unconscious: The character drops unconscious. If you're at normal or hurt condition, make a CON roll to recover in 3 seconds. If you miss it, make another to recover in 3 minutes. If you miss that you recover in 3 or more hours (the GM can have you make another roll—if you miss it by 5 or more you could slip into a coma . . .) If you're worse than Hurt, make a roll to recover in 3 minutes.

When you're unconscious you immediately fall down and are at +5 to be hit by all attacks aimed at you (and, of course, no AGI bonus). Needless to say, you can't grapple, grab, or otherwise take any actions—you're out cold.

Internal Damage: Internal damage means some organs got bruised (or ruptured), bones got broken, etc. If the damage was to a limb (see the advanced combat section for rules on targeting limbs) the limb is probably broken.

Multiple Wounds in the Same Turn:

If you've already taken a wound during a given turn you don't suffer any effects of lesser wounds. This counts even if you've paid the REA to recover.

A person can only be stunned once in a turn. After that, only a result of Dazed or worse will have any effect.

This is because the wound effects last for the entire turn, not just until you've paid the REA for them.

Otherwise, if the damage was from energy or a blunt (impact) blow you're automatically unconscious for three minutes (or more if you miss a CON roll). If the damage came from a penetrating source (a knife, sword, or bullet) make another CON roll. If you make this, you are treated as dazed (see above) and your CON drops by 2 points for *all further rolls until the damage heals*.

Additionally, you bleed. The full rules for bleeding are covered in the advanced section. In the basic combat section use the below list:

- Minor Penetration Wound—the character will lose 20 – CON damage points before the bleeding stops.
- Major Penetration Wound—the character will die in CON minutes unless aided.
- Critical Penetration Wound—the character will die in CON x 10 seconds unless aided.

Dying: You've had an artery severed, a lung collapsed, or some severe trauma to the head (these are only a few of the possibilities). Unless aided (by someone with Medical Skill at Level 2—the roll to save you is at –3 for a character with Medical Skill Level 1) you will die in CON x 2 seconds. Your character is unconscious and CON is reduced by three *until all damage is healed*.

Dead: Your character has died instantly. There may be some chance of "restoring" the body. Usually a Level 4 medical roll will bring a character back from this (other unorthodox means may also exist . . .)

Switching to the Advanced Combat System

When do you switch over to the advanced rules? Whenever you want to, of course. Once you're started using the advanced rules in the sidebar you're probably ready to move to the advanced section—but honestly, the only reason we split the sections up was for ease of reading. The sum-total of the JAGS combat rules seemed to be too much for people to take in all at once so we made it easier. If you consider yourself an "advanced roleplayer" who likes complicated, intricate, combat sessions you could start by taking a stab at the advanced rules . . . and maybe even some of the optional rules as well.

Integrated Combat Example (with an Advanced Rule)

Dalton, a modern day fencing instructor, finds himself transported to the 17th century with his family's dueling sword. He's standing in a field, facing the man who slew his great, great, whatever, grandfather.

Initiative Rolls: The GM rolls for the noble and the player rolls for Dalton. The Noble makes his roll by 2 (he has a 13 REA and rolls an 11). Dalton makes his roll by 3 (he has a 13 REA and rolls a 10).

Dalton goes first.

The two are far apart so Dalton declares a Move action to start running. His run (he can't immediately sprint) could take him all the way to the man but he doesn't want to reach him just yet so he circles. He doesn't want to strike this turn so he ends his turn.

Buying the Action: Dalton's player buys the action move. He spends 8 of his 13 REA and then, wanting to be able to block, he simply declares that his turn is over.

NOTE: Although he "ends his turn" he can still block or dodge—he just can't strike, move, or do anything else. If he wanted to take a Wait maneuver, he could (and then he'd be able to react with a thrust from his sword, for example). However, since he already moved, a Wait maneuver would cost him 2 REA and that would leave him with 3—too little to attack with! This is an application of an advanced rule: *Waiting*.

The other guy, Lord Monroe, (also 13 REA) gets to go. Dalton is circling so he starts moving too (8 REA). As Dalton has 5 REA left, but isn't waiting, he charges straight at Dalton and strikes with his sword.

Why he charged: If Dalton had enough REA to move and *then* wait and *then* strike, charging wouldn't be such a good idea. Monroe would stand the chance of being hit on the way in.

Since Dalton ended his turn he can't respond as Monroe closes.

NOTE: Sword blows usually cost about 6 or 7 REA for a medium sized sword and a normal strike. As both of these men are Level 3 swordsmen, they can execute the thrust for the same REA as a punch (5).

Dalton sees the man charge and then strike. He declares a block for 3 REA and successfully deflects the man's attack.

Roll To Strike: Monroe has a sword skill of 15- and Dalton has an AGI of 13. This means that the GM (playing Monroe) must roll a 12 or less to hit Dalton (skill of 15 minus 3 for Dalton's AGI).

The GM gets an 11 and hits by 1 for purposes of damage but by 4 for purposes of blocking.

From the moment I saw the blade, over my father's fireplace almost two decades ago, I knew it was special.

It wasn't just that it was old—or ornate. It was the strange glow in the firelight that told me it was not only a weapon . . . but a key.

I stood in the orchard, just after dawn, facing the man whose picture I had studied in two-century-old oil paints in the family archives.

He smiles, expecting me—recognizing the blade. For my part, there is nothing to say. A snap of a salute—in deference to history and then the cool flood of adrenaline that marks combat.

I circle, balanced, ready. Carefully skirting the edge of his striking zone, I let him come.

He does. My father was a peasant, as every bit as unskilled with the sword as the pen. We were a line of peasants and for Lord Monroe, in his age, peasants are not taught the sword.

The blades kiss as I deflect his blow. My turn.

I see the shock in his eyes as the nerves in his hand carry the sensation of the parry up his arm. I try to beat them to his brain.

* * *

Dalton's Block: Dalton ended his turn—but he still gets to take defensive actions, like blocks, if he has the REA. He does (he's got 5 REA left). So he blocks.

Dalton's skill is 17- and he's Level 3 with the sword. Checking the Skill table we see that at Level 3 your block roll is equal to your skill roll. Dalton has a 17- block roll and has to make his roll by 4. He rolls a 12, making his roll by 5.

The block is successful and the strike is deflected.

Both men end their turn—Dalton has 2 REA left but it isn't enough to do anything with and Lord Monroe spent all of his.

A New Turn Begins: So you roll initiative again.

They roll initiative again. This time Dalton lucks out and makes his REA roll by 8. Monroe makes his by 3. When Dalton gets to go first, he declares a strike.

The Strike: Dalton's strike cost him 5 REA and he rolls to hit and gets a 4. Monroe's AGI is 12 so Dalton's chance to hit was 17 (skill) – 2 (target's AGI above 10). He needed a 15- and he rolled a 4. He hit by *eleven for purposes of damage*. Worse, he made his skill roll by 13 so Monroe needs to make his block roll by 13 or more!

The Block: Monroe declares a block but needs to roll a 2 or less to parry the attack. He rolls an 8, fails to block, and gets hit.

The Damage Roll: Dalton has a STR and BLD of 11. The sword does +6 penetrating damage. Dalton's *base damage* with the sword is 7 (he gets no bonus for BLD because he isn't big enough).

Since the attack is penetrating (swords are sharp) and he hit by 4 or more (a vital target) the amount he hit by is *doubled*. So he makes a damage roll and adds 22!

He rolls a 14. The total is $14 + 22 = 36$. On the chart that's 4x damage—a stab through the eye! The damage is $7 \times 4 = 28$ points.

The Wound Type: Lord Monroe has 12 Damage points. His *minor wound* is 4, his *major wound* is 12, and his *critical wound* is 24. He's taken 28 points in one hit—a critical wound.

The Wound Effect Roll: Monroe has an 11 CON and makes a roll. He rolls a 15, missing his CON roll by 4. On the *critical wound chart* that's a dying result: Instant unconsciousness and shortly, death. Monroe drops.

As the man slumps, Dalton looks down at the body . . . and the blood on his sword.

What if Monroe was Armored?

Let's suppose Monroe was wearing full plate mail (like an armored knight). Checking the tables in the back of the book we see that Plate Mail has a Damage Reduction of 6 and a Penetration Resistance of 12.

Because Dalton's *base damage* with the sword is below 12—the Penetration Resistance of his target's armor, the damage is treated as impact instead of penetrating.

Okay, so how does that effect?

Two ways:

- Vital hits (hits by 4+ *don't* double the damage modifier) and . . .
- Damage is rolled on the impact damage chart.

So, Dalton's hit, with the same damage roll would be: $14 + 11 = 25$ on the *impact damage chart*.

That result is 1.5x damage or $(7 \times 1.5) = 11$ points. Since the armor has a damage reduction of 6, Monroe only takes 5 of those.

That's still a minor wound and he blew his CON roll by 4: unconsciousness. Dalton could kill him while he's down . . . but he seems like a sporting fellow (Monroe is still in pretty good condition so, if he makes a CON roll he'll get up in three seconds).