



THE HERO SYSTEM

GENRE BY GENRE

One of the best things about the *HERO System* is that once you learn the rules, you can use it to create games for *any* genre, time period, or setting. Campaigns as diverse as gritty modern espionage, fantasy tales featuring demigods, epic science fiction wars with starships and battlemechs, and crimefighting four-color superheroes all work with the *HERO System*.

To help you get started learning the *HERO System* and deciding what sort of game you want to run, this chapter provides a brief overview of the major genres common to roleplaying games, and shows you how to play characters and campaigns in them using the *HERO System*. It reviews some of the major elements or important features of each genre, and explains how you can simulate them with the *HERO System* rules. Each section also includes one or two sample characters you can use as guidelines for creating your own characters or NPCs for scenarios you plan to run.

So, what are you waiting for? It's time to learn how to **BE A HERO!**

What Page Was That Again?

Throughout this document, you'll find lots of page references. All of these are to the *HERO System 5th Edition* core rulebook, available from fine game and hobby stores. If you're having trouble finding a copy, check out the *Hero Retailers* page at www.herogames.com.

For Further Information

If you'd like to learn more about the *HERO System*, or you have questions, please visit the Hero Games website — **www.herogames.com**. It contains lots of free downloads, information about our current products and future releases, and an active message board with over 1,700 registered members. You can post and read messages without being a registered member, though — and there are plenty of fans who will be glad to help you out, tell you more about the *HERO System*, and answer your questions. You can also e-mail the company at info@herogames.com.

COMIC BOOK SUPERHEROES

CHAMPIONS

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Hero Games refers to using the *HERO System* rules for comic book superheroes games as *Champions* because the system itself, and the company, got started in this genre over twenty years ago by publishing a game with that name. To many gamers, *Champions* and the *HERO System* are synonymous, though the rules can do a lot more than just create superheroes and villains. Even if a name like, say, *Super Hero* would make more sense descriptively and thematically, so many gamers know what *Champions* is and means that we can't resist keeping the name alive.

Men with the strength to lift battleships, flying through the air wearing gaudy, caped costumes. Mighty heroes in armor made not of simple leather and steel, but advanced polymers and alloys and circuitry, and equipped with enough weaponry to defeat a tank battalion. Beautiful women who can fire power-bolts from their eyes. Megalomaniacal villains determined to conquer the world — or destroy it. Villainous organizations, powerful occult conspiracies, the highest of high technology. All this, and more, you can find in the pages of comic books — and in the roleplaying campaigns inspired by them.

Campaign Guidelines And Standards

In *HERO System* terms, *Champions* campaigns are almost always Superheroic. Typically characters are built as Standard Superheroic characters, with 200 Base Points and up to 150 more points from Disadvantages. Published *Champions* characters use this guideline. Gamemasters who prefer slightly less powerful characters are more likely to choose Low-Powered Superheroic (150 Base Points + 100 Disadvantages); other GMs want their players to have more points to work with, and use the High-Powered or even Very High-Powered guidelines.

As discussed on page 338, many *Champions* GMs (gamemasters) choose to impose restrictions, or “caps,” on the amount of Active Points a *Champions* character can have in any one power. Fifty, 60, or 75 point caps are the most common for a typical Standard Superheroic game, 40 or 50 points for a lower-powered game, and sometimes as much as 90 points or more for higher-powered campaigns. The other guidelines and restrictions listed in the tables on page 15 of the core rulebook are usually also applied. On the other hand, some GMs prefer not to set point caps and just evaluate each character and his powers individually.

Genre Conventions And Features

The superhero genre is so large and varied that it's difficult to provide any sort of capsule description of it. Even when two comic books look similar from the outside, they can prove to have very different stories and artistic styles on the inside. The genre ranges from the most ridiculous and childish of four-colored stories, to the darkest and grimmest “realistic” heroes, with everything in between appearing somewhere during the history of the medium. So, the possibilities for a *Champions* campaign are just about endless.

Nevertheless, there are a few common “bits” that most people associate with comic book superheroes.

Here are a few of them, and how you can simulate them using the *HERO System* rules.

Costumes: More than anything besides superpowers, what distinguishes superheroes from heroes in other genres is their clothing — or, more precisely, their costumes. Ranging from skintight suits, to powered armor, to stylish leathers, costumes tend to be bright and colorful, often revealing without being too risqué, or in other ways attention-grabbing. Even costumes supposedly designed for stealth are usually visually distinctive. Many come with masks (to hide the character's identity) and capes.

In game terms, there's usually nothing you have to do to “build” or create your costume — you just get to have fun dreaming it up, and maybe even drawing it (or having someone draw it for you). However, in some cases, the costume itself provides powers — a suit of powered armor has defensive and weapons technology, a magical cape allows its wearer to fly, a high-tech headband grants the owner psychic powers. Costumes like that you have to pay Character Points for. To create them, you buy whatever Powers or abilities you want, and then apply an appropriate Limitation. Costumes are usually a *Focus* (see page 187), though it's better to buy some costumes (such as some types of powered armor) with the Limitation *Only In Heroic Identity* (page 197) instead.

Impossible technology and super-science: Most comic books are full of amazing technology that simply cannot exist in the real world — everything from blaster pistols, to suits of powered armor able to increase the wearer's strength a thousandfold, to time travel devices, and beyond. This sort of “super-science” (and the characters able to manipulate it) are a staple of most comic book settings.

In *HERO System* terms, most personal items of technology (like weapons, shields, magic wands, and the like) are bought as Powers with the Limitation *Focus*. If the *Focus* is easily taken away from a character (like a gun, an enchanted amulet, a power-staff, or a shield), it's an Accessible *Focus*. Foci that are harder to remove (suits of armor, power rings, bracers) are Inaccessible. Most Foci in a superheroes campaign are Obvious, but a few are Inobvious. See page 187 for more information about *Focus*.

Bigger types of technology — vehicles, secret headquarters, robots, and the like — are bought differently. Chapter Four, *Equipment*, has rules for creating Automatons (robots, golems, the undead, and so forth), Bases, Vehicles, and Weapons using the *HERO System*.

Radiation accidents: “Radiation accident” is the slang term for the amazing coincidences and accidents that give ordinary people superpowers. Just like Spiderman got his powers from the bite of a radioactive spider, the Fantastic Four got theirs from cosmic rays, and the Flash got his from a laboratory

disaster, your character may have a similarly far-fetched — but fun! — origin.

The origin you choose for your character may have all sorts of consequences in the game. Primarily, it explains where your character's superpowers come from, and what they're like. As you develop the origin story more, and think about your character in more detail, you may think of additional powers your character should have, or that he might acquire someday. Additionally, your character's origin may help you determine who his enemies are, why he fights crime, and many other fascinating details.

Secret identities: In most comic book settings, most superheroes maintain secret identities. Because they don't want their homes and loved ones threatened by maniacal supervillains and other enemies, they wear masks and take other steps to keep their true names and identities concealed from the world at large.

In *HERO System* terms, a secret identity is a Disadvantage — a form of *Social Limitation* that your character receives more points for. See pages 220-21 for more information.

Superpowers: What makes a superhuman a superhuman is that he has *superpowers* — strange abilities beyond those of ordinary men. The range of superpowers is virtually infinite, ranging from super-strength, to super-speed, to the power to walk through walls, to the ability to control other peoples' minds, to walking effortlessly up walls, to anything in between.

The *HERO System* is ideally suited for creating superhero characters because its rules offers you complete flexibility in the creation of these all-important superpowers. Using Powers, Power Modifiers, and other game elements, you can create just about any ability you can think of. If you don't want to create your own right away, you can use the hundreds of example powers listed in the sidebars of the 5th Edition from pages 88 to 202. You can also look at example characters, like the two below, and use their powers as guidelines and inspiration (or even just “steal” them for use as a PC or NPC if you want).

Superteams: Unlike many other adventure genres, the comic book superheroes genre has a long and proud tradition of using groups of characters — superteams — instead of focusing on just a single character all the time. This makes the genre a good one for gamers, who usually play in gaming groups.

Superteams typically have something in common, be it a mutual origin, common goals (like “protect the world from evil and injustice!”), or ties of friendship and romance. They often share resources, like vehicles and headquarters. In *HERO System* terms, you can take Perks like *Vehicle/Base* (page 60) to represent a team's technology, *Fringe Benefit: National Police Powers* (page 58) to represent their government sanction, and the *Power Enhanced Senses* (page 105) to create advanced communicators for each member to carry.

Truth, justice, and the American way: Most comic books feature heroes who obey strict, if informal, codes of conduct. They don't use unnecessary violence, and in particular they never kill their opponents. They stand for all that's right and good, promoting “truth, justice, and the American way” not

only through their actions on the battlefield, but their conduct in day-to-day life. They don't hesitate to oppose injustice or risk their life to save others.

Because living up to the “superhero code” can restrict a character's actions and make him put himself in danger, the *HERO System* represents it through a Disadvantage called *Psychological Limitation* (see page 219). Characters can express the superhero code through many different types of Psychological Limitations. The most common is *Code Versus Killing*; in other campaigns, characters take *Fearlessly Heroic*, *True-Blue Hero*, *Code Of The Hero* instead of, or in addition to, a “CVK.”

Of course, not every superhero follows the code; some famous and beloved characters achieved their popularity in part because they choose a different way to approach crimefighting. You can do the same thing with your character in most games. If you have any questions or concerns, talk with the GM to determine what sort of characters he wants to have in his campaign, and how he suggests you represent them with Psychological Limitations.

World threats: In comic books, particularly those featuring an entire team of superheroes, the freedom, security, and/or existence of Earth itself become endangered from time to time (sometimes, almost every issue!). Whether it's a megalomaniacal supervillain bent on world conquest, an alien armada

sent to subjugate humanity, or a madman's threat to unleash a fatal plague, the heroes find themselves pitting their might against their enemies in contests where the fate of the entire world is on the line.

In game terms, the basic outline of the plot or story the characters participate in is up to the GM. He decides to start a story in which, say, Mechanon threatens to kill everyone on Earth. But it's up to the players to decide how their characters oppose this threat and what they do to stop the fiendish robotic master villain.

Character Archetypes

Because the superhero genre is so varied, you can create a character with just about any combination of powers and abilities you can think of. But to at least some degree, most characters tend to fall into certain "archetypes." Some of these archetypes are:

Brick

"Brick" is gamer slang for characters whose main superpowers are super-strength and superior resistance to injury. Examples from the comics include Superman, the Hulk, the Thing, and the Rhino. In game terms, a brick character usually has high STR (usually as high as the campaign standards allow), CON, and PD and ED. He may buy Damage Resistance or Armor so he can bounce bullets off his skin. Using Powers, you can build all sorts of "Strength Tricks" for the character, such as the ability to clap his hands together so hard he creates a deafening shockwave (a Hearing Group Flash Attack with the *Explosion Advantage*).

Energy Projector

An "energy projector" is a character with the ability to manipulate some form of energy, be it fire, ice, a mysterious "cosmic energy," or the weather. Examples from the comics include the Human Torch, Storm, and Green Lantern. Most "EPs" (as some gamers call them) have Energy Blast, Flight, and Force Field among their typical powers, and often some other, unusual abilities (like Absorption, Aid, Telekinesis, or Teleportation).

Gadgeteer

The gadgeteer is a hero who relies upon his skill with technology and devices — "gadgets" — to fight crime. He doesn't usually possess superpowers himself, but instead builds them in the form of jetpacks (Flight), blaster pistols (Energy Blast), personal cloaking screens (Invisibility), defensive shields (Force Field), and so on. (A few gadgeteers do have powers like the ability to manipulate machines with their minds, however.) Examples from the comics include Hank Pym (during some stages of his career), the Fixer/Techno, and in some respects Batman.

There are two main ways to create a gadgeteer character using the *HERO System*. The first, and easiest for someone new to the game, is simply to buy each gadget the character wants individually. The GM might let you place some gadgets in a Power Framework to save points. The other way, which is more complicated but also more flexible, is to use a Variable Power Pool. A VPP gives your character the ability to change his gadgets in mid-game, but that requires some work on your part. See pages 209-10

regarding VPPs; there's even an example "Gadget Pool" you can use.

Martial Artist

A martial artist uses his skills at fighting to combat crime. He's usually been trained in the fighting arts (*i.e.*, he has the *Martial Arts Skill*; see pages 44, 254, and 264-267), and he typically has other acrobatic and athletic abilities as well. Examples from the comics include Batman, Daredevil, Moon Knight, the Question, and Shang-Chi.

Most martial artists spend a lot of points on Skills — by percentage, significantly more than other characters. However, they often supplement their Skills with various powers and equipment, such as weapons, extra inches of Running or Leaping, reconnaissance gear, heightened senses, and so forth. With clever use of Powers (and Talents), you can create all sorts of interesting abilities for them.

Mentalist

A mentalist (also called a "psi") relies on the awesome powers of the mind. He can control the will of others, create illusions so real they injure their victims, locate another person's mind from miles away, blast his enemies with psychic attacks, and so forth. Examples from the comics include Professor X, Marvel Girl/Phoenix, and Moondragon.

To create a mentalist character, you should increase his EGO (which is important for mental combat) and then buy him plenty of Mental Powers, often in a Multipower or other Power Framework (see page 78). Some mentalists favor psychokinetic powers, which they can simulate with Telekinesis, Force Wall, Missile Deflection, and the like. For an unusual surprise attack, a mentalist can buy powers with the Advantage *Based On Ego Combat Value*.

Metamorph

"Metamorph" is a catch-all term for superhumans who can change the shape, size, or structure of their bodies. Some can become much larger (or smaller) than normal humans, while others can contort their bodies in all sorts of ways. Examples from the comics include Mr. Fantastic, Antman, Changeling, Apocalypse, Giant-Man, and the Atom.

If you want to create a metamorph, take a look at the Body-Affecting Powers (page 76) and Size Powers (page 85). Most of the abilities you want you can find listed among those Powers. For a stretching character like Mr. Fantastic, Stretching is obviously the way to go; for a character who can change his shape, look into Multiform or Shape Shift.

Mystic

A "mystic" is a character who relies on his ability to evoke and control magical forces, or his magical nature, to fight crime. A mystic might be a powerful spellcaster, a kindhearted person cursed with lycanthropy, an enchanted warrior from another dimension, or a demon kicked out of Hell for being too nice. Examples from the comics include Dr. Strange, Dr. Fate, the Phantom Stranger, John Constantine, and Werewolf By Night.

Like gadgeteers, mystics can be difficult to build, because you want to allow for a wide range of abilities while keeping the character easy to play. The main ways to do this are the same, too: either buy the

character's main abilities individually (or perhaps, in part, through a Power Framework), or use a "Magic Pool" created with a Variable Power Pool. You should also consider some appropriate Knowledge Skills and perhaps some other interesting abilities (such as Martial Arts) to round the character out.

Patriot

A "patriot" is a character whose outlook, abilities, and/or appearance embody some concept or theme (typically one associated with the United States or some other nation, hence the name). Examples from the comics include Captain America and Captain Britain.

Patriots don't have any particular unifying set of powers, since their abilities derive from whatever theme or subject they embody. A patriot who's the living manifestation of surrealism will have very different abilities from one embodying the fighting spirit of America. Thus, most patriots also fit into some other archetype (often martial artist or brick).

Powered Armor

A "powered armor" character (sometimes also called a "battlesuit") derives his powers from a suit of high-tech armor that contains defensive and offensive capabilities. As such, he combines some features of the gadgeteer and the energy projector, sometimes with aspects of the brick and the weaponmaster as well. Examples from the comics include Iron Man, War Machine, and the Red Ranger.

Powered armor characters often have a lot of different powers, but most fall into a few specific categories. First, they have at least one strong defensive power — usually Armor, but sometimes Force Field and/or Damage Reduction. Second, they have built-in weaponry, usually defined as a Multipower of Attack Powers and called a "weapons array" or something of the sort. They may also have high STR. Third, they have Flight (a few armored suits rely on other forms of movement). Fourth, they have a collection of miscellaneous useful abilities built into their armor — Enhanced Senses, Life Support, and so on.

Most powered armor characters define their armor as an Obvious Inaccessible Focus, taking that Limitation on most (if not all) of the Powers they buy. For greater security, some prefer to use the *Only In Heroic Identity* Limitation instead. Most also have some Skills and abilities they can use when not in their armor (including the Skills needed to create the armor in the first place) — after all, it's not very heroic to be helpless most of the time!

Speedster

A speedster is a character who relies on movement, usually very rapid movement, as his primary superpower. Examples from the comics include the Flash, Quicksilver, and Northstar and Aurora.

To create a speedster, you first need to choose your character's primary movement power, and buy a lot of it. Most speedsters rely on Running (or on a variant, *Flight Only In Contact With A Surface*, so they can easily run up buildings and across the surface of bodies of water). However, speedsters based on Flight, Teleportation, or other forms of movement are possible.

In combat, speedsters find ways to use their ability to move at hypervelocity to hurt or impair

their foes. They often have Combat Skill Levels and/or extra defenses for performing Move Bys and Move Throughs, or create special abilities like "super-fast punching" (a large HA, defined as "I punch him 100 times in the blink of an eye") or "dismantle gadgets" (typically bought as a type of Dispel). Plenty of possibilities exist.

Weaponmaster

A weaponmaster character picks a particular type of weapon, such as the bow or the sword, and becomes so skilled with it that he can compete in the superhuman arena. Examples include Green Arrow, Hawkeye, and the Black Knight.

To create a weaponmaster, first you need to make sure he has the right type of weapon. It might be an ordinary weapon, a heavily modified high-tech version of a normal weapon, or even an enchanted (or otherwise unique) weapon. Many weaponmasters define their weapons with Multipowers, since they can do so many things with them, but this isn't required. A weaponmaster usually also has a generous helping of Skills — Combat Skill Levels with his weapon, Martial Arts for when an enemy disarms him, stealth and infiltration abilities, and so forth.

Subgenres

There are many different "subgenres" and styles of superhero game, each simulating or reflecting a particular period in comics history, or a particular type of character or storytelling.

Golden Age Champions

"The Golden Age" refers to the comics in the period around World War II and some years thereafter, and usually focuses on the activities of superheroes and villains during the War. While the adventures typically consist of fighting enemies and villains on the homefront, some campaigns allow the PCs to invade Europe, participate in famous battles, and the like.

Golden Age Champions superheroes are usually built on fewer points than other heroes (often the Low-Powered variant of 100 Base Points + 150 Disadvantages), and are usually simpler and easier to construct. They tend not to have complicated or unusual powers — after all, at this stage of history, superhumans are a new thing, and just having a plain old Energy Blast or Flight ability is remarkable enough, without slapping lots of Advantages on it!

Silver Age Champions

Comics historians and fans use the term "the Silver Age" to describe the period from roughly 1956 to 1972 (although some choose different dates). During this time, many classic characters (including all the most famous Marvel characters) were created or re-defined, and many motifs and themes now common to comics (such as a focus on the perils and problems that come from being a superhero) emerged. The style is eclectic, often retaining some of the innocence and pure heroism of the Golden Age, but tinged (particularly later on) with the social awareness and "realism" that became important in comics in later years. Heroes are typically colorful, with bright costumes and larger-than-life attitudes.

In many ways, Silver Age Champions represents the "typical" or "default" type of *Champions*

campaign. It's a great era for teams of superheroes, and features all the common "bits" without altering any of them too much. It appeals to gamers who don't want their games to become too serious or "gritty" — who enjoy a combination of action and humor touched by drama. Silver Age heroes are usually built on the Low-Powered total of 150 Base Points + 100 Disadvantages.

Bronze Age Champions

"The Bronze Age" refers to the comics of the 1970s and early '80s. Comics during this period are marked primarily by a slow shift away from the "Comics Code"-oriented stories and characters of the Silver Age to more mature themes. Heroes sometimes found themselves confronting issues of mortality, societal unrest, drug abuse, and the like.

Bronze Age heroes are usually built on the Standard 200 Base Points + 150 Disadvantages. Some variations on the theme focus on lower-powered heroes and how they interact with normal humans (who are much more of a potential threat to them than they are to normal, four-color superheroes).

Iron Age Champions

"The Iron Age" refers to comics from the mid-1980s until the present day. During this time, the trends that began in the Bronze Age continued. The Comics Code was often ignored altogether, as heroes and stories shifted from gaudy costumes and "simple" heroic attitudes and conduct, and more towards "realism" and "grittiness": characters favor darker costumes, leather, and the like; they're more likely to kill or seriously injure their opponents; they have a harder, more practical, attitude toward superheroing; and they spend more time coping with the "realistic" implications of having superpowers, the effects of their powers on the world around them, and so forth. The settings are often more likely to be inner-city environments or other "realistic" places instead of a supervillain's secret headquarters or a space station. In short, the heroes often are no longer "four-color," as gamers sometimes call Golden and Silver Age characters. Iron Age heroes are usually built on the Standard 200 Base Points + 150 Disadvantages.

Galactic Champions

"Galactic Champions" refers to superhero campaigns taking place away from Earth and/or in the far future. The superheroes in this case are usually similar to Silver Age heroes, but come from a dizzying variety of sentient species and planets. In many cases a hero's powers are not true superpowers *per se*, but simply manifestations of abilities native to his species — it's just that his species is so rarely encountered that he's distinctive in the regions where the team operates.

Galactic Champions characters are usually built with High-Powered, or greater, Superheroic character guidelines. After all, they're operating on a cosmic scale, saving the entire universe from all kinds of threats. They have to be tough — most of them need to be able to survive unprotected in the vacuum of space, or in unusual atmospheres. Given the high-tech nature of the setting they usually operate in, most have a few technical Skills as well.

Teen Champions

Comic books sometimes focus on superheroes who are young and new to crimefighting — teen heroes, like the early X-Men, their successors the New Mutants, the early Teen Titans, and so forth. Characters in these campaigns are usually powerful but one-dimensional. They're new to their powers and haven't learned how to use them to full effect yet. Instead of having a Multipower of different Energy Blasts, they have a single Energy Blast — and no Combat Skill Levels. They may have speedster powers, but they can't always stop in time or keep them under control. They can teleport, but only themselves and only over short distances. As time goes by and they gain more experience (in game terms, Experience Points), they develop more powers, learn how to use their powers more effectively, and so forth.

Teen Champions campaigns also focus on the characters' real lives. It's tough to save the world when you have a term paper due the next day and you haven't asked anyone to the prom yet! There's a lot of potential for humor, drama, and gaming fun.

To get the right feel for a Teen Champions campaign, most GMs require players to build Low-Powered Superheroic characters, or sometimes characters with even *fewer* Character Points (say, 100 Base + 100 Disadvantages). That way they can't buy a lot of powers and have to "grow into" their abilities.

Character Type-Specific Campaigns

Some comics and *Champions* campaigns focus on a particular type of character, rather than on a setting, time period, or social theme. Perhaps the most common example here is the "mystic masters" campaign, which features characters with magic powers and abilities exclusively. The PCs are heroic mystics who oppose dimensional conquerors, powerful demons, evil sorcerers, and the like in a shadowy war that most of humanity has no knowledge of. Vigilante-oriented campaigns also fall into this category, but they're in the realm of *Dark Champions* (see below).

Sample Characters

Here are two sample *Champions* characters — Taurus, a super-strong hero; and Eagle-Eye, a hero who uses his heightened senses to fight crime.

TAURUS

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
50	STR	40	19-	Lift 25 tons; 10d6 [5]
23	DEX	39	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
30	CON	40	15-	
20	BODY	20	13-	
14	INT	4	12-	PER Roll 12-
12	EGO	4	11-	ECV: 4
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
10	COM	0	11-	
20	PD	10		Total: 20 PD (10 rPD)
20	ED	14		Total: 20 ED (10 rED)
5	SPD	17		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
20	REC	8		
60	END	0		
60	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 206

Movement: Running: 11"/22"
Leaping: 10"/20"

Cost Powers **END**

- 44 *Shockwave:* Area Of Effect (10" Radius; +1¼) for up to 50 STR, Hole In The Middle (one hex; +¼); Only Affects Targets On The Ground (-¼), Extra Time (Extra Segment; -½) 8
- 20 *Braced For Impact:* Missile Deflection (all Ranged attacks) 0
- 15 *Bull's Horns:* HKA 1d6 (2d6 with STR) 1
- 10 *Tough, Leathery Skin:* Damage Resistance (10 PD/10 ED) 0
- 10 *Charge!:* Running +5" (11" total) 1
- 6 *Animal Senses:* +2 PER with all Sense Groups 0

Perks

- 3 Contact: a PRIMUS agent 8- (very useful Skills, access to major institution)
- 2 Money: Well Off
- 4 Reputation: heroic "monster" (in the United States) 11-, +2/+2d6

Skills

- 10 +2 Hand-To-Hand
- 1 Computer Programming 8-
- 3 Deduction 12-
- 2 AK: Millennium City University 11-
- 2 KS: History 11-
- 2 KS: The Superhuman World 11-
- 2 KS: Track And Field 11-
- 2 KS: Trivia 11-
- 1 KS: VIPER 8-
- 1 Language: German (basic conversation; English is native)
- 3 Power: Strength Tricks 14-
- 1 Systems Operation 8-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 144**Total Cost: 350****200+ Disadvantages**

- 15 DNPC: Billy Burleson (little brother) 11- (Normal)
- 20 Distinctive Features: minotaur (Not Concealable, Causes Major Reaction)
- 25 Enraged: Berserk if takes more than half his BODY as damage (Uncommon), go 11-, recover 11-
- 20 Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
- 15 Hunted: PSI 8- (Mo Pow, Capture/Kill)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Fearlessly Heroic; Risks His Life Even In Obviously Lethal Situations (Very Common, Strong)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Code Against Killing (Common, Total)
- 15 Social Limitation: Public Identity (Matt Burleson) (Frequently, Major)

Total Disadvantage Points: 350

Background/History: Mark Burleson was once an ordinary college student, with a major in history and a place on the Millennium City University track and field team. All that changed when the villainous organization VIPER kidnapped him for use as a “guinea pig” in their experiments mixing human and animal genetic material. When they infused Mark’s body with the genetic material of a bull, it triggered a latent mutation that caused his body to transform into a minotaur-like shape, with the head of a bull and the body of a man. The change also made him immensely strong and resilient. He broke free and destroyed the VIPER lab, but it was too late — there was no way to reverse the process. His life had been changed forever.

Not one to dwell on misfortune, Mark decided to put his abilities to good use, so he became a superhero. As Taurus, he has fought many battles and teamed up with other heroes on many occasions. VIPER wants him back so they can analyze what happened in the experiment (and, hopefully, duplicate the effect); PSI, a group of evil psychics, wants revenge on him for the times he’s thwarted their plans. Since Mark can’t pass as a normal human, he never bothered to maintain a secret identity — with the unintended consequence of causing his little brother Billy, a high school freshman, to want to tag along on his “adventures.”

Personality/Motivation: On the surface, Taurus is everything people think a superhero should be: altruistic, self-sacrificing, and willing to risk his life to protect innocent people against evil. Without a thought for his personal safety, he has charged into danger time and time again to rescue trapped disaster survivors, save crime victims, and stop supervillains dead in their tracks. Despite his enormous strength, he tries not to inflict serious harm on his enemies, and would never even think of trying to kill another human being (except on those rare occasions when he’s so badly injured he loses control).

But himself, that’s another matter. Although he’s deeply repressed them, Taurus has significant feelings of bitterness and anger over his transformation. He feels cut off from humanity, alone, and unlovable. His willingness to risk his life in the service of others is a way of trying to connect with the world at large — and a subconscious way of expressing his secret belief that his life really isn’t worth much anymore. In time, he can probably overcome these feelings and learn to accept himself for who and what he is, and to be glad of the silver lining behind the cloud, but it’s going to be a hard road before he gets there.

Quote: “You think you can beat me? Bull!”

Powers/Tactics: Taurus’s powers derive from his immense strength and minotaur form. He’s particularly good at charging opponents, using the speed he developed as a runner and the strength of his transformed body to knock his foes out (or, if they’re robots or other unliving enemies, he might gore them with his horns instead). He’s even learned how to brace himself to bounce attacks off his super-strong body, and how to smash his fists into the ground to cause a small shockwave around him that can hurt anyone standing on the ground. (The GM should note that the “shockwave” power significantly violates the Active Point cap in most *Champions* campaigns, and scale it back accordingly if it causes game balance problems.) The GM may allow him to pull other “tricks” with his Strength using his *Strength Tricks* Skill (which is based on DEX, to reflect his control over his abilities).

Appearance: Taurus resembles a classic minotaur. He has the body of a man, the head of a bull (complete with horns), and hooves instead of feet. Short black-grey fur covers his body, with an especially thick patch covering up his midsection. He often wears golden bracers on his wrists.

EAGLE-EYE

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
20	STR	10	13-	Lift 400 kg; 4d6 [2]
24	DEX	42	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
20	CON	20	13-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
12	EGO	4	11-	ECV: 4
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
10	COM	0	11-	
10	PD	6		Total: 21 PD (11 rPD)
8	ED	4		Total: 19 ED (11 rED)
6	SPD	26		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
8	REC	0		
40	END	0		
30	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 125

Movement: Running: 9"/18"
Leaping: 10"/20"
Swinging: 15"/30"

Cost Powers **END**

40 *Sense Weak Points:* Find Weakness 15- with all Martial Maneuvers

Martial Arts: Karate

Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4 <i>Atemi Strike</i>	-1	+1	4d6 NND(1)
4 <i>Block</i>	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4 <i>Disarm</i>	-1	+1	Disarm, 50 STR
4 <i>Dodge</i>	+0	+5	Dodge all attacks, Abort
3 <i>Legsweep</i>	+2	-1	9d6; Target Falls
4 <i>Knifehand Strike</i>	-2	+0	1d6+1 HKA (2½ d6 w/ STR)
4 <i>Punch/Snap Kick</i>	+0	+2	10d6 Strike
5 <i>Side/Spin Kick</i>	-2	+1	12d6 Strike
16	+4 Damage Classes (already added in)		

16	<i>Bulletproof Costume:</i> Armor (8 PD/8 ED); OIF (-½)	0
7	<i>Swingline:</i> Swinging 15"; OAF (-1)	0
6	<i>Fast Runner:</i> Running +3" (9" total)	1
6	<i>Strong Leaper:</i> Leaping +6" (10" total)	1
12	<i>Uncanny Senses:</i> +4 PER with all Sense Groups	0
5	<i>Uncanny Eyes:</i> Nightvision	0
10	<i>Uncanny Ears:</i> Targeting for Normal Hearing	0
15	<i>Radar-Sense:</i> Radar	0

Talents

6 *Combat Luck* (3 PD/3 ED)

Skills

10	+2 <i>Hand-To-Hand</i>
3	<i>Acrobatics</i> 14-
3	<i>Breakfall</i> 14-
3	<i>Climbing</i> 14-
3	<i>Concealment</i> 13-
3	<i>Contortionist</i> 14-
3	<i>Criminology</i> 13-
3	<i>Deduction</i> 13-
2	<i>KS: Millennium City Underworld</i> 11-
3	<i>Lockpicking</i> 14-
1	<i>Paramedics</i> 8-
2	<i>PS: Writer</i> 11-
3	<i>Security Systems</i> 13-
3	<i>Shadowing</i> 13-
3	<i>Sleight Of Hand</i> 14-
3	<i>Stealth</i> 14-
3	<i>Streetwise</i> 12-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 225

Total Cost: 350

200+ Disadvantages

25	<i>DNPC:</i> Lila Wilborn (girlfriend) 14- (Normal; Unaware of Eagle-Eye's Social Limitation: Secret Identity)
20	<i>Hunted:</i> Millennium City Police Department 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
15	<i>Hunted:</i> Cabrera Mafia Family 11- (As Pow, Capture/Kill)
15	<i>Psychological Limitation:</i> Determined To Wipe Out The Mob (Common, Strong)
20	<i>Psychological Limitation:</i> Code Against Killing (Common, Total)
10	<i>Reputation:</i> wanted criminal, 11-
15	<i>Social Limitation:</i> Secret Identity (Patrick Penhurst) (Frequently, Major)
10	<i>Susceptibility:</i> to Flashes and other intense sensory stimuli, 1d6 damage instantly (Common)
20	<i>Vulnerability:</i> 2 x Effect from Flashes (Common)

Total Disadvantage Points: 350

Background/History: Patrick Penhurst seemed like an ordinary boy growing up, but that changed when he reached puberty and his mutant powers manifested. Suddenly his senses went into overdrive — he could hear conversations from a block away, see clearly in the dark of night, feel the slightest breeze rasp across his skin. The onslaught of sensory stimuli threatened to drive him insane; he spent many years in almost total isolation while undergoing medical and psychological treatments.

Eventually, Patrick learned to master his phenomenally acute senses, though even today he finds intense stimuli painful and debilitating. He did so in part by training his body to a peak of physical fitness, the better to resist pain and keep himself under control. He continued his exercise regimen, supplementing it with martial arts training. As time went by, his senses continued to develop. He even manifested a strange radar-like sense that went beyond the normal five human senses.

A chance encounter with organized crime put him on the path of heroism. One evening he chanced to hear, from across a crowded classroom building, one of his criminology professors being shaken down by mobsters. It seemed his professor had a gambling problem, and owed the Cabróna mob more than a little money. Covering his face with a ski mask, Patrick charged to the rescue, using his karate skills to knock the mobsters out cold.

Finding he enjoyed being a hero, and that his heightened senses made him a powerful combatant, Patrick decided to become a superhero. Sewing himself a costume, he took the name “Eagle-Eye” and set out to help keep the streets safe.

Unfortunately, all did not go as planned. Eagle-Eye soon got involved in a serious war with the Cabróna mob (and sometimes other Mafia families), and they decided to get rid of him. Rather than simply kill him, they framed him for murder — he showed up at the scene of a hit right before the police did, and all the evidence pointed to him. Unwilling to take his chances in court, Eagle-Eye fled, and has been wanted by the police ever since. Despite the fact that he keeps on fighting the mob, as far as the public’s concerned, he’s just another costumed criminal trying to make a name for himself.

Outside of his crimefighting career, Patrick is trying to make a living as a writer. He’s attempting to put his experiences to work and become a true-crime writer. So far he’s managed to sell enough articles to keep himself fed, but what he really needs is a book contract. His girlfriend Lila (who has no idea he’s

secretly Eagle-Eye) keeps telling him it’s just a matter of time.

Personality/Motivation: Eagle-Eye is a genuinely heroic individual, someone who’s taken a condition that could have crippled him for the rest of his life and turned it into an asset in the war on crime. He’s a striver, the sort of person who’s never satisfied with things the way they are, always looking for a way to make them better — and to do better and be better himself. It’s that sort of passion that’s driven him to conduct a one-man war against the Mafia; between his own experiences, and what he’s learned through his criminology studies, he knows just what a plague organized crime is on society, and he’s determined to end it. Sometimes his enthusiasm verges into obsession, but so far he’s managed to keep himself under control.

Quote: “You can’t get away from me, Franetti... I can smell that cheap cologne you were wearing yesterday.”

Powers/Tactics: Eagle-Eye is a gifted martial artist and naturally talented athlete and acrobat, but his real powers come from his heightened senses. Besides simply remaining hyper-aware of his surroundings, he’s learned to use them to detect the weak points in any target. This ability, combined with his powerful punches and kicks, allows him to deliver devastating blows. But he’s always careful to hold back so he doesn’t cause death or serious injury.

Eagle-Eye has two main weaknesses. First, he has no ability to attack at range; he has to close with his opponent to fight. As he gains more experience, he’ll probably learn to use some throwing weapons to compensate for this. Second, and more seriously, he has difficulty handling intense sensory input — Flash attacks, mainly, but also any extremely loud noise (*e.g.*, a gun going off right next to his head), bright light, or strong smell. They have extra effect on him, and cause him brief but extreme pain. Try as he might, he can’t overcome this problem; it seems his augmented senses are sometimes a curse as well as a blessing.

Appearance: Patrick Penhurst is a young white man in his middle 20s, six feet tall, brown hair and eyes, with the well-developed physique of an athlete who has intense, regular workouts. As Eagle-Eye, he wears a navy blue bodystocking, boots, gloves, and half-face mask, with a gold stylized eagle motif on his torso and shoulders.

CYBERPUNK

CYBER HERO

Street fighters “chromed” with advanced cybernetic and biological systems, making them as much machine as man. Computer wizards, surfing the “virtual reality” of the Cybernet, living their lives more in the world of silicon and data than the world of flesh and bone. Powerful megacorporations, flouting the laws or making their own laws as they choose. Rampant consumerism, societal decay, and urban blight. Welcome to the world of cyberpunk science fiction — the world of *Cyber Hero*.

Technically speaking, *Cyber Hero* is really not a genre by itself, but a subgenre of *Star Hero*, since cyberpunk is a type of science fiction. But it’s so distinctive, and so popular among gamers, that it deserves some discussion of its own.

Campaign Guidelines And Standards

In *HERO System* terms, *Cyber Hero* campaigns are usually Heroic. Most characters are built on the Standard Heroic point totals of 75 Base Points + 75 Disadvantages. However, since cyberware (technological, and sometimes biological, enhancements of the body) is a common element of the setting, some GMs prefer the higher point totals of Powerful or Very Powerful Heroic characters, to give the PCs more points with which to augment themselves. As with most Heroic campaigns, in *Cyber Hero* games characters typically obtain normal equipment (but not cyberware) with in-game money instead of Character Points, are subject to Normal Characteristic Maxima by default, and use the Hit Location rules and many other such options.

Genre Conventions And Features

Cyberpunk stories typically take place in the near future — during the mid-to-late twenty-first century — rather than the far future like most science fiction. This allows them to portray a setting somewhat different from, but clearly derived from and ultimately grounded in, the modern day.

The cyberpunk genre has a lot of features that distinguish it from other types of science fiction, and from modern-day action campaigns (though it shares some elements of both those genres). Here are a few common “bits” most gamers associate with cyberpunk, based primarily on the writings of authors such as William Gibson, Walter John Williams, and Bruce Sterling.

Computers and Cyberspace: Computers crop up constantly in cyberpunk stories, not only as tools the characters use, but as obstacles they must overcome, weapons for their enemies to use against them, and

sometimes even direct threats. In fact, so prevalent have computers become in cyberpunk settings that they are all linked together in a vast “virtual reality” referred to as “cyberspace,” “the Net,” or “the matrix.” When a character “jacks in” to the Cybernet, using a piece of cyberware called a dataport to directly interface his mind with the machine, he sees a vast electronic world in which telephone lines are roads and paths, and collections of data are represented by buildings, fancy icons, geometric symbols, or similar constructs. Programs with defined functions, such as security, often have distinctive appearances as well; for example, a program for locating a particular type of data might look like a cybernetic bloodhound.

As discussed on pages 349-50, probably the best way to represent the Cybernet is with Extra-Dimensional Movement and the proper Limitations. Although the character doesn’t really enter another “dimension” in the classic sense, he does enter another “world,” and while he’s there he no longer truly interacts with the real world. (Other possibilities for simulating cyberspace include Duplication and the special effects of bonuses to the *Computer Programming Skill*.) The dataport, unlike most forms of cyberware, qualifies as an OIF — it’s easy to block or plug it so the character can’t use it. Here’s an example:

The Cybernet: Extra-Dimensional Movement (any location in the Cybernet, as defined by the location of the computer where you jack in), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (37 Active Points); OIF (dataport; -½), Meat Body (character’s body remains in the real world, but cannot move, perceive, or act, and damage to either the virtual form [in cyberspace] or the real body [in the real world] can hurt or kill the character; -1). Total cost: 15 points.

The programs a character buys for use in cyberspace are usually defined as Skills or Powers with the Limitations *Only In Cyberspace* (-2) and *OAF* (the cyberdeck the character stores his programs on). Thus, to create a security-penetration program, a character might go for the stealthy approach (Invisibility), the puzzle-solving approach (Lockpicking and Security Systems), or the brute force approach (Hand-To-Hand Killing Attack). There are lots of options and possibilities for creative use of the *HERO System*.

Consumerism and the power of money: The cyberpunk ambience is shot through with cynical reminders of the hold exerted by the consumer mentality on the minds of PCs and NPCs alike. Most characters know the brand name or manufacturer of their equipment, identify themselves through the brands they use or scorn, and so forth. It’s modern American consumer culture taken to a greater extreme, and clever GMs use it to give their *Cyber Hero* settings more appeal. Just spending a few

EXAMPLE CYBERWARE

Bone Lacing: Armor (1 PD/1 ED) (total cost: 3 points) **plus** Armor (3 PD/3 ED) (9 Active Points); Only Works Against BODY Damage (-1), Only To Protect Against Breaking Bones (-2) (total cost: 2 points) **plus** HA +2d6 (10 Active Points); Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½) (total cost: 7 points). Total cost: 12 points.

Enhanced Chemoreception: +2 PER with Smell/Taste Group (total cost: 4 points) **plus** Tracking for Normal Smell (total cost: 5 points). Total cost: 9 points.

Hot Reflexes II: +2 SPD (20 Active Points); Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x4 END; -1½), Restrained (-¼). Total cost: 6 points.

Cybernetic Arm: +10 STR (10 Active Points); Only When Using The Right Arm (-¼), Restrained (-¼), No Figured Characteristics (-½). Total cost: 5 points

minutes assigning manufacturer and product names to the weapons and gear used frequently in the campaign goes a long way toward bringing this element into the game.

Corporate power: In cyberpunk settings, corporations are large and powerful — in fact, so powerful, they are beyond the reach of ordinary governments, and may even have taken their place! They maintain “corporate enclaves” where their laws, not civil law, apply, they have their own security organizations and military units, and they basically can do whatever they want — unless another corporation objects, in which case espionage, assassination, and financial maneuvering becomes the order of the day.

Cyberware: Characters in cyberpunk settings often undergo surgical procedures in which surgeons install special technology — cyberware — in their bodies, either to augment normal functions, replace weak tissues with something stronger, or provide a character with abilities he lacks. Examples include “handrazors” (blades that can pop out from beneath the fingernails), cybereyes, metal lacing to make bones unbreakable, dermal armoring to provide protection against blades and guns, artificial muscles sewn to existing ones to improve strength, and many, many more.

Similarly, characters are often bio-engineered or genetically altered. This ranges from replacing existing organs with better ones (for example, an enhanced liver that can filter venoms and poisons from the character’s body), to changing the character’s form and structure, to grafting DNA from animals into the character’s body to improve him somehow (for example, to give him a cat’s reflexes).

As discussed on page 200, the Limitation *Restrained*, at the -¼ level, is appropriate for many types of cyberware. Typically electromagnetic pulses, electric shocks, and the like can disable or destroy them (a fact that security guards and cops take advantage of frequently!). On the other hand, things like bone lacing and replacement organs usually aren’t Limited much, if at all, and are usually just bought as normal Powers or abilities.

Because cyberware can unbalance the game, many *Cyber Hero* GMs establish rules regarding how much a character can have. They may limit the total Active Points’ worth of cyberware and other modifications each character can buy, or the total Real Points, or establish some other system (like “10 Active Points per point of BODY the character possesses”).

Globalism: In the world of cyberpunk, Earth is a small place. Rapid travel from one side of the planet to the other is possible and frequent (though also too expensive for most people). High-tech products are manufactured all over the world (“Hey, do you guys have any of those hot new chips from Bali?”), and the influence of Asian cultures on the rest of the world, particularly America, is marked. Chinatowns have grown in size and influence, and especially in the large urban areas like New York and California the Japanese and/or Chinese exert a lot of behind-the-scenes control. Many American businessmen have to learn Asian languages just to do business.

In game terms, GMs can simulate this element by including KS: Asian Culture in the Everyman

Skill list for the campaign, putting 1 Character Point worth of Japanese in the Package Deals for many professions, and so forth.

Societal decay: Cyberpunk settings usually feature a high degree of societal decay. Cities are vast urban blights where one often takes one’s life in one’s hands just by going for a walk. The gap between the enormous numbers of the poor, and the few ultra-rich, is wide and marked — which is one reason for the well-protected corporate enclaves mentioned above. Corruption, scandal, bribery, and crime are rampant. Often the characters’ goals include survival and prosperity before anything else — though, if they’re to be true heroes, they have to grow beyond that.

Violence: In a cyberpunk world, violence, ranging from fistfights to brutal murders, is a fact of everyday life. Characters usually go around armed to the teeth, carrying everything from boot knives to salvaged chainguns. In game terms, this is just a matter of having a well-stocked equipment list for the PCs to choose from, and including a fight or two in almost every adventure.

Character Archetypes

The archetypes in *Cyber Hero* games usually aren’t quite as pronounced as they are in *Champions* or *Fantasy Hero*, but they do exist. They include:

The Computer Wizard

Also called a “console cowboy,” “decker,” “technomancer,” or “hacker,” this character specializes in using the computer, working in

cyberspace, and so forth. He always has Computer Programming and a dataport, and he often branches out to include Cryptography, Electronics, Lockpicking, Security Systems, and Systems Operation in his Skill suite.

The Corporate Suit

“Corporate suit” refers to any character who works for one of the corporations dominating the campaign setting — or who at least looks and acts like he does. Skills such as Conversation, High Society, KS: High Finance, Language: Japanese, Persuasion, and PS: Businessman predominate, and the character also tends to have a lot of Contacts, Fringe Benefits, and other Perks.

The Driver/Pilot

Some characters specialize in operating vehicles, either ground, air, or both. In some cyberpunk settings, they can “jack in” to the vehicle, the same way a computer wizard jacks into his computer, to almost “merge” with the vehicle and get better performance out of it. The character must have Combat Driving (and/or Combat Piloting), and probably has Mechanics and a bunch of TFs as well.

Ganger

This character survives by belonging to (or perhaps leading) a street gang that controls part of the turf in one of the major cities of the campaign setting. He typically has plenty of streetfighting skills (Martial Arts: Dirty Infighting, WF: Blades), TF: Two-Wheeled Motorized Ground Vehicles, perhaps a small bit of cyberware (or two), and lots of minor (but useful!) KSs and Contacts related to his “turf.” If he leads the gang, he can buy them as Followers.

Samurai

The ultimate street warrior, the samurai is heavily “chromed” (filled with cyberware and other modifications). The chrome is his calling card, his mark of distinction — it’s how his employers know they’re getting a skilled professional, not some thug off the street. In addition to paying Character Points for lots of cyberware, samurai have plenty of fighting Skills (Demolitions, Martial Arts, WFs, Weaponsmith) and relatively high Characteristics (also resulting from cyberware, typically).

Sample Character

Here’s Slash, an example of the “samurai” archetype. You can bring him into your game as an NPC or PC, or use his cyberware for other characters.

SLASH

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [1]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
15	CON	10	12-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
7	PD	4		Total: 10 PD (3 rPD)
5	ED	2		Total: 8 ED (3 rED)
4	SPD	12		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
6	REC	0		
30	END	0		
30	STUN	4		Total Characteristics Cost: 65

Movement: Running: 9”/12”

Cost Powers END

7	Handrazors:	HKA ½ d6;		
	No STR Bonus (-½)			1
	Martial Arts: Razor Dancing			
	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Damage/Effect
4	Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4	Dodge	—	+5	Dodge, Affects All Attacks, Abort
5	Jab	+1	+3	Weapon Strike
4	Slash	+2	+0	Weapon +2 DC Strike
9	Dermal Armoring:	Armor (3 PD/3 ED)		0
6	Enhanced Legs:	Running +3” (9” total)		1
5	Cybereyes:	Infrared Perception (Sight Group)		0
9	Cybereyes:	+6 versus Range Modifier for Sight Group		0
3	Hot Reflexes I:	+1 SPD; Restrainable (-¼), Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x4 END; -1½)		4

Skills

3	+1 with Razor Dancing
3	Bribery 12-
3	Computer Programming 11-
2	Gambling (Card Games) 11-
1	KS: Football 8-
2	KS: Hudson City 11-
3	Lockpicking 13-
3	Security Systems 11-
3	Stealth 13-
3	Streetwise 12-
3	WF: Small Arms, Hand Razors

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 85

Total Cost: 150

SAMURAI PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
20 points’ worth of cyberware	20
10 points’ worth of Martial Arts	10
WF: Small Arms	2
Pick three Skills from the following list: Bribery, Combat Driving, Combat Piloting, Computer Programming, Fast Draw, Lockpicking, Security Systems, Stealth, Streetwise, Systems Operation, Tactics	9
Disadvantage	
Distinctive Features: Chromed	-5
Total Cost Of Package	36

75+ Disadvantages

- 5 Distinctive Features: Chromed (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)
- 15 Hunted: Detective Murrow 8- (As Pow, NCI, Capture)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Overconfidence (Very Common, Moderate)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Resists Corporate Influence (Common, Strong)
- 10 Reputation: wanted criminal and terrorist, 11-
- 15 Social Limitation: Lacks National Security Number (can't vote, pass through secured checkpoints, use many government services, and so forth) (Frequently, Major)

Total Disadvantage Points: 150

Background/History: Hernan Flores born in the worst part of Hudson City in 2037. Growing up in grinding poverty, he quickly took to petty crime. Only an interest in computers, and a fair bit of skill with them, kept him going to school. But it wasn't easy. Small and skinny, Hernan was picked on and beaten up a lot by bigger kids. He learned the hard way that success went only to the strong.

Unwilling to become nothing more than a glorified electron jockey for some corporation after he finished school, he used his computer skills to steal enough money to hire a cyber-surgeon to augment him. His normal muscles were interwoven with high-strength artificial muscle fiber. Armored plastics were implanted just beneath his skin, making him strong and tough. His eyes were replaced with artificial versions that can see in the dark and focus in on distant objects better than human ones. Best of all, long, sharp "razors" were implanted underneath his fingernails, just waiting for him to flex his muscles the right way to "snik" out of their sheaths. Hernan practiced long and hard with the razors, becoming a skilled streetfighter.

When he had healed from the operations and finished his training, Hernan hit the streets, picking up work as a bodyguard and enforcer. His technical skills got him some jobs that wouldn't go to ordinary "samurai," earning him more money and contacts. Today, he's well-known around the Hudson City underworld.

Personality/Motivations: Hernan — or "Slash," as he's known on the street — may be successful and relatively well-off, but he's not satisfied. After years of looking out only for Number One, he's slowly come to the realization that he doesn't like himself, or society, very much. After a lot of studying, he's concluded that the real problems in society stem mostly from undue corporate influence over... well, over pretty much every aspect of people's lives! He's decided he doesn't like that very much, and intends to do something about it. Although he still puts up the usual "tough street fighter" facade, he's begun working against the corps on his own, and taking jobs against them for cheaper than normal fees. The corps have responded by having him labelled a terrorist, and siccing one of their pet cops, Detective Murrow, on his trail. It's only a matter of time before he and Murrow meet face-to-face and find out who's the better man....

Quote: "Cash, up front. No refunds. Your guarantee is that you're hiring me, and when I take the money, I get the job done."

Powers/Tactics: Slash's abilities are a combination of chrome and training. He's been extensively cybernetically augmented, and in fact hopes to undergo even more cyber-surgery in the near future (he's got his cyber-eyes on a sweet little bone augmentation package, and this great hot-reflex upgrade...). But what sets him apart from a legion of other cyber-samurai are his other skills — his deft touch with a computer keyboard, and his ability to bypass security and locks without tripping alarms.

Slash usually goes heavily armed. Besides his handrazors, he always carries at least one small "holdout" pistol. If he's expecting trouble, he'll have a large pistol with him, and maybe even some military-spec weaponry to boot.

Appearance: Slash is a short (5'9") Hispanic male in his early 20s, with black hair and dark eyes. His body has obviously been cybernetically enhanced; the dermal armoring shows wherever his skin is visible, and even on casual inspection his eyes were clearly made in a factory. He dresses stylishly, in clothes tailored to fit his small but oddly bulky frame. He never wears fingered gloves, wanting to have his razors ready for action at all times.

FANTASY

FANTASY HERO

Armored knights, hunting dragons to keep the lands safe from their depredations. Mighty wizards, able to quell the storm, summon demons, and blast their foes with lightning with but a word and a gesture. Wise priests, invoking the powers of mighty gods who still, sometimes, walk the world. Wily thieves, using their skills to obtain illicit wealth and outwit their foes. Mighty kings in tall-spired castles. Alchemists, swords, prophecies, monsters, ancient magics, and much, much more. Such is the stuff of fantasy.

Campaign Guidelines And Standards

In *HERO System* terms, *Fantasy Hero* campaigns are usually Heroic, with characters built on the Standard Heroic point totals of 75 Base Points + 75 Disadvantages. However, fantasy encompasses many settings and styles of play, and in some games the characters are so powerful they are built with more points, or even on Superheroic standards. In Heroic *Fantasy Hero* campaigns, characters typically obtain normal equipment (but not enchanted items) with in-game money instead of Character Points, are subject to Normal Characteristic Maxima by default, and use the Hit Location rules and many other such options.

Genre Conventions And Features

“Fantasy” is so broad — broader even than the superheroes genre — that it defies easy description. Even a casual discussion of major genre “bits” would be too long for this chapter, and a thorough review of the elements of the genre could easily fill an entire book! However, three things stand out as defining what “fantasy” is for gaming purposes: magic; alternate worlds; and low technology.

MAGIC

The first, and most important, feature of fantasy is *magic*. The existence and effects of magic almost define “fantasy” by themselves; only in the lowest of Low Fantasy (see below) is there no magic whatsoever. Magic ranges from minor and rare to extremely commonplace and powerful, depending on subgenre. In many cases it consists of cast spells and evoked effects that player characters can control (or be harmed by); in other settings it’s mostly an atmospheric thing, something that may help or hinder the characters indirectly, but over which they exert little control.

Creating And Casting Spells In The *HERO System*

The *HERO System*’s flexibility and adaptability allow you to create pretty much any sort of magic system you can imagine, whether it’s a copy of one

you read about in a novel, or an original creation of your own. You simply use the game elements to define what spells do, how characters cast them, and any related effects.

In *HERO System* terms, spells are usually created using Powers (and sometimes Talents or Skills), with appropriate Advantages and Limitations. In most *Fantasy Hero* campaigns, the following Limitations apply to most spells: Focus (a wizard’s staff, a material component the spell consumes, or the like); Gestures; Incantations; and Requires A Magic Roll (*Magic* being a use of the *Power Skill*; for priests, you might call this *Prayer*, *Piety*, or *Faith* instead). Concentration, Extra Time, and Side Effects are also fairly common. The accompanying sidebar provides several example spells, and there are dozens more in the sidebars on pages 89-202.

The GM also needs to decide how characters pay for spells. First, does a spellcaster have to buy a Skill (like Magic), or perhaps a special Perk or Talent, to cast spells, or can pretty much anyone work magic? Does a character have to buy each spell individually, or can he put them in a Power Framework? Does the setting impose any restrictions on how many spells a character can learn, or have active at one time, or cast during a single day? The answers to each of these questions shape how magic works in the campaign, and how characters can best make use of it.

SAMPLE SPELLS

Levitation Spell: Flight 5" (10 Active Points); OAF Expendable (feather; -1), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), Only To Go Straight Up And Down (-1). Total cost: 2 points.

Magesight: Detect Magic (INT Roll), Discriminatory (10 Active Points); OAF (wizard's staff; -1), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½). Total cost: 3 points.

Magic Bolt: RKA 1d6, NND (defense is Power Defense; +1), Does BODY (+1) (45 Active Points); OAF (wizard's staff; -1), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½). Total cost: 15 points.

Spell Of Many Tongues: Universal Translator (INT Roll) (20 Active Points); OAF Expendable (jadeite pebble with rune of comprehension etched on it, Difficult to replace; -1¼), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½). Total cost: 6 points.

Thendric's Spell Of Concealment: Invisibility to Sight Group (20 Active Points); OAF Expendable (small piece of shaped and polished glass, Difficult to replace; -1¼), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½). Total cost: 6 points.

Vandular's Chaotic Corruscations: Energy Blast 6d6, Area Of Effect (6" Radius; +1¼) (67 Active Points); OAF (wizard's staff; -1), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½). Total cost: 22 points.

Casting a spell usually counts as an Attack Action (though this may depend on the type of spell used). If the spell has the *Requires A Skill Roll* Limitation, or other Limitations controlling whether (or how) it functions, the caster must comply with all those restrictions to make it work properly. If not, the spell fails or cannot be cast.

ALTERNATE WORLDS

The second feature of fantasy is *an alternate world*. Although a few types of fantasy (such as Urban Fantasy) take place here on good old Earth, most fantasy stories are set in an alternate reality that bears some resemblance to our own in terms of technology and customs, but has plenty of differences to distinguish it. Even fantasies set in earlier eras on Earth, or in "secret places" in our world, essentially take place in "alternate worlds." For many fantasy gaming campaigns, the better realized the world — the more detailed and flavorful the GM makes it, the more "dramatic verisimilitude" it has — the better the game.

LOW TECHNOLOGY

The third is low technology. Characters in fantasy games can't call each other on the phone, don't have indoor plumbing, and lack modern medicine. They use swords, not guns; they ride on horses, not in cars; they have to use muscle power instead of engines and electricity. There are some exceptions (such as, again, Urban Fantasy, or games where magic essentially takes the place of technology), but most *Fantasy Hero* campaigns follow this rule.

Weapons And Armor

The most prevalent examples of the low technology of fantasy worlds are the implements of violence: swords, bows and arrows, armor, and the like. Most characters will have at least some familiarity with them, and characters such as warriors will be quite skilled with them.

Pages 327-334 contain plenty of weapons and armor suitable for *Fantasy Hero* games, and rules on how to create more if you want to. In many fantasy games, GMs ignore the standard Encumbrance rules when it comes to armor, instead imposing a straightforward DCV penalty (typically -1 DCV per 3 DEF, or some similar formula) to represent the bulkiness and hindering effects of armor. That allows "light fighters" (characters who use speed and accuracy to fight effectively, instead of brute strength and defense) to be a viable option in many campaigns.

Horses

Many *Fantasy Hero* characters know how to ride, since that's usually the fastest way to cross land in a fantasy campaign (aside from magic, of course!). Page 308 has a writeup for a typical Light Warhorse, and the *HERO System Bestiary* has information and character sheets for several types of equines. For information on mounted movement and combat, see pages 241-42.

Character Archetypes

Although fantasy is a broad and varied genre, in most cases fantasy characters fall into one of several standard archetypes. These include:

Priest

A devotee of a god or gods, gifted by his patron deity(ies) with magical powers. Usually priests' magic relates to healing, defense, and succoring the weak, but some priests are more militant, using their divinely-granted gifts to smite the foe and convert the pagan. Many priests are skilled with weapons as well, but some prefer the paths of peace. Common Skills for a priest include Chirurgeon (Paramedics), Oratory, Persuasion, Power: Prayer, and various Knowledge Skills relating to the liturgy, cosmology, and lore of the priesthood he belongs to and god(s) he serves.

Rogue

"Rogue" is a catch-all term for characters who live primarily by their wits and guileful skills, rather than strength of arms or magical prowess. The category typically includes thieves, scouts, explorers, treasure-seekers, bards, assassins, burglars, and bounty hunters. Some of these rogues rely on skills of deception (Disguise, Mimicry, Ventriloquism), others on skills of persuasion and trickery (Conversation, Persuasion, Seduction, Sleight Of Hand), and others on skills of infiltration (Lockpicking, Security Systems). Almost all have Stealth and Streetwise, and the ability to use at least some weapons (typically small, easily-concealed ones like daggers, short swords, slings, and hatchets). A few, such as the assassin and bounty hunter, emphasize fighting prowess more than the others.

Warrior

Warriors rely primarily on skill at arms to overcome their enemies and achieve their aims. In addition to lots of Weapon Familiarities, they often have Skills like Martial Arts (weapons-based fighting arts, usually), Oratory (for rallying the troops), Riding, Stealth, Survival, Tactics, Tracking, and Weaponsmith.

Many gamers divide warriors into two broad groups: heavy fighters and light fighters. Heavy fighters use high STR, high-DEF armor, and large weapons to cause lots of damage to their foes. Light fighters prefer little or no armor, favoring DEX, speed, and accuracy over brute force. Fortunately, the *HERO System's* flexibility allows you to mix and match elements to achieve just the right blend for the character you have in mind.

You can make the ordinary warrior more interesting by tailoring his abilities and background a little. Examples include:

—the *barbarian*, a primitive tribesman who relies on his wilderness skills and powerful muscles to overcome more sophisticated foes. Barbarians typically have high STR and use large weapons, but prefer light (or no) armor so they can dodge and move quickly.

—the *knight*, a heavy fighter who's also a skilled horseman. Knights commonly use weapons such as swords, lances, and axes, and are often bound by oaths of loyalty to a liege-lord or beloved lady.

—the *paladin*, a knight-like warrior who promotes some holy cause. Paladins often have divinely-granted powers similar to, but less flexible than, the spells of priests.

—the *ranger*, a warrior specializing in wilderness campaigns and scouting. Rangers usually have high Survival, Stealth, and Tracking rolls, and are skilled with Ranged weapons such as the bow.

Wizard

Wizards are masters of arcane lore with the ability to cast spells and manipulate magical effects. In many fantasy worlds, they rarely know much (if anything) about arms and armor, since they rely on their learning and powers instead of mundane means of combat. Wizards typically have a *Magic Skill*, lots of appropriate Knowledge Skills, relatively low Characteristics (except for INT, EGO, and PRE, which they favor), and lots of points devoted to buying spells.

In many fantasy games, wizards “specialize” in a particular type of magic: Necromancy, Alchemy; Thaumaturgy; Conjunction; and so on. Sometimes this is because of the way magic is learned and taught in the campaign world, other times it relates to specific game benefits and rules established by the GM.

Subgenres

Fantasy has many subgenres. Some of the most important include:

Epic Fantasy

Epic fantasies are grand, romantic, monumental stories of the heroes’ struggle against a vast, and often overwhelmingly powerful, enemy. Typically this entails a great quest to find, destroy, create, or awaken the person or talisman needed to defeat the enemy. Epic fantasy stories feature detailed worlds with extensive histories (and often lots of prophecies); magic that’s usually subtle, flavorful, and evocative, and usually low-key though not necessarily low-powered; and conflicts on scales small and large, where the actions of both individual heroes and entire armies are necessary for victory.

The quintessential epic fantasy is, of course, J.R.R. Tolkien’s magnificent *Lord Of The Rings*, and many others imitating his work exist as well. Other examples include Patricia McKillip’s “Riddlemaster of Hed” trilogy, *The Belgariad* series by David Eddings, and some bodies of myth and legend (such as the Arthurian tales or some parts of Norse mythology).

High Fantasy

High fantasy is a subgenre characterized mainly by extensive, common, and/or powerful magic. Unlike epic fantasy, where wizards are something of a rarity, in some high fantasy games you can’t take ten steps without tripping over someone who can cast spells. In some high fantasy games, magic controls the fate of entire kingdoms (or worlds), and can devastate entire regions; in others it substitutes for technology (cities have magical lighting at night, everyone has running water because of aquamancy spells, and people drive self-propelling enchanted wagons).

In a gaming context, high fantasy campaigns

usually feature a plethora of sentient races — elves, dwarves, gnomes, little sneaky people, orcs, hobgoblins, trolls... — though in literature this is much less common. They also often have a lot of magical creatures and fantastic beasts. At their best, they allow for the creation of grand and wondrous stories of adventure and enchantment, and verge toward epic fantasy. At their worst, they often descend into nigh-mindless hack-and-slash campaigns devoted solely to killing monsters, getting treasure, and acquiring magical items.

Examples of high fantasy include the typical *Dungeons & Dragons* gaming campaign, *Master Of The Five Magics* by Lyndon Hardy, the *Earthsea Trilogy* of Ursula LeGuin, some bodies of myth and legend (such as certain Greek myths), the *Deed Of Paksennarion* trilogy by Elizabeth Moon (though many of its high fantasy elements are rather muted), and some of the tales written by Lord Dunsany and James Branch Cabell.

Low Fantasy

Low fantasy is the opposite of high fantasy — it features little magic (sometimes none whatsoever). What magic does exist is usually difficult to cast (it’s hard to learn, or tires the user out), relatively low-powered and/or subtle, and quite rare. The characters are most likely to face mundane opponents — city guards, the king’s soldiers, political rivals, or the like — instead of hordes of orcs or a rampaging dragon.

Examples of low fantasy include most of the fantasy novels of Guy Gavriel Kay, the various Deryni novels of Katherine Kurtz (which feature about as much magic as a story can have and still remain “low fantasy”), and John Morrissey’s *Iron Angel* trilogy.

Swords And Sorcery

Swords and sorcery fantasy focuses on primarily on warriors, emphasizing that only the tough survive and that fighting skills are, in most cases, better than other types of skills. The sword-wielding hero fights terrible monsters, rescues helpless maidens, and thwarts evil plots all with the strength of his mighty muscles and his refusal to become corrupted by the “softness” of more civilized life.

Wizards and priests get short shrift in swords and sorcery tales. Typically magic is so slow, or so limited, that a sword-wielding hero can cleave a spellcaster in two before he can complete his magic (which often involves a curse, or the conjuration of some monster). However, this changes in swords and sorcery tales where the hero himself can wield some magic.

Examples of swords and sorcery fantasy include Robert E. Howard’s Conan stories, Michael Moorcock’s stories about Elric of Melniboné, Fritz Lieber’s tales of Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser, Karl Edward Wagner’s novels about Kane, and many others.

Urban Fantasy

Urban fantasy mixes modern-day, real world settings with magic. Typically there’s a “hidden history” — a secret, underground, and/or behind-the-scenes community of spellcasters and fantastic creatures most people remain completely oblivious to. The magic is usually relatively low-powered, and often flavorful. The hero often gets involved in some conflict between the forces of good and evil, or has to

CROSSWORLDS FANTASY

One sort of fantasy subgenre is *crossworlds fantasy*, in which the heroes are people from the real world (often children) who somehow cross over into a fantasy world and become involved in adventures there. Often the heroes are the subjects of prophecy, or possess some power, ability, or insight that inhabitants of the fantasy setting lack. Crossworlds fantasies usually involve epic or high fantasy worlds.

Examples of crossworlds fantasy include *The Chronicles Of Narnia* by C. S. Lewis, *The Chronicles Of Thomas Covenant* trilogy and *Mordant’s Need* duology by Stephen Donaldson, and Alan Garner’s *The Weirdstone Of Brisingamen*.

find a way to use magic to correct some societal problem.

Examples of urban fantasy include many of the novels of Charles deLint, Tim Powers, and Simon Hawke, as well as some of Lord Dunsany’s marvelous short stories.

Sample Characters

Here are two sample characters to get you started in *Fantasy Hero*: Darien, a bold warrior; and Belakar, a wizard who uses the example spells from the sidebar accompanying this section.

DARIEN THE BOLD

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
18	STR	8	13-	Lift 300 kg; 3½ d6 [2]
15	DEX	15	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
18	CON	16	13-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
12	COM	1	11-	
6	PD	2		Total: 6 PD (0 rPD)
5	ED	1		Total: 5 ED (0 rED)
4	SPD	15		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
8	REC	0		
36	END	0		
30	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 67

Movement: Running: 7”/14”

Cost	Powers	END
	Martial Arts: Weapons Combat (Usable with Blades)	
	Maneuver OCV DCV Notes	
5	All-Out +1 -2	Weapon +6 DC Strike
4	Attack +0 +2	Weapon +4 DC Strike
4	Charge +0 -2	Weapon +4 DC Strike
		+v/5, FMove
4	Defend +2 +2	Block, Abort
5	Probe +1 +3	Weapon Strike
8	+2 Damage Classes (already added in)	
2	<i>Fleet-Footed</i> : Running +1” (7” total)	1
2	<i>Sharp-Eyed</i> : +2 PER with Normal Sight	0
15	<i>Blessed By The Gods</i> : Luck 3d6	0
	Skills	
10	+2 Hand-To-Hand	
2	Animal Handler (Equines) 13-	
3	Courtier 13-	
2	KS: Heraldry 11-	
2	KS: Military History 11-	
3	Riding 13-	
3	Stealth 13-	
3	Tactics 11-	
1	Trading 8-	
5	WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons, Lances	

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 83
Total Cost: 150

- 75+ Disadvantages**
- 10 DNPC: Princess Arellia (his true love, and the King’s daughter) 14- (Normal, Useful Noncombat Position)
 - 15 Hunted: Shattered Skull orc tribe 11- (Mo Pow, Limited Geographical Area, Kill)
 - 10 Hunted: the King 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
 - 20 Psychological Limitation: Code Of Chivalry (Common, Total)
 - 20 Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Frequently, Major)

Total Disadvantage Points: 150

Typical Equipment
Broad Sword (HKA 1d6+1, STR Min 12)
Medium Lance (HKA 1½ d6, STR Min 13)
Medium Longbow and 20 Arrows (HKA 1½ d6, +1 RMod)
Dagger (HKA 1d6-1 STR Min 6)
Chain Mail (DEF 6)
Normal Shield (+2 DCV)
Medium Warhorse

Background/History: The fifth son of a noble of moderate power, Darien learned early in life that he stood to inherit little or nothing, and thus that the only roads to success, prosperity, and power for him were the priesthood or service in the King's Army. Lacking any religious vocation, he chose the latter course, and soon distinguished himself as a skilled warrior. Although he has not yet been knighted, he has proven himself in the King's service so many times that the King sends him whenever there's a "special mission" he needs performed. In truth, the King does this not just because he knows of Darien's abilities as a warrior, but because he's aware of the love that has grown between his daughter, the Princess Arellia, and Darien, and seeks to put an end to it... one way or another.

Personality/Motivation: Darien's motivations are those of the code of chivalry: love of adventure; loyalty to his liege-lord; and living up to the adoration of a good woman. He asks for little more from life than the chance to live well, smite evil, and enjoy the company of boon companions.

Darien has always enjoyed a greater share of good fortune than most other men; his luck has kept him safe through more than one dangerous situation that left equally skilled warriors dead. As a result, Darien has come to believe the gods have blessed him and given him a great and noble purpose to fulfill, and this has made him bold, even overconfident. There may come a time when he relies on his luck once too often, and finds himself in greater danger than he can handle....

Quote: "Hold, dog! My lord commands that I bring you before him, and bring you I shall — be you in one piece, or cut in two by my blade."

Powers/Tactics: Darien is a skilled warrior, trained primarily in the use of the broadsword (his *Weapons Combat* Martial Art is usable with Blades), but quite able to use other weapons as well. When traveling, he carries two broadswords, a medium lance, a medium longbow, a dagger, and a shield, and wears well-polished chainmail. He prefers to fight from horseback when possible, but is no stranger to getting down on foot and slogging it out in the mud with his enemies.

Appearance: Darien the Bold is a tall, well-muscled warrior of 24 winters. His hair is black, and his eyes brown. His countenance is usually cheerful, but quickly turns stern, even frightening, when battle approaches or he enters a dangerous situation.

BELAKAR

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 [1]
14	DEX	12	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
13	CON	6	12-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll 13-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
10	COM	0	11-	
3	PD	1		Total: 6 PD (3 rPD)
5	ED	2		Total: 8 ED (3 rED)
3	SPD	6		Phases: 4, 8, 12
5	REC	0		
26	END	0		
23	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 57

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

WARRIOR PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
One KS or PS related to a military subject	2
Riding	3
WF: Small Arms	2
Other WFs (player's choice)	4
Two 3-point Skills	6
Total Cost Of Package	17

Cost	Powers	END
	<i>Spells</i>	
2	Levitation Spell	
3	Magesight	
15	Magic Bolt	
6	Spell Of Many Tongues	
6	Thendric's Spell Of Concealment	
22	Vandular's Chaotic Corruscations	
	<i>Talents</i>	
6	Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)	

Skills

- 3 KS: Arcane And Occult Lore 13-
- 3 KS: History 13-
- 3 KS: Legends And Lore 13-
- 2 Languages: 2 points' worth (player's choice)
- 1 Literacy
- 15 Magic 19-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 93**Total Cost: 150****75+ Disadvantages**

- 10 Distinctive Features: mystic aura (Not Concealable, Always Noticed, Detectable Only With Unusual Senses)
- 10 Hunted: Shattered Skull orc tribe 8- (Mo Pow, Limited Geographical Area, Kill)
- 15 Hunted: Gardak the Necromancer 8- (Mo Pow, Kill)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Honorable (Common, Strong)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Fascinated By Magical Artifacts And Lore; Will Go Out Of His Way And Risk Danger To Obtain Them (Common, Moderate)
- 5 Rivalry: Professional (with another wizard of player's choice)
- 10 Social Limitation: Feared By The Common Folk (Frequently, Minor)

Total Disadvantage Points: 150**Typical Equipment**

Staff (used as a club — 4d6 Normal Damage, STR Min 10)
 Dagger (HKA 1d6-1 STR Min 6)
 Cloth Armor (DEF 1)
 Silver medallion (a gift from his first master)
 Wineskin of fine wine

Background/History: Growing up as a limner's son, Belakar was apprenticed to a local wizard after he displayed an aptitude for the Arts Arcane. He

studied under the wizard for several years, until his master died. He then apprenticed himself to another wizard, Gardak, later known as Gardak the Necromancer. After several months, when he finally perceived the evil nature Gardak hid beneath a facade of civility, Belakar fled, taking several of Gardak's most precious tomes with him. To this day, Gardak pursues him, hoping to recover the grimoires.

After several years of studying on his own, Belakar became an adventuring mage, using his powers to work with other like-minded people to destroy evil, perform heroic deeds, and perhaps recover a bit of treasure or two in the process. He continues down this path today, ever seeking to expand his knowledge, earn a reputation for his skills, and serve the good people of the world — even though most of them fear his sorcerous powers.

Personality/Motivation: Belakar has taken the path of the adventuring mage mainly because that's the best way for him to uncover ancient magical artifacts, old lorebooks and spellbooks, and like valuables. Such things fascinate him, and he'll go to extremes to recover them. But stronger still than that is his sense of honor and duty. If he gives his word, he keeps it, and he always conducts himself in an honest and forthright manner.

Quote: "Look at this! It's the work-book of a mage of the Crimson Shield Dynasty! Who knows what secrets it might contain?"

Powers/Tactics: Belakar is a mage who can cast several useful spells. His main weakness is that he has no defensive magics (yet). He has to take care, hide behind cover when he can, and dodge if he must. When possible, he uses Thendric's Spell of Concealment to shield himself from the eyes of potential attackers.

Appearance: Belakar is a man in his mid-30s, with dark skin and eyes. He's mostly bald, with just a few whips of hair here and there on his head. He wears robes (similar to those of many wizards), carries a staff, and never seems to be without a book or two.

MARTIAL ARTS

NINJA HERO

Masters of unarmed combat, able to take on armies of armed men and defeat them using just bare hands and feet. Feuds and rivalries between different schools of the fighting arts. Characters with such acrobatic prowess that they can literally run right up walls! This type of excitement and action, and more, characterizes the martial arts genre.

In addition to the *Ninja Hero* genre book, Hero Games publishes another book that's crucial for any martial arts-oriented campaign: *The Ultimate Martial Artist*, a thorough and detailed guide to martial arts from around the world and in the various genres of adventure fiction. It contains dozens of sample powers, rules for creating new Martial Maneuvers, and lots of optional and expanded rules for hand-to-hand combat in the *HERO System*, making it a must for anyone who wants to run a martial arts campaign or character. Page references below to "UMA" refer to *The Ultimate Martial Artist*, not the core rulebook.

Campaign Guidelines And Standards

In *HERO System* terms, most *Ninja Hero* campaigns are Heroic, with characters built on the Standard Heroic point totals of 75 Base Points + 75 Disadvantages. But some martial arts subgenres — wuxia and video-game, for example — require more points, so that players can create characters able to perform fantastic stunts and feats. Some even verge into the Superheroic. In Heroic *Ninja Hero* campaigns, characters typically obtain normal equipment with in-game money instead of Character Points, are subject to Normal Characteristic Maxima by default, and use the Hit Location rules and many other such options.

Genre Conventions And Features

Regardless of the point totals or characters involved, the themes of martial arts adventures remain basically the same from subgenre to subgenre. Some of the more common "bits" include:

Amazing fighting prowess: Of course, every player character and important NPC in a *Ninja Hero* campaign has the *Martial Arts Skill* — indeed, many characters know every maneuver in their chosen style, and some have studied multiple styles. Competition between fighters to prove that "my kung fu is better than your kung fu!" occurs frequently. Combats in a martial arts campaign, if properly described and envisioned, can be spectacular!

To bolster their fighting skills, many *Ninja Hero* characters buy Combat Skill Levels (either 3-point

Levels with a particular martial arts style, or 5-point Levels with Hand-To-Hand Combat). Other common Skills include Defense Maneuver, Fast Draw, Two-Weapon Fighting, and Weapon Familiarity. Talents like Combat Luck, Combat Sense, Danger Sense, and Lightning Reflexes are also worth considering.

Masters and students: Most characters have to learn martial arts from someone — a master. In most *Ninja Hero* adventures, the PCs' master is old, wise, and skilled, but too feeble or slow to oppose the enemies of his school or style (thus, the job falls to the PCs). Masters of evil or rival schools are often more robust, since they represent a major opponent for the PCs to overcome. But first, of course, the enemy master makes the PCs fight his students and lieutenants, and observes them as they do so. (In the game, many *Ninja Hero* GMs use a dramatic guideline something jokingly called the "thug rule" — you can't fight the major antagonist until you've fought and defeated his minions.)

Within a given school, the PCs can also develop friendships and rivalries with fellow students. Sometimes the worst enemy they can face is not another master, but a former comrade who's turned against them out of greed, wickedness, or misunderstanding.

Ninja: These stealthy, supremely skilled spy-assassin-scouts appear in numerous martial arts stories. In some cases, they are utterly deadly — even one of them is enough to challenge an entire group of PCs. In other stories, they're like Nazis in *Pulp Hero* games — standard "cannon fodder" for the heroes to wade through on their way to the *really* dangerous opponents. Sometimes they even function as comic relief.

In *HERO System* terms, ninja learn the Ninjutsu style (UMA pages 45-47). UMA also includes, on pages 75-83, a Ninja Package Deal and lots of ninja special abilities and equipment.

Personal honor and sacrifice: To a *Ninja Hero* character, his personal honor (however defined) is everything. It dictates how he lives his life, whom he serves, and the way he conducts himself in a fight or crisis. At times, the course of an adventure puts him in the untenable position of having to do something terrible to uphold his honor, or violate his honor to do the "right thing" (like keeping a promise to a dying friend). That, however, plays into a related element of the genre, the theme of personal sacrifice. *Ninja Hero* PCs often have to give something of themselves — up to and including their lives — to accomplish a noble goal. And that's fine; they usually don't even blink an eye at what's required. To refuse would, after all, be dishonorable.

In *HERO System* terms, many martial artists take Psychological Limitations such as *Code Of Honor* or *Honorable* to reflect this element of the genre.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Ninja Hero has a long and proud history. The title was originally used for a book written by Aaron Allston and published in 1990. It included not only information on martial arts, but extensive campaign and character creation rules. Much of that information later made its way, in expanded and revised form, into *The Ultimate Martial Artist*, leaving the new *Ninja Hero* to focus on the genre itself and all the elements that make it so enjoyable for gaming. Hero Games has chosen to keep the title not only for nostalgia's sake, but because it's sufficiently evocative and descriptive for the average gamer to understand what the book's about from the title alone.

Revenge: Many *Ninja Hero* plots are driven by a desire for revenge — whether it's the PCs or their enemies seeking it. An ancient defeat, a real (or supposed) insult, or any action that causes dishonor can lead to a quest for vengeance. Often revenge is a to-the-death affair; the story only ends when the target of the revenge is killed, or kills his antagonist.

Rivalries and feuds: Related to both the “master and student” and “revenge” elements is the theme of rivalries and feuds. Clans, martial arts schools, and specific characters often develop rivalries with their peers, which sometimes develop into feuds lasting for generations. Dealing with these conflicts and their consequences can occupy a lot of the PCs' time and energy.

The supernatural: Ghosts, curses, prophecies, and strange Oriental magic abound in many *Ninja Hero* campaigns. Sometimes the PCs themselves can work magic, but more often magic is used against them as they oppose evil Chinese sorcerers, fearful undead minions, and the like.

Character Archetypes

Since martial arts campaigns can vary wildly among several different subgenres, it's sometimes difficult to pin down distinctive archetypes common to the genre. But certain character types, often defined more by personal philosophy, lifestyle, and fighting style than common powers or equipment, do exist. They include:

The American From The Orient

This character is a Westerner who's lived in the Orient so long, or spent so much time in Chinatown, that he's become an expert on the culture, and adopted Eastern philosophies and fighting styles. Even if he mixes in a few Americanisms, his behavior is more Asian than American.

To create a character like this, you need to mix a few distinctive Background Skills, Perks, and Disadvantages into the usual martial artist character sheet — things like City Knowledges of American cities, or Contacts in the American government or business community.

The Honorable Ninja

This character is a member of a ninja clan who, for reasons of his own, has turned his back on the wicked and/or mercenary ways of his brethren to walk a brighter path. He now uses his skills and abilities for noble and honorable causes, such as preventing evil landlords from throwing hapless widows and orphans out into the street.

See the “Ninja” discussion above for information on creating ninjas in the *HERO System*.

The Irritable Student

An Irritable Student, unlike most of his fellows, is hot-tempered and easily frustrated. He's got a lot of talent and potential, but he chafes under the slow and philosophical pace of instruction set by his master. He wants to learn how to fight, not perform meaningless chores! In the best martial arts stories, the Irritable Student eventually comes to understand the value of his master's choices, but never wholly loses his slightly renegade approach to the martial arts.

In the *HERO System*, you can create the Irritable Student by giving your martial artist an appropriate Psychological Limitation, such as *Aggressively Impatient* (Common, Strong; 15 points). He should start the game with a minimal number of maneuvers and related Skills (perhaps just the minimum 10 points' worth, plus an 8- KS of his style and the *Style Distinctive Feature* discussed in *The Ultimate Martial Artist*). As the game progresses, he quickly learns other maneuvers and abilities, thanks to his natural potential.

The Kickboxing Cop

A “kickboxing cop” is a law enforcement officer (or sometimes soldier) who uses his martial arts skills to keep himself safe on the streets and get his job done. Often considered something of a hothead or a renegade, he manages to keep his position because he consistently gets results when other cops are stymied.

In addition to buying an appropriate Martial Arts style (often Kung Fu or Karate), when building a Kickboxing Cop you need to select some cop Skills and abilities for him: Criminology, Deduction, Streetwise, various KSs, WF: Small Arms, Fringe Benefit: Local Police Powers, and so forth.

The Monk

This character is a religious ascetic, often on a pilgrimage from one temple to another, or on a mission to seek alms or help for the poor. Modest, unassuming, and quiet, he looks like a helpless pushover to bandits and thugs — but in truth he's mastered the martial arts and can easily look out for himself. After his attention is attracted to some

injustice, he uses his skills to help right it and save innocent people from oppression and evil.

The best way to represent the monk in a *Ninja Hero* game (besides his fighting style) is with certain Disadvantages — Psychological Limitations for vows of poverty or a requirement to help those in need, Social Limitations reflecting his place in a rigidly hierarchical society, Destitute, and so forth. Certain Fringe Benefits (like *Right To Marry* or *Right To Shelter*) are also appropriate.

The Naive Hero

The naive hero (or heroine) possesses tremendous fighting skills — but little or no knowledge of the world outside the temple, monastery, or compound where he's been training most of his life. He's so sheltered that he's easily fooled by con artists and villains, which can lead to situations both comedic and tragic.

The naive hero should have a lot of points in Martial Arts and related Skills and abilities, plus appropriate Disadvantages such as Psychological Limitation: *Naive* (Common, Moderate; 10 points).

The Samurai

Most appropriate to games set in medieval Japan, the samurai is a warrior trained in the use of the katana (and other Japanese weapons), and who follows a special code of honor called *bushido*. Bushido mandates obedience to one's liege-lord, resolute acceptance of death and danger, and personal sacrifices when necessary to achieve one's goals. Masterless samurai, or *ronin*, also exist, and often become mercenaries or troublemakers.

Characters in other places and times often adopt the samurai mentality (and even training), and so qualify for this archetype. In some campaigns (such as *Star Hero* games), characters may encounter entire races or species that qualify as "samurai" for game purposes.

The samurai should have one or more appropriate Martial Arts styles (definitely Kenjutsu, possibly also Jujutsu), plus other warrior skills. *Code Of Bushido* is a Psychological Limitation (Common, Total; 20 points).

The Unwilling Fighter

This character, although possessed of tremendous fighting skills, is reluctant to use them. He's a pacifist, or for some other reason eschews violence. Unfortunately, the events of the story inevitably sweep him up and put him in a position where he has to fight — often to seek vengeance on evil men who have wronged him or his loved ones.

You can build an unwilling fighter similar to a naive hero — lots of points in Martial Arts and related abilities, plus a Psychological Limitation like *Pacifist* (Common, Total; 20 points).

Subgenres

Although most types of *Ninja Hero* campaigns do share some story themes, features, and archetypes, they also have some significant differences. Some of the subgenres common to this genre include:

Realistic Martial Arts

A realistic martial arts story or campaign involves plenty of fighting action, but attempts to model the real world fairly closely. The PCs cannot

perform incredible stunts, there is no element of the supernatural, and so forth. The characters' enemies include rival martial artists, criminals, Chinese and Japanese organized crime, and so forth.

Realistic martial arts campaigns are Heroic, with characters typically built on 75 Base Points + 75 Disadvantages.

Cinematic Martial Arts

Cinematic martial arts are a sort of intermediary step between "realistic" and "wuxia" — the events, characters, and abilities portrayed veer away from absolute realism, but not into the completely outrageous. Many martial arts action movies fall into this category.

Cinematic martial arts campaigns are usually Heroic, but with higher point totals than realistic campaigns (Powerful or Very Powerful Heroes).

Wuxia Martial Arts

Wuxia ("woo-shee") ratchets the action and spectacular effects of a cinematic martial arts campaign up a notch. In a wuxia campaign, characters can run up walls, stand on thin branches or narrow poles to fight, leap tremendous distances, and perform other impossible feats. Many have their own "secret" fighting techniques, honed by years of practice.

Wuxia PCs are usually Superheroic, either Low-Powered or Standard. This gives them enough points to buy all the amazing powers they have. They should normally pay points for weapons and equipment as well (especially since many of them use unique, or uniquely powerful, weapons).

Video-Game Martial Arts

This style of martial arts campaign simulates American and Japanese "fighting" video games. In some ways it mingles with *Champions*, in that the characters are often extremely unusual (aliens, lizardmen, cyborgs, and so forth) or possess blatant superpowers (like armored skin, fiery fists, or energy projection). The characters are built on a Standard Superheroic scale.

Anime Martial Arts

"Anime" martial arts campaigns derive from or imitate Japanese animated cartoons. These campaigns can take place in any time period or setting the GM desires; what sets them apart are the incredible powers displayed by the characters — powers even more amazing than those of video-game martial artists. They can project energy bolts powerful enough to affect entire buildings, punch someone a hundred times in the blink of an eye, run so fast others can only see their afterimages, transform their bodies into stone or metal, and so forth. They're built using Superheroic guidelines (the GM determines the exact level and amount of points, based on the setting for the game).

Sample Character

Here's a sample cinematic martial arts character, Yeung Li, for you to use if you like. You can easily beef him up to wuxia or greater levels by changing the campaign parameters and giving him more points.

YEUNG LI

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
20	STR	10	13-	Lift 400 kg; 4d6 [2]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
18	CON	16	13-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
12	EGO	4	11-	ECV: 4
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
10	COM	0	11-	
8	PD	4		Total: 8 PD (0 rPD)
6	ED	2		Total: 6 ED (0 rED)
4	SPD	12		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
8	REC	0		
36	END	0		
29	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 77

Movement: Running: 9"/18"
 Leaping: 9"/18"

Cost	Powers	END
	Martial Arts: Long Fist Kung Fu	
	Maneuver OCV DCV Notes	
4	Block +2 +2 Block, Abort	
4	Dodge +0 +5 Dodge all	
		attacks, Abort
5	Kick -2 +1 12d6 Strike	
4	Knife Hand -2 +0 1d6+1 HKA	
		(2½ d6 w/ STR)
4	Punch +0 +2 10d6 Strike	
3	Throw +0 +1 8d6 +vel/5,	
		Target Falls
4	Tien-hsueh Strike -1 +1 4d6 NND (1)	
16	+4 Damage Classes (already added in)	
6	Swift: Running +3" (9" total)	1
5	Leap Of The Grasshopper: Leaping +5" (9" total)	1

Skills	
3	+1 with Kung Fu
3	Acrobatics 13-
3	Breakfall 13-
3	Stealth 13-
6	WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons, Common Martial Arts Weapons

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 73
Total Cost: 150

75+ Disadvantages	
5	Distinctive Features: Monks Garb And Demeanor (Easily Concealed, Noticed And Recognizable)
20	Hunted: Shòu Min and her bandit gang 11- (Mo Pow, NCI, Kill)
15	Psychological Limitation: Honorable And Noblehearted; Must Help Those In Need And Fight Fairly (Common, Strong)
10	Psychological Limitation: Naive (Common, Moderate)
10	Reputation: dangerous fighter and troublemaker, 11-
15	Rivalry: Professional and Romantic (with head of monastery regarding fighting prowess and the affections of Ma Mei; Rival Seeks To Harm/Kill Yeung Li)

Total Disadvantage Points: 150

Typical Equipment
Jien (Chinese broadsword; HKA 1d6, STR Min 10)
Chiang (Chinese spear; HKA 1d6+1 or HA +3d6, STR Min12)
Monk's clothes and accouterments

Background/History: Yeung Li was abandoned on the doorstep of a monastery by his mother, and grew up among the monks in their cloistered society. He spent all his time doing chores and practicing martial arts. Today, grown into a young man, he is strong and fit, and a skilled fighter.

Due to an unfortunate circumstance, Yeung Li was forced to leave the monastery to seek his fortune in the wide world. The head monk had a mistress, Ma Mei, who developed an affection for Li instead — an affection he returned. The head monk cast him out in disgrace, into a world he knew very little about. Still consumed by jealousy, the head monk often pursues Yeung Li, or has friends who owe him favors harass the young man. Thanks to their influence, Yeung Li is widely regarded as a hotheaded troublemaker, causing local officials to keep a careful eye on him (even though, in truth, he's unassuming and heroic).

Yeung Li ran into difficulties almost as soon as he left the monastery. While traveling to the nearest town, he encountered some bandits robbing a family. Without a thought for his own safety, he leapt into the fray and drove the robbers off with his fierce fighting. Unfortunately, the thugs were part of a large and influential gang led by Shòu Min, the notorious “Bandit Queen” of the central provinces. Furious that one man could thwart her desires so easily, Shòu has ordered her men to track him and kill him on sight.

Unaware of Shòu Min's enmity toward him, Yeung Li continues his journeys, never seeking adventure, but always seeming to find it somehow.

Personality/Motivation: Yeung Li is a classic naive hero. Though quite skilled at fighting, and possessed of a strong sense of honor and desire to right wrongs, he knows little of the world at large, or of the ways people interact with each other. He's constantly committing *faux pas* and having to apologize or otherwise make amends. Despite these difficulties, he remains intensely curious about the world around him. He's eager to meet new people, see new sites, and do new things.

Quote: “There is more to kung fu than knowing how to punch or kick. There is honor, there is understanding.”

Powers/Tactics: Yeung Li is a gifted practitioner of the martial arts, who's been studying Long Fist Kung Fu for nearly all his life. He favors punches and throws in most situations. If necessary, he can use his *jien* (broadsword) or *chiang* (spear), but he usually prefers to rely on fists and feet rather than sharpened steel.

Appearance: Yeung Li is a young Chinese man of average appearance. He wears the typical robes of a monk (usually quite dusty from his travels, and perhaps a bit scuffed or torn after his fights), and carries himself with a monk's demeanor.

MODERN-DAY ACTION

DARK CHAMPIONS

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Dark Champions, originally published in 1993, got its name because it was initially conceived as a subgenre or companion book for *Champions* itself. It focused mainly on vigilante crimefighters in the tradition of Batman or the Punisher. The term has since expanded to encompass modern-day action campaigns involving espionage, technothriller stories, weird conspiracies, and the like. Although another name, such as *Action Hero*, might fit the genre better, so many Hero gamers are accustomed to talking about “*Dark Champions* campaigns” that the name is worth keeping.

Well-armed costumed vigilantes, opposing killers and crime syndicates the police can’t possibly hope to stop. Suave spies dressed to the nines but ready to spring into action at the drop of a poker chip. Criminals more evil, more cruel, than any four-color supervillain. Soldiers, mercenaries, assassins, and terrorists. All these people, and many more, inhabit the world of *Dark Champions* — a world of action, adventure, and often deadly excitement.

Campaign Guidelines And Standards

In *HERO System* terms, *Dark Champions* campaigns are usually Heroic, typically with Powerful characters (as in published *Dark Champions* books for the 5th Edition) or Standard ones. Gamemasters sometimes expand the allowable points characters can acquire from any one category of Disadvantages to 30 or 40, since some Disadvantages (such as Hunted and Psychological Limitation) are more common and important in this genre than other Heroic genres. Characters typically obtain normal equipment with in-game money instead of Character Points, are subject to Normal Characteristic Maxima by default, and use the Hit Location rules and many other such options.

Genre Conventions And Features

Dark Champions campaigns can vary pretty dramatically from one GM to another, but most share certain features or elements. These include:

Gritty, dramatic action: First and foremost, *Dark Champions* games are characterized by a sort of “gritty dramatic realism” and action. They feature characters who are more or less realistic — ordinary humans, not superhumans, using training, equipment, and their wits to overcome obstacles and enemies. They take place more or less in the “real world,” even if there happen to be superhumans in other parts of that world (the dramatic rules governing the genre keep the two from mingling to any significant extent, because if they did, the *Dark Champions* characters would quickly be overwhelmed by their more powerful “comrades”). They focus on the problems and perils of the real world — organized and disorganized crime, societal decay, terrorism, war — rather than on the fanciful plots of supervillains or dark overlords.

Conspiracy: In many modern-day action stories, conspiracy plays a significant part. The characters often find themselves opposing, or even manipulated by, shadowy cabals of power-brokers who are trying to conceal something from the rest of the world

(either because doing so benefits them, or to protect humanity from the implications of the secret facts). The characters often find themselves in situations where things aren’t as they seem, or where they don’t have all the facts — thus forcing them to take extra steps to outwit their enemies and learn the truth.

Espionage: Espionage — ranging from the relative realism of John Le Carré novels to the over-the-top “spywork” of James Bond movies — factors into many *Dark Champions* campaigns. The characters (one, some, or all of them) may be spies, or have received training from an intelligence agency (either a real one, like the CIA, or a fictitious one created by the GM). Or they may find themselves entangled in espionage matters during the course of their adventures.

Guns and violence: *Dark Champions* is all about action, and that action often involves violence — be it a car chase, a brawl, or, most likely of all, a gunfight. Most *Dark Champions* characters go around heavily armed, ready at all times to defend themselves from their enemies or put a stop to crime.

Hot cars and cool gear: In addition to guns, *Dark Champions* characters use all sorts of gear and technological resources. From expensive sportscars (often tricked out with hidden weapons and gadgets), to high-tech lockpicks and security scramblers, to the latest laptops specially prepared for hacking and data theft, they’ve got all sorts of gear to help them get the job done.

Military and government: *Dark Champions* characters are as likely to find themselves involved in military or governmental matters as espionage. Many of them have military training in their backgrounds, and depending on the nature of the campaign they may still be in the military (and thus have the Social Limitation *Subject To Orders*). Military-oriented adventures may include rescuing a lost or trapped group of soldiers, preventing the theft of nuclear or biological weapons (or recovering them after they’ve been stolen), or conducting special forces-style raids or assaults against targets designated by the characters’ superiors.

Character Archetypes

In the *Dark Champions* genre, character archetypes are typically defined by the Skills they commonly possess and most frequently use during adventures, though a few (such as Vigilante) are more defined by their attitude and activities. In many campaigns, each archetype essentially has a specific “job” within the team, based on his abilities (though a good team has enough overlap between characters’ abilities to keep it from becoming too dependent on any one member).

The Hacker

The hacker is a technology expert. As the name indicates, he's usually got a high *Computer Programming Skill*, but most hackers go beyond that, learning Electronics, Security Systems, and/or Systems Operation in addition to whatever other abilities they might possess. If the team needs to retrieve some data from an encrypted hard drive, or plant a virus in an enemy's system, the hacker's the man for the job.

The Security Specialist

Often similar to the hacker in many ways, the security specialist is an expert at infiltration and retrieval — breaking and entering, theft, and similar tasks. His Skills usually include Concealment, Electronics, Lockpicking, Security Systems, and Stealth, among others.

The Soldier

The soldier is a combat expert. Most *Dark Champions* characters have at least some combat abilities — a WF or two, if nothing else — but the soldier has special combat training. Often a veteran of a special force or elite unit, he not only has plenty of WFs, but often Autofire Skills, Demolitions, Martial Arts, Stealth, Tactics, TFs, and Weaponsmith. He usually carries the heaviest weapons in the group.

The Spy

A spy is a character trained in the arts of espionage, spycraft, and intelligence-gathering. He has an eclectic blend of skills covering many subjects: guile and trickery (Acting, Disguise, Mimicry, Seduction); covert information-gathering (Bugging, Computer Programming, Conversation, Shadowing); and combat (Demolitions, Martial Arts, WFs). Many spy characters have to pick one area to “specialize” in, gradually expanding the scope of their abilities as the campaign progresses. In keeping with the James Bond tradition, many have high COMs, and Skills like Gambling or High Society.

The Vigilante

The vigilante is a character who, disgusted with the rampant crime in modern society, has taken it upon himself to put an end to it — whether by beating up criminals and leaving them for the police, or more extreme methods. Often defined by their Disadvantages (particularly Psychological Limitations like *Obsessed With Crimefighting* or *Devoted To Justice*) as much as by their abilities, they can be complex and intriguing characters to play. They usually have a generous helping of combat Skills, plus Skills like Computer Programming, Stealth, and Streetwise.

The Wheelman

A wheelman is a specialist in driving and/or piloting. He's the team's getaway man, the guy who provides cover support, and the person everyone relies on when the bad guys try to get away by starting a car chase. Combat Driving and/or Combat Piloting are musts for this character, along with Mechanics and a generous helping of Transport Familiarities. Beyond that, the wheelman often has support Skills that allow him to back up other members of his team.

Subgenres

Although they have a lot of overlap in most cases, there are several distinct subgenres in *Dark Champions*. They include:

Dark Champions (Vigilante Crimefighting)

In its purest form, *Dark Champions* is about what its title refers to: vigilante crimefighting in a comic book style. Taking its cue from heroes such as Batman, the Question, the Punisher, and Vigilante, it features characters who, though often dressed in costumes of some sort, lack true superpowers. Instead, they get by with Skills, training, gadgets, and weapons (often special ones of their own devising). Depending on the GM's preferences, the game can become extremely grim and gritty, or remain closer to its roots in four-color comics.

Dark Champions: The Animated Series

If a *Dark Champions* game gets *too* close to its four-color roots, what emerges is a sort of hybrid subgenre called *Dark Champions: The Animated Series*. DC:TAS campaigns typically feature characters who have the Psychological Limitation *Code Against Killing* (a rarity in this genre), and also more than a few other bits and pieces from the superhero genre: weird costumed villains, impossible technology, and the like. “Theme” villains, each patterning his costume, abilities, and crimes around a favored, but bizarre, concept (like puzzles, an animal type, or dark comedy), appear frequently.

Espionage

Espionage campaigns (sometimes known as *Danger International* games, based on the title of an old Hero Games product that covered this subject) focus on the “great game” of intelligence-gathering and political intrigue. Typically they occur in the modern era or during the Cold War period, but sometimes GMs create fun variants, such as espionage-fantasy or espionage-science fiction. The characters’ opponents include enemy spies, enemy soldiers, terrorists, assassins, double agents, and large-scale criminal organizations (often fictitious ones, such as James Bond’s long-time adversary SPECTRE).

Law Enforcement

Some *Dark Champions* campaigns cast the characters in the role of law enforcement officers — anything from beat cops, to FBI agents, to officers of Interpol. The emphasis is usually on action and excitement, with gamers taking their cues from police movies like *Lethal Weapon*, rather than on true police procedure (which is often dull).

Characters in a law enforcement campaign usually have a Package Deal to provide them with the mandatory Skills and abilities they need to function as cops. These include Combat Driving, Streetwise, WF: Small Arms, and Fringe Benefit: Local Police Powers, among others.

Military

In a military game, the characters are all soldiers of some kind — typically special forces operatives, or some sort of elite unit. Alternately, they may be mercenaries of some kind. In either case, the characters are called on or hired to do what they do best: fight, capture, destroy, and emerge victorious. They may have to pin down an enemy regiment so it can’t get to a battle elsewhere, sneak into a heavily-guarded installation to rescue hostages or steal valuable technology, or lead the invasion of an enemy nation. Compared to other *Dark Champions* characters, military PCs usually have access to much more firepower and force, and have a much greater chance of effecting lasting change in the world around them.

Weird Conspiracy

Popularized by television shows such as *The X-Files*, this subgenre introduces an element of the weird and the occult into *Dark Champions*. The premise of the campaign is that there’s more out there than humanity knows about (or can comfortably acknowledge), and the PCs have to both investigate this concept and deal with its ramifications. In a weird conspiracy game, things like aliens and UFOs, Bigfoot, cults with magic (albeit low-powered magic) that actually works, bizarre genetic throwbacks of men and animals, and much, much more actually exist. The genre also often features conspiratorial groups trying to hide or exploit these phenomena for vague and shadowy reasons the player characters can never quite pin down. Investigation, mystery, and an eerie feel are the hallmarks of this subgenre, not gunfights and car chases.

Sample Characters

To get you started in this genre, here are two sample characters: the Verdict, a *Dark Champions* vigilante; and Alena Drake, a spy working for the CIA.

Perks

- 1 Fringe Benefit: License To Practice Law

Talents

- 6 Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)

Skills

- 16 +2 with All Combat
 5 +1 with Ranged Combat
- 3 Acting 13-
 3 Bugging 13-
 3 Bureaucratics 13-
 3 Combat Driving 13-
 3 Computer Programming 13-
 3 Concealment 13-
 3 Criminology 13-
 3 Deduction 13-
 3 Disguise 13-
 1 Electronics 8-
 3 Fast Draw (Small Arms) 13-
 3 Forensic Medicine 13-
 3 KS: Criminal Law 13-
 3 KS: (Campaign City) Underworld 13-
 3 Lockpicking 13-
 3 PS: Attorney 13-
 3 Security Systems 13-
 3 Shadowing 13-
 3 Stealth 13-
 3 Streetwise 13-
 3 TF: Common Motorized Ground Vehicles,
 Two-Wheeled Motorized Ground Vehicles
 3 WF: Small Arms, Blades

THE VERDICT

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [1]
15	DEX	15	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
18	CON	16	13-	
14	BODY	8	12-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll 12-
12	EGO	4	11-	ECV: 4
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
10	COM	0	11-	
6	PD	3		Total: 9 PD (3 rPD)
4	ED	0		Total: 7 ED (3 rED)
4	SPD	15		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
7	REC	0		
36	END	0		
31	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 81

Movement: Running: 7"/14"

Cost	Powers	END
	Martial Arts: Commando Training	
	Maneuver OCV DCV Notes	
3	Aikido Throw +0 +1	3d6 + vel/5, Target Falls
4	Boxing Cross +0 +2	5d6
4	Choke -2 +0	Grab One Limb, 2d6 NND (2)
4	Karate "Chop" -2 +0	½ d6 HKA (1d6+1 with STR)
4	Kung Fu Block +2 +2	Block, Abort
2	Swift: Running +1" (7" total)	1
6	Sharp Senses: +2 PER with all Sense Groups	0

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 119

Total Cost: 200

100+ Disadvantages

- 20 Hunted: Cabrera Mafia Family 8- (Mo Pow,
NCI, Kill)
 20 Hunted: Police 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
 20 Psychological Limitation: Devoted To Justice
(Very Common, Strong)
 10 Psychological Limitation: Vengeful
(Uncommon, Strong)
 15 Reputation: murderous, out-of-control
vigilante, 11- (Extreme)
 15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Robert
Markham) (Frequently, Major)

Total Disadvantage Points: 200

Typical Equipment

.44 Automag (RKA 2d6, +1 Increased STUN
Multiplier, 7 shots, two extra clips)
 Another .44 Automag
 Walther PPK-S (RKA 1d6, +1 OCV, -1 RMod, 7
shots)
 Silencer for Walther
 Taser (EB 6d6, NND [defense is insulated rED];
No Range, 6 Charges)
 Knives (2) (HKA 1d6-1, STR Min 4)
 Customized Body Armor (6 PD/6 ED)

Background/History: After completing a tour of duty in the U.S. Army, Robert Markham returned home, attended law school, and after graduation got a job with the local public defender's office. He worked there for nearly a decade, becoming progressively more and more disgusted with "the system." Every day it was his job to try to free people so socially maladjusted, so dangerous, that they ought to be locked up forever, not given a slap on the wrist. The final straw was when a client he had successfully defended robbed him, beating him half to death in the process.

After he healed, Robert quit the PD's office. He knew now that it wasn't the place for him. He should be *opposing* the criminals, not helping them. And not by joining the prosecutor's office, either; it was time for... more *direct* action.

After withdrawing his life savings from the bank, Robert vanished. He spent over a year intensively training and studying, building himself into a warrior capable of taking on the scum of the underworld on their own turf and beating them. He acquired weapons, and even designed a distinctive suit of form-fitting body armor to protect himself from bullets and knives.

Since appearing on the streets last year, the vigilante who's identified himself only as "the Verdict" has been responsible for over 20 killings and many more brutal assaults. While the criminal element (except for the Cabrera mob, whom he's badly damaged with several raids) doesn't take the threat he poses seriously — yet — the police certainly do. A botched attack on a crackhouse several weeks ago, which was captured on film by a nearby TV camera crew, has brought him firmly into the public eye. He now finds himself completely isolated, pursued by both the law and the underworld, without anyone to turn to for help.

At least he knows who his enemies are.

Personality/Motivation: The Verdict's war on crime is motivated by two feelings. The first, and

most important, is his devotion to the concept of right and wrong. He has a strong sense of justice, and it dismays him when those who deserve punishment somehow escape it. His most common targets are criminals who've escaped the law due to "loopholes," or who have so far managed to elude capture.

The Verdict's other motivation, one he'd never admit to, is vengeance. Robert Markham has a vengeful streak to him, which is one reason why it took an attack on him personally to finally tip him over into the vigilante camp. Anyone who defeats or humiliates him becomes the complete focus of his attention until he gets even with them. It remains to be seen whether his desire for justice will ultimately diminish his vengeful nature, or his vengefulness will overwhelm him and his crusade.

Quote: "I'm not the judge or the jury, just the verdict. And the Verdict... is death!"

Powers/Tactics: Since he fights crime by himself, the Verdict is cautious. He prefers to investigate a target thoroughly before taking him on, using Skills like Bugging, Bureaucratics, Computer Programming, Criminology, Disguise, Lockpicking, and Shadowing to get the information he needs. Then he strikes at the most opportune moment — when his target is most vulnerable.

The Verdict prefers to use two customized .44 Automags. As a backup, he has a Walther PPK-S, with a silencer he can attach to it for times when stealth is paramount. He also carries two knives (one on the back of his belt, and another concealed in a boot) and a taser (for targets he needs to capture alive).

Appearance: The Verdict wears a suit of custom-designed body armor, complete with helmet. The armor is black, with dark red highlights; numerous straps and buckles reveal how it's fastened to his body. Robert Markham is a man in his early 30s, obviously fit and muscular, with piercing grey eyes, black hair, and a short black moustache and beard.

ALENA DRAKE

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 [1]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
14	CON	8	12-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll 13-
14	EGO	8	12-	ECV: 5
18	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack: 3½ d6
16	COM	3	12-	
4	PD	2		Total: 7 PD (3 rPD)
3	ED	0		Total: 6 ED (3 rED)
4	SPD	12		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
5	REC	0		
28	END	0		
25	STUN	3		Total Characteristics Cost: 78

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost Powers END

Martial Arts: Aikido

	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4	Dodge	—	+5	Dodge all attacks, Abort
4	Escape	+0	+0	35 STR versus Grabs
3	Hold		-1	-1 Grab Two Limbs, 30 STR for holding on
4	Joint Lock/Throw	+1	+0	Grab One Limb; 2d6 NND(1); Target Falls
5	Redirect	+1	+3	Block, Abort
3	Throw	+0	+1	4d6 + v/5; Target Falls
8	+2 Damage Classes (already added in)			

Perks

- 6 Contacts (defined by player or GM)
- 3 Fringe Benefit: Membership (CIA)
- 6 Fringe Benefit: Security Clearance (U.S. Government)

Talents

- 6 Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)

Skills

- 10 +1 Overall
- 3 Acting 13-
- 3 Combat Driving 13-
- 1 Computer Programming 8-
- 3 Concealment 13-
- 3 Conversation 13-
- 3 Cryptography 13-
- 3 Disguise 13-
- 1 Electronics 8-
- 1 Gambling (Card Games) 8-
- 3 High Society 13-
- 3 One or more CKs (defined by GM or player)
- 3 KS: The Espionage World 13-
- 1 Language: Spanish (basic conversation; English is native)
- 1 Language: Russian (basic conversation)
- 3 Lockpicking 13-
- 3 Persuasion 13-
- 3 PS: Spy 13-

- 3 Security Systems 13-
- 3 Seduction 13-
- 3 Shadowing 13-
- 3 Stealth 13-
- 5 TF: Common Motorized Ground Vehicles, Basic Parachuting, Snow Skiing, Two-Wheeled Motorized Ground Vehicles
- 2 WF: Small Arms

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 122

Total Cost: 200

100+ Disadvantages

- 20 Hunted: Russian Mafia group 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Kill)
- 20 Hunted: enemy intelligence agency (defined by GM) 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Claustrophobia (Uncommon, Total)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Curiosity (Common, Moderate)
- 15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity (normally lives under the identity of Monica Rossington, wealthy dilettante) (Frequently, Major)
- 20 Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)

Total Disadvantage Points: 200

Typical Equipment

- Holdout Pistol (RKA 1d6+1, 4 shots)
- Lipstick Pistol (RKA 1d6, 1 shot, built into a functioning tube of lipstick)
- Jewelry Communicator (HRRP, disguised as a necklace, watch, or other piece of jewelry)
- Mission-specific covert equipment

Background/History: The daughter of a career diplomat and a political science professor, Alena Drake had an interest in government from an early age. Her excellent college grades, and equally good performance on federal service exams, earned her a job in the State Department. That, in turn, brought her to the attention of certain officials in the CIA who, recognizing her potential for intelligence work, arranged to have her transferred to the Agency.

After an extensive and gruelling period of training, Drake began her career as a field agent. Since then she’s performed admirably on several assignments. But she’s not been without her share of mishaps and disasters; one mission resulted in a short but extremely unpleasant period of confinement that’s left her claustrophobic, and another revealed her activities to a Russian Mafia organization that’s been trying to eliminate her ever since. But whatever challenges lie ahead, she’s confident she can handle them.

Personality/Motivation: Alena Drake is capable, self-assured, cool-headed in times of crisis, and quick-thinking. In short, she has attributes that make her well-suited to field work as an espionage agent. The only thing that tends to impair her efficiency is her curiosity; she’s all too often tempted to stick her neck out just a little too far to learn about something that seems important or interesting. (That’s how the Russians found out about her, for example.)

Quote: “Please, General, tell me more. Your work is so fascinating to someone like me who knows nothing of military matters!”

Powers/Tactics: Alena Drake typically works “undercover,” using a cover identity (Monica Rossington, wealthy dilettante) established for her by the CIA. This allows her to mingle with the rich and powerful without seeming threatening. Her supposed riches, and obvious good looks, gain her entrance to many places a male agent could never go.

Drake typically carries few (if any) weapons, preferring to rely on her wits as much as possible. For times when danger threatens, she keeps her Holdout Pistol (a small firearm specially designed for her by the Agency) hidden on her person, as well as other weapons and gear disguised as ordinary items. If she can’t get to a weapon, she’ll use her Aikido.

Appearance: Tall and slender, with an attractive figure, Alena Drake tends to grab attention wherever she goes. Shoulder-length straight hair frames her pretty face, with its green eyes. As Monica Rossington, she usually affects a slightly bored and distracted air; but when on the job in her true identity, she’s focused, attentive, and wary.

BASIC SPY PACKAGE DEAL	
Ability	Cost
Stealth	3
WF: Small Arms	2
Pick 18 points’ worth of Skills from the following list:	
Bribery, Bugging, Bureaucrats, Computer Programming, Conversation, Demolitions, Electronics, Fast Draw, Forgery, Gambling, High Society, Lockpicking, Security Systems, Seduction, Shadowing, Systems Operation, Weapon Familiarity	18
Disadvantage	
Social Limitation: Subject To Orders	-20
Total Cost Of Package	3

THE PULP ERA

PULP HERO

Strong-jawed, two-fisted heroes. Femme fatales as deadly as they are beautiful. Ancient artifacts, lands of mystery, and lost civilizations. Explorers and great white hunters. The looming Nazi menace. Masked mystery men fighting the mob with wit, skill, and thundering automatics. Weird science. Put them all together, and they mean one thing — pulp-era adventure!

The “pulp era” refers to the 1920s and ’30s, a time when the adventures of the Shadow, Doc Savage, and Indiana Jones took place. Much of the world remains basically unexplored and strange, full of potential for exotic and dangerous adventures. With World War I past, and World War II growing ever closer, it’s a time of both great opportunities and great danger — in short, the perfect time for heroes!

Campaign Guidelines And Standards

In *HERO System* terms, *Pulp Hero* campaigns are usually Standard Heroic games, with characters built on 75 Base Points + 75 Disadvantages, but some feature Powerful (100 + 100) characters instead. Characters typically obtain normal equipment with in-game money instead of Character Points, are subject to Normal Characteristic Maxima by default, and use the Hit Location rules and many other such options.

Genre Conventions And Features

Although pulp has a number of distinctive elements, such as the ones discussed below, the most important thing to preserve, but the hardest to grasp and use effectively, is the pulp “feel.” Pulp-era adventures have a distinctive taste to them, unlike other action-adventure genres. The heroes are larger than life — strong-jawed, two-fisted, better, brighter, more grand and glorious, somehow, than heroes in similar genres. Although they may appear hard-bitten and world-weary, they’re not — they are noblehearted and true, without the heartfelt bitterness and cynicism that marks so many modern-day heroes. They know a heroic attitude, a sharp mind, and a good right cross are enough to solve any problems they might encounter.

Conspiracy: Conspiracy abounds in many pulp adventures, particularly those of the crimefighting and mystery variety. Villains (and many heroes, for that matter) have networks of agents and contacts they use to accomplish their goals. Shadowy cabals of nefarious men plot the downfall of entire nations. Player characters may find tackling these organizations difficult!

Exotic settings: Pulp adventures often take place in strange, mysterious, and exotic locations. Characters chase thugs down the darkened alleys of Shanghai, explore previously undiscovered land in Africa, and duel villains to the death beside some enormous South American waterfall — they don’t just hang around the corner bar. Even in the crimefighting and mystery pulp stories, which often take place within a single city, characters often find hidden “grottoes” within the otherwise familiar cityscape.

Lands of mystery and lost worlds: Similarly, many pulp adventures focus on lands of mystery, lost worlds, and hidden civilizations. Characters might discover a second “world” inside the hollow earth which they can enter through a hole in Antarctica, a South American plateau where dinosaurs still live, a long-forgotten valley in Africa where classical Greek civilization lives on, or the like. Such places are always full of excitement, intrigue, and danger.

Masterminds and mad scientists: Pulp heroes’ deadliest enemies are often masterminds who seek to use their power to rule the world, or mad scientists who have perverted their knowledge and training for selfish gain. The villains, like the heroes themselves, have a larger-than-life quality that makes them lovably easy to hate — and extremely enjoyable to defeat!

Nazis: Another common enemy in many pulp campaigns is Nazis. With the Nazi party controlling Germany by 1933, the Nazis afflict almost half of the pulp era with their twisted ideals and schemes of conquest. Given Hitler’s supposed interest in archaeology and the occult, GMs can even bring Nazis into games involving mysticism and weirdness. Like orcs in *Fantasy Hero* games, Nazis are the foe every pulp hero can shoot without feeling guilty about it — though for best effect, the GM should occasionally introduce a Nazi villain who has a few noble or honorable qualities.

Science!: The pace of scientific and technological development was strong and steady during the first forty years of the twentieth century, and pulp adventure stories take advantage of that fact. In addition to regular science and gadgetry, “weird science” — in the form of primitive jetpacks, devices able to pull meteors down from the skies to devastate entire cities, and more — also appears from time to time. Used properly, weird science can add a lot to pulp adventures; just be careful not to overdo it.

You can create weird science gadgets using Powers (and sometimes Talents or Skills). Most have Limitations like *Activation Roll*, *Concentration*, *Extra Time*, or *Requires A Skill Roll* to reflect their primitive nature, tendency to breakdown, and the like.

WHAT’S IN A NAME?

Many years ago, Hero Games published a pulp-era game using the *HERO System* called *Justice Inc.* To this day many hardcore Hero fans still know and use the term, but most gamers don’t have any idea what it refers to. Since it doesn’t convey the nature or contents of the product at all, Hero has chosen not to perpetuate that name. Instead we’ll probably use *Pulp Hero*, which isn’t as colorful, but does have some meaning for potential customers.

The term “pulp” itself comes from the cheap pulp paper used for the magazines in which the stories that created this genre were printed.

EXAMPLE WEIRD POWER GADGETS

Jetpack: Flight 10" (20 Active Points); OIF (-1/2), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (1 Hour; -0), Requires A PS: Operate Jetpack Roll (-1/4). Total cost: 11 points.

Wrist Communicator: HRRP (12 Active Points); Activation Roll 13- (-3/4), OIF (-1/2). Total cost: 5 points.

Stun Dart Gun: Drain STUN 4d6, Ranged (+1/2) (60 Active Points); Activation Roll 14- (-1/2), OAF (-1), 8 Charges (-1/2). Total cost: 20 points.

Nightgoggles: Nightvision (5 Active Points); Activation Roll 14- (-1/2), OIF (-1/2). Total cost: 2 points.

Sidekicks: Pulp heroes often have assistance from sidekicks, agents, friends, or servants. The Shadow's corps of agents, Doc Savage's five friends, and the Spider's faithful manservant Ram Singh all participate in their adventures to some degree (even if only to get captured, thus providing the hero with plenty of motivation to defeat the villain). In some *Pulp Hero* campaigns, the player characters may actually *be* agents or "followers," with their master a shadowy figure who occasionally gives them instructions.

Character Archetypes

The list of pulp archetypes is just about endless, given the many "stock" characters that showed up in pulp stories. Some of the more common, and appealing to RPG players, include:

The Aviator

In the 1920s and '30s, air travel is still a new, exciting, and often dangerous undertaking. "Barnstormers" and pilots are daring men, given to thrillseeking and adventure, and thus make perfect pulp heroes. An aviator character needs Combat Piloting, Mechanics, Navigation (Air), and all appropriate TFs, plus a few other Skills to give him things to do when his plane is on the ground.

The Explorer

The explorer archetype includes any character driven to investigate and learn about the strange and mysterious places of the world — archaeologists, great white hunters, and true explorers who can't wait to learn what lies over the next horizon. Explorers usually have a lot of AKs and CKs, a good Survival roll, Stealth, and other Skills appropriate to their chosen profession(s) (like SS: Archaeology for a seeker of ancient artifacts). Doc Savage and Indiana Jones both largely fall into this archetype (though Doc can do so many things it's difficult to fit him into any one category).

The Heroine

In pulp adventure stories, women are often every bit as competent as men. Some are of the "Oh, I've twisted my ankle!" variety, but they're mostly NPCs. Female PCs, often women who've chosen not to accept the demure roll society tries to impose on them, can do anything men can do (but never seem to get too dirty or dishevelled).

The Mystery Man

A staple of the crimefighting pulp stories, the mystery man is a precursor to the superheroes of *Champions*. Dressed in clothing that conceals his identity — often not just a mask, but a cape or cloak of some kind — he uses his skills and training (usually including matchless aim with handguns) to seek out and defeat ordinary criminals, mastermind villains, and anyone else who threatens his fair city. The Shadow and the Spider, two of the best-known pulp heroes, provide perfect examples of this archetype.

Mystery men typically have Deduction, Stealth, Streetwise, and several WFs including Small Arms. Many other Skills and weird abilities (whether bought as Talents or Limited Powers) are also possible.

The Scientist

Some pulp heroes are masters of the technologies and sciences of the era. They can construct all sorts of interesting gadgets and gizmos to help themselves, and their friends, through dangerous situations. Doc Savage falls into this archetype to some degree.

A scientist needs Skills like Electronics, Inventor, Mechanics, Science Skill (several), and Systems Operation. Scientist characters often have a unique gadget or two, built with the *Focus* and *Independent Limitations*, to help them during adventures.

The Strong-Jawed Hero

Perhaps the most stereotypical pulp hero is the "strong-jawed" or "two-fisted" variety — a man possessed of nothing but heroic determination and the fighting skills of an honest American (*i.e.*, the Martial Arts style Fisticuffs). With his cleft chin, dashing good looks, strong muscles, friendly manner, implacable opposition to evil and injustice, and perhaps some experience or abilities learned during the Great War, he's perfect for any type of pulp adventure.

Subgenres

Pulp doesn't have subgenres so much as it simply applies its aesthetics and "feel" to stories of many different types. Thus, you can have pulp stories involving action/adventure, crimefighting, detectives and mysteries, espionage, exploration and discovery, horror and the occult, science fiction, suspense/thriller, Westerns, or the like. All the GM has to do is construct the campaign and its elements to ensure the pulp "feel." For example, in a pulp science fiction story, characters often wear garish uniforms with fins on their helmets and rayguns, explore weird alien planets that look as much like bad movie sets or magazine cover paintings as actual new worlds, and encounter a lot of aliens that somehow speak English. Such campaigns often blend the *Pulp Hero* elements with elements from the other genre they belong to (*Star Hero*, in this case), but the exact mix depends on the GM, the players, and the course of the campaign.

Sample Character

Here's an example character to get you started in *Pulp Hero*: Randolph Murdock, a bold explorer and strong-jawed hero.

RANDOLPH MURDOCK

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
20	STR	10	13-	Lift 400 kg; 4d6 [2]
15	DEX	15	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
20	CON	20	13-	
15	BODY	10	12-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
14	COM	2	12-	
8	PD	4		Total: 11 PD (3 rPD)
6	ED	2		Total: 9 ED (3 rED)
4	SPD	15		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
8	REC	0		
40	END	0		
35	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 86

Movement: Running: 9"/12"
Swimming: 3"/6"

Cost Powers END

Martial Arts: Fisticuffs

	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Damage/Effect
4	Block/			
	Chin Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4	Disarm	-1	+1	Disarm, 30 STR to Disarm roll
4	Kidney Blow	-2	+0	HKA ½ d6 (1d6+1 with STR)
4	Punch/Backhand	+0	+2	6d6 Strike
5	Roundhouse	-2	+1	8d6 Strike
3	Tackle	+0	-1	4d6 +v/5 Strike; You Fall, Target Falls
3	Throw	+0	+1	4d6 +v/5; Target Falls
6	Swift: Running +3" (9" total)			1
1	Strong Swimmer: Swimming +1" (3" total)			1

Talents

- 3 Bump Of Direction
- 6 Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)

Skills

- 20 +2 Overall
- 3 Fast Draw (Small Arms) 12-
- 3 High Society 13-
- 1 Language: French (basic conversation; English is native)
- 1 Language: German (basic conversation)
- 1 Language: Swahili (basic conversation)
- 1 Mechanics 8-
- 3 Riding 13-
- 3 Shadowing 13-
- 5 Stealth 13-
- 8 Survival (Mountains, Temperate/Subtropical, Tropical, Desert) 13-
- 3 Tracking 13-
- 6 WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons, Small Arms

- 3 Traveler
- 2 1) AK: Africa 12-
- 2 2) AK: India 12-
- 2 3) AK: The Middle East 12-
- 2 4) CK: Istanbul 12-
- 2 5) CK: Nairobi 12-
- 1 6) CK: Hudson City 11-
- 2 7) CK: Paris 12-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 114

Total Cost: 200

100+ Disadvantages

- 25 DNPC: Jubu (faithful manservant and gunbearer) 14- (Incompetent)
- 5 Distinctive Features: notable scar on left chin (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)
- 20 Hunted: Nazis 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture/Kill)
- 5 Hunted: Stanislaw Bremanski 8- (As Pow, Mildly Punish)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Fearlessly Heroic; Risks His Life Even In Obviously Lethal Situations (Very Common, Strong)
- 10 Rivalry: Romantic (Rival is a Player Character)
- 15 Social Limitation: Public Identity (Frequently, Major)

Total Disadvantage Points: 200

Typical Equipment

Colt M1911 (RKA 2d6-1, +1 Increased STUN Multiplier, +1 OCV, 7 shots)
Other guns as needed (hunting rifles and such)
Dagger (HKA 1d6-1, STR Min 6)
Lucky silver dollar

Background/History: Randolph Murdock grew up in Georgia. After fighting in the Great War, he decided he didn't want to return home, and eventually drifted down into Africa, where he became a hunting guide for Westerners. That, in turn, led to a job guiding some scientists deep into the interior, to search for some mysterious lost city they were looking for. Murdock refuses to say what happened on that expedition, but since then he's developed quite a reputation as an explorer and adventurer. He's been featured in the Western press on many occasions, and has worked with many other men (and women) of like mind and disposition.

Given his line of work, Murdock has understandably made a few enemies. First and foremost among these is Nazi Germany, whose schemes he has foiled on several occasions. As a result, he doesn't travel into Germany, or through German-occupied territory, if he can help it. Another is Stanislaw Bremanski, a former fellow hunting guide who's become so jealous of Murdock that he pursues him all over the world, trying to embarrass and inconvenience him.

Murdock has been linked in the press to a number of beautiful and eligible women, but in fact he's romantically inclined towards one of the female adventurers he works with. (It's up to the GM to decide who this is — and who the rival for her affections is....)

Personality/Motivation: Randolph Murdock is a typical strong-jawed hero. He believes in the virtues of honor, decency, kindness, refusal to back down in the face of cruelty or aggression, and a strong roundhouse punch. Although he doesn't live in America full-time, he's definitely got that roll-your-sleeves-up-and-get-the-job-done American attitude.

Quote: "Come on! There's a trail down this way. If we hurry we can cut those Nazis off and find the idol first!"

Powers/Tactics: Murdock relies on his strong punches, good aim, and heroic attitude to win through. He usually tackles a problem head-on, and if he can't make any headway, he backs off and looks for another solution. He's neither bullheaded nor foolish, and applies his native intelligence at all times.

Appearance: Randolph Murdock is a tanned, fit, muscular man 6'2" tall, with brown hair and olive eyes. It's obvious from his appearance that he spends a lot of time outdoors. On the left side of his chin, near the jawline, there's a distinctive scar he got from a lion's claw.

EXPLORER PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
8 points' worth of AKs and CKs	8
2 points' worth of Languages	2
Stealth	3
Survival	2
Total Cost Of Package	15

SCIENCE FICTION

STAR HERO

Hotshot space pilots, daring to attempt maneuvers that scare everyone else. Enormous starships able to move faster than the speed of light. Strange new planets, filled with alien flora and fauna. And aliens themselves — sentient races with a thousand different forms from a thousand different worlds. Characters who can use eerie powers of the mind to help, or harm. All this, and more, awaits you in the many worlds of science fiction... the province of *Star Hero*.

Campaign Guidelines And Standards

In *HERO System* terms, *Star Hero* campaigns are usually Standard Heroic games, with characters built on 75 Base Points + 75 Disadvantages. (Some campaigns, particularly those with a heavy emphasis on psionic powers, use higher point totals.) Characters typically obtain normal equipment with in-game money instead of Character Points, are subject to Normal Characteristic Maxima by default, and use the Hit Location rules and many other such options.

Genre Conventions And Features

Science fiction, like fantasy, is a broad and far-reaching genre. It encompasses everything from *The War Of The Worlds* and *20,000 Leagues Beneath The Sea* to *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, and *Dune*. Despite this breadth (and depth), a few elements are common to most science fiction. These include:

Technology: First and foremost, nearly all science fiction has the element of technology in common. Science fiction is, largely, about the relationship of man and technology — what technology enables men to do, the opportunities it offers, the perils it presents, the limitations it imposes (or abolishes). From blaster rifles, to teleportation devices, to time machines, to bio-engineering, advanced technology factors into almost every *Star Hero* story to some degree.

For the GM, the trick with technology is not to let it overwhelm the game. A *Star Hero* campaign should be about the PCs and their abilities and accomplishments — not what they own. The PCs definitely need access to high-tech gear (it wouldn't really feel like *Star Hero* without it!), but too much access may cause problems if they come to rely on their equipment instead of on themselves.

In *HERO System* terms, technology is typically built with Powers (though sometimes Talents or Skills factor in as well). Take a look at Chapter Four of the *HERO System 5th Edition*, and at the example powers in Chapter One, for lots of ideas and sample equipment.

Aliens: Most science fiction also deals, at least to some extent, with Humanity's interaction with other sentient species — be they Klingons, Mon Calamari, Minbari, plasma-beings from another dimension, or something even stranger.

To represent alien beings, particularly alien species players can use for their PCs, most GMs create Racial Package Deals (pages 16-17). In addition to any abilities native to the species (*e.g.*, higher than Human-normal STR for a silicon-based species, Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing) for a fish-based species), the GM should include in the Package any Skills and Talents common to the species that aren't represented by Everyman Skills.

Computers: One of the most common forms of technology to appear in science fiction is computers. They aren't absolutely necessary — one of the greatest science fiction epics ever written, *Dune*, doesn't really feature them at all — but they usually show up (especially these days, when computers have become so important a part of modern-day life that they can't help but intrude into the artistic consciousness). Many are artificially intelligent,

which raises all sorts of interesting story possibilities (remember HAL from *2001: A Space Odyssey*?).

To create a computer in *HERO System* terms, use the rules on pages 312-13.

Exploration: Many science fiction stories are premised on the theme of “What’s out there?” Space is enormous — more vast than the Human mind can comfortably handle, in some ways — so there’s always a frontier to explore. The new planets, races, and astronomical phenomena characters encounter during their journeys of discovery are ripe with adventure possibilities. Many of the best *Star Trek* stories, for example, involve exploration.

Mecha: In some science fiction stories, mecha or battlmechs — giant anthropomorphic vehicles armed with all sorts of weaponry — play a prominent part. To create a mecha in *HERO System* terms, use the Vehicle design rules, and give it Extra Limbs so that its Ground Movement simulates “running” rather than wheels, tracks, or hover technology.

Psionics: In many science fiction settings, some or all sentient species have the capacity for mental powers — telepathy, telekinesis, and the like. These are collectively referred to as “psionics” in most roleplaying game campaigns. Whether psionics exist in your *Star Hero* campaign, what type of psionic abilities characters can have, and how strong those abilities can be depends on the GM.

To create psionic abilities for *HERO System* characters, use Mental Powers (see page 78). In campaigns with a heavy emphasis on psionics, the GM may wish to allow players more Character Points to create characters with, since Mental Powers can get expensive.

Robots: Some science fiction settings, including *Star Wars* and Isaac Asimov’s *Robot* series, feature robots and androids — mechanical men, to use a crude and sometimes inaccurate term — as a common element. They can range from humanoid-shaped constructs able to do just about any job (and sometimes even to pass themselves off as true humans), to odd-shaped devices designed to perform one or two specific functions. In some settings, robots are governed by specially-programmed “laws” and ethical guidelines that prevent them from harming Humans (though the villains always seem to find a way to circumvent these “laws” at some point during the story).

To create a robot with the *HERO System*, you typically use the rules for Automatons (pages 310-11). Extremely sophisticated robots and androids might be built using the normal character creation rules instead, with appropriate adjustments in the special effects involved. For example, when a sophisticated robot is Stunned by an attack, it’s not really “Stunned” like an organic being would be, it’s simply had its systems knocked offline for a second or two — but the game effect is the same.

Space marines: “Space marines” is a generic term referring to science fiction soldiers, though the name is most appropriate for the kind of warrior appearing in books like Robert Heinlein’s *Starship Troopers* — heavily armored, carrying weapons of mass destruction and other devices designed solely to cause havoc and death. In a lower-tech *Star Hero*

campaign, a space marine might be an ordinary soldier with advanced body armor and ballistic weapons.

Starships: It’s hard to explore space, wage war against hostile aliens, or engage in interstellar trade if you don’t have a way to journey between the stars. So, starships — spacegoing vessels — appear in most science fiction stories. Some SF takes place entirely, or almost entirely, aboard a starship (much of *Star Trek* provides a good example of this). Most starships have FTL (faster-than-light) travel capability, defensive “shields” or “screens” of energy, and weapons such as energy beams or anti-matter missiles. Many other features or systems are of course possible.

To create a starship in the *HERO System*, use the Vehicle rules beginning on page 314. For FTL flight capability, use the *FTL Travel Power* (in some instances, *MegaScaled Flight* might also be appropriate).

Time travel: Common in some SF settings (or even the basis for them, as with *Doctor Who*), but rare or absent in others, time travel presents all sorts of intriguing adventure possibilities. If the PCs are time travelers themselves, they can mix and mingle with history’s most famous personalities, helping to ensure that historical events take the proper course. If they simply encounter other time travelers, they may find themselves dealing with events they don’t fully understand, with potentially catastrophic consequences if they make the least slip.

To create time travel devices in the *HERO System*, use the *Power Extra-Dimensional Movement*.

Character Archetypes

Since science fiction settings can vary wildly from one to another, not all archetypes are common across the entire genre. But some character types do tend to crop up frequently, including:

The Explorer

Many character types — prospectors, scouts, some types of scientists, personnel belonging to organizations like *Star Trek*’s Starfleet — are defined primarily by their desire to see what lies beyond the next solar system. Their skills and abilities are eclectic, reflecting the need to live on a starship (Combat Piloting, Navigation (Space), Systems Operation, appropriate TFs), conduct scientific surveys (Science Skills), and survive in potentially hostile environments (Martial Arts, Survival, WFs).

The Pilot

Just like in *Pulp Hero*, in *Star Hero* pilot characters are usually cocky daredevils, willing to take all sorts of crazy risks for the thrill involved and the pride of the accomplishment. The difference is they fly fighters armed to the teeth with weapons capable of destroying asteroids, vast starships able to reduce entire planets to rubble, modified smuggler ships fast enough to outrun patrol vessels, and the like.

Star Hero pilots need Combat Piloting, Navigation (Space), Systems Operation, some appropriate TFs, and perhaps a few technical Skills (Computer Programming, Electronics, Mechanics) to make running the ship easier.

The Psionic

In many science fiction stories and *Star Hero* campaigns, there's just one character in the group with psionic powers. That's his (or often, her) role to fill — he's "the guy with mental powers," instead of the sneaky guy or the guy with big guns. With the right selection of psionic abilities, a psionic can be a fun and effective character to play in a wide variety of scenarios.

In roleplaying campaigns where multiple (or all) characters have psionic powers, a character who wants to stand out for his use of psionics should either have more psionic abilities than average (*i.e.*, spend more Character Points on them than the other characters do), or should "specialize" in a particular type of psionic power (such as telekinetic abilities).

The Rogue

Gamblers, pirates, con men, smugglers, assassins, thieves, bounty hunters — all are types of rogues who ply the spacelanes, seeking to make a dishonest credit. Some (particularly those who are PCs) really have "hearts of gold" and act heroically when they need to, but most are outright scoundrels who wouldn't hesitate to sell their own grandmothers on the Denebian Slave Exchange if it was worth their while. And that just makes them all the more fun to defeat.

Most rogue characters have Skills like Computer Programming, Concealment, Conversation, Forgery, Gambling, Lockpicking, Security Systems, Seduction, Sleight Of Hand, Stealth, and Streetwise. It all depends on what sort of crimes the rogue prefers. A rogue who makes his money cheating in the star-casinos has a far different set of Skills than a cat burglar or pirate.

The Scientist/Technician

With all the technology featured in *Star Hero*, and all the scientific puzzles characters are likely to encounter, it's not surprising that scientists (and their counterparts, technicians and engineers) crop up frequently as PCs. Armed with a wealth of technology- and science-oriented Skills (Computer Programming, Electronics, Inventor, Science Skills, Systems Operation, and more), they're valuable allies in a setting where keeping the ship's support systems functioning can make the difference between life and death!

The Soldier

Particularly common to the Military SF subgenre (of course), but also frequently appearing in other types of SF, the soldier (be he an actual ground-pounder, a starship naval officer, a fighter pilot, or what have you) can play many roles. As a PC, he usually fights the good fight, protects innocents from aggressive aliens, and helps to guard trade convoys and passenger ships traveling through dangerous areas. As an NPC, he may be an honorable enemy, an amoral mercenary, or simply an opponent the PCs must kill, or be killed by.

Soldier characters usually have lots of WFs, Martial Arts, Stealth, Systems Operation, Tactics, and other Skills useful in military situations.

The Trader

Many *Star Hero* characters focus, in whole or in part, on interstellar economics. Usually traveling in small ships they pilot themselves, these traders and

merchants seek to buy low, sell high, and beat their rivals to the new markets. Acquiring, securing, and transporting cargo may sound dull, but when the PCs have cut-throat competitors to contend with, it can become a real adventure. And what happens when the valuable cargo itself proves dangerous...?

Subgenres

Science fiction has several gaming-friendly subgenres, including:

Hard SF

So-called "hard" science fiction is SF that pays close attention to "hard" scientific facts, deviating from them as little as possible. Complete scientific accuracy is rarely possible, but the creators of the story do their best to remain as accurate as they can. The resolution of the dilemma or conflict in the story often revolves around solving some scientific mystery.

Hard SF is difficult to pull off in a *Star Hero* campaign, unless the players and the GM alike are all interested in it and all highly scientifically literate. Even then, there's the danger of the game devolving into arguments about scientific "facts" instead of focusing on the creation of a fun story. The GM has to pay close attention, and work hard, to keep the game flowing smoothly.

Low SF

Often mingled with Hard SF, Low SF involves the lowest level of technology a story can feature and still qualify as "science fiction." There are no blasters; characters fight with advanced ballistic rifles. There's no FTL travel; characters have to cope with vectored thrust drives, cryo-ships, and the like. Humanity may not have even left its own solar system yet. But don't let a lack of advanced technology fool you into thinking the game can't have a grand, epic scope. After all, Frank Herbert's *Dune* features very little high technology, but it's a fantastic science fiction story.

Military SF

Military SF, obviously, focuses on the intersection of military stories and science fiction. A Military SF campaign may involve a vast interstellar war in which the PCs play a key role (as in the "Dominion War" story arc on *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*), a group of PCs who are a "special force" of space marines sent out to deal with crises (as with the characters in *Aliens*), a futuristic tank crew, or the like. Military SF stories are often also Hard and/or Low SF stories.

Space Opera

The opposite of Low SF, Space Opera features incredibly advanced technology — often tech so marvelous that it embodies Clarke's Law ("Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic"). Disintegration weapons, artificially intelligent computers, FTL travel, teleportation, and more are casual, everyday matters. *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* both represent, to varying degrees, this type of science fiction. As a *Star Hero* campaign, Space Opera presents the GM with the problem of finding challenges for the characters that they can't quickly and easily solve with gadgetry.

Time Travel

As described above, time travel stories usually involve protagonists who are time travelers themselves, or who encounter a time traveler and have to deal with the ramifications of his actions or the information he brings them. In a roleplaying game context, time travel works best if the PCs themselves are the time travelers (usually with an enemy group of time travelers they have to contend against). Before the game begins, the GM should develop a coherent theory of how time travel works

in his campaign, so he can deal with the players' questions and in-game conduct without too many difficulties.

Sample Characters

To give you an idea of what *Star Hero* characters are like, here are two examples: Hur'shaas, a reptilian space pilot; and Jessica Fivedawns, a Human explorer.

HUR'SHAAS

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [1]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
15	CON	10	12-	
13	BODY	6	12-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll 12-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack: 2½ d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
6	PD	3		Total: 8 PD (2 rPD)
4	ED	1		Total: 6 ED (2 rED)
4	SPD	12		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
6	REC	0		
30	END	0		
29	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 68

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Swimming: 4"/8"

Cost	Powers	END
4	Claws: HKA 1 point (½ d6 with STR); Reduced Penetration (-¼)	1
5	Sharp Teeth: HKA 1 point (½ d6 with STR)	1
6	Scaly Skin: Armor (2 PD/2 ED)	0
2	Reptilian Form: Swimming +2" (4" total)	1
6	Griinoq Senses: +2 PER with all Sense Groups	0
5	Tail: Extra Limb, Inherent (+¼); Limited Manipulation (-¼)	0

Perks

- 3 Fringe Benefit: Galactic Computernet Access Code

Talents

- 9 Griinoq Dexterousness: Ambidexterity (no penalties with either hand)

Skills

- 6 +2 with Ship's Weapons
- 3 Computer Programming 13-
- 7 Combat Piloting 15-
- 3 Electronics 12-
- 2 Gambling (Card Games) 12-
- 3 Mechanics 12-
- 4 Navigation (Space) 13-
- 3 Paramedics 12-
- 7 Systems Operation 14-
- 2 TF: Science Fiction & Space Vehicles
- 2 WF: Small Arms

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 82

Total Cost: 150

75+ Disadvantages

- 10 Dependence: must keep body at least partly immersed in warm water or suffers Weakness after 20 minutes of dehydration (Very Common)
- 10 Hunted: enemy pilots 8- (As Pow, Capture/Kill)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Thrillseeker (Common, Strong)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Hunts Enemy Pilots (Common, Moderate)
- 10 Rivalry: Professional And Romantic (with another pilot)
- 20 Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)

Total Disadvantage Points: 150

Typical Equipment

- Blaster Pistol (EB 9d6, 32 shots)
- Griinoq starsuit (DEF 4, helps keep body hydrated)

Background/History: Hur'shaas is a Griinoq, a reptilian species from a swampy world in the Perseid arm. Like all Griinoq, he must keep his body moist and hydrated at all times, or he begins to suffer painful (and possibly fatal) dehydration. On the other hand, he's stronger than the average Human, comes equipped with nasty fangs and claws, and has a handy tail and tough skin.

After aptitude tests revealed his qualifications for the Imperial Stellar Navy, Hur'shaas enrolled in the Piloting Academy, where he quickly distinguished himself. Since graduation, he's been helping the Stellar Navy prosecute its long war against the forces of the Interstellar League, which wants to cut off the Empire's trading routes and strangle it economically. He enjoys his job a lot; it's exciting, patriotic, and romantic. The only thorns in his side these days are those pesky League fighter pilots (who don't seem to learn that he's better than they are, keep trying to kill him, and just get killed themselves) and one of his fellow Imperial pilots, with whom he competes over number of dogfights won and the affections of the beautiful bartender at the spaceport's watering hole.

Personality/Motivation: Like many starfighter pilots, Hur'shaas is a thrillseeker — a daredevil who'll risk his ship and his life to perform some stunt or out-do another pilot. He's earned a bit of a reputation among his squadron for his daring raids on the League's capital ships. Some of his friends are concerned he's going to stick his neck out too far one of these days... and then the League's going to turn him into space debris.

Quote: "Hsss, four fighters coming in high and back on you, Commander! I'll get 'em!"

Powers/Tactics: Hur'shaas has received extensive starfighter pilot training at the Imperial Piloting

Academy. He's qualified to fly any type of starship used in Imperial space, but most of his training specifically involves starfighters. If he's forced down, his priorities are to (a) preserve the integrity of his starsuit (so he doesn't dehydrate), and (b) use his blaster to defend himself until his distress beacon summons help. If the blaster runs out of energy-charge, he can resort to his claws and fangs if he must, though he finds this somewhat distasteful.

Appearance: Hur'shaas is a tall, slender reptilian humanoid, with a lizard-like face, long, flexible tail, and scaly skin with a pattern of dull green and dull orange. His hands have short claws, and his teeth are sharp.

GRIINOQ PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
<i>Griinoq Dexterousness:</i> Ambidexterity (no penalties with either hand)	9
<i>Claws:</i> HKA 1 point (½d6 with STR);	
Reduced Penetration (-¼)	4
<i>Sharp Teeth:</i> HKA 1 point (½ d6 with STR)	5
<i>Scaly Skin:</i> Armor (2 PD/2 ED)	6
<i>Reptilian Form:</i> Swimming +2" (4" total)	2
<i>Griinoq Senses:</i> +2 PER with all Sense Groups	6
<i>Tail:</i> Extra Limb, Inherent (+¼);	
Limited Manipulation (-¼)	5
Disadvantage	
Dependence: must keep body at least partly immersed in warm water or suffers Weakness after 20 minutes of dehydration (Very Common)	-10
Total Cost Of Package	3

JESSICA FIVEDAWNS

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 [1]
15	DEX	15	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
16	CON	12	12-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
12	EGO	4	11-	ECV: 4
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
12	COM	1	11-	
5	PD	3		Total: 8 PD (3 rPD)
5	ED	2		Total: 8 ED (3 rED)
3	SPD	5		Phases: 4, 8, 12
5	REC	0		
32	END	0		
30	STUN	5		Total Characteristics Cost: 64

Movement: Running: 7"/14"
Swimming: 3"/6"

Cost	Powers	END
6	<i>Weak Psychokinesis:</i> Telekinesis (4 STR)	1
	Martial Arts: Commando Training	
	Maneuver OCV DCV Notes	
3	Aikido Throw +0 +1	2d6 + vel/5, Target Falls
4	Boxing Cross +0 +2	4d6
4	Choke -2 +0	Grab One Limb, 2d6 NND (2)
4	Escape +0 +0	25 STR vs. Grabs
4	Judo Disarm -1 +1	Disarm, 20 STR
4	Karate "Chop" -2 +0	½ d6 HKA (1d6+1 with STR)
4	Kung Fu Block +2 +2	Block, Abort
2	<i>Swift:</i> Running +1" (7" total)	1
1	<i>Strong Swimmer:</i> Swimming +1" (3" total)	1

Perks

- 2 Contact: Wulfram McGee 11- (a free trader)
- 3 Fringe Benefit: Galactic Computernet Access Code

Talents

- 6 Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)
- 3 Lightsleep

Skills

- 3 Bureaucratics 12-
- 3 Combat Piloting 12-
- 3 Computer Programming 13-
- 3 Electronics 12-
- 3 Navigation (Land, Space) 13-
- 2 SS: Biology 11-
- 2 SS: Geology 11-
- 3 Stealth 12-
- 6 Survival (Mountains, Temperate/Subtropical, Tropical) 13-
- 3 Systems Operation 13-
- 2 TF: Science Fiction & Space Vehicles
- 3 WF: Small Arms, Blades

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 86**Total Cost: 150****75+ Disadvantages**

- 15 Hunted: enemy scouts 11- (As Pow, Capture/Kill)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Wanderlust; Wants To Know What's Over The Next Horizon (Common, Strong)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Hunts Enemy Scouts (Common, Moderate)
- 10 Rivalry: Professional (with another explorer)
- 20 Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
- 5 Social Limitation: Harmful Secret (her psychokinetic power) (Occasionally, Minor)

Total Disadvantage Points: 150**Typical Equipment**

Blaster Pistol (EB 9d6, 32 shots)
 Scout armor (DEF 2)
 Machete (HKA 1d6)
 Field Sensor Unit

Background/History: Jessica Fivedawns, a Human of Cheyenne ancestry, has always had a nomadic soul. Even as a child, she was constantly wandering off to explore meadows and forests, instead of staying put and playing in her family's yard. It didn't surprise anyone when she joined the Imperial Scout Service and became a professional explorer.

Since the war with the Interstellar League broke out, Jessica's job has become far more militarized than she'd like. Now she really has to act like a scout — she monitors enemy movements, finds new worlds for the Imperial Star Navy to use as forward bases, and so on. She'd much rather go back to looking for new worlds for colonization or scientific examination, and she hopes the war ends soon.

Personality/Motivation: Except for her perpetual wanderlust, which tends to get her in trouble occasionally (especially in time of war!), Jessica is a fairly ordinary person. As a scout, she's something of a loner by profession, so when she's off-duty she enjoys spending time around other people in space stations and starports. Since her work doesn't allow for long-term relationships, she's developed a habit of getting involved in short-term romantic flings; she figures when she finds a man who makes her want to stay home instead of go exploring, that will be the time to quit the Scout Service.

Quote: “Hmmm, that's an interesting reading. Looks like a potentially breathable atmosphere. C'mon, Ship, let's go take a look!”

Powers/Tactics: Aside from standard scout training, which includes basic weapons use and hand-to-hand combat skills, Jessica doesn't have any combat abilities. But she does have one unique power that often makes her job easier — low-strength psychokinesis. She's had it since she was 18 years old, when it suddenly manifested for no reason she could discern. Since she doesn't want to run the risk of being involuntarily inducted into the Imperial Psionic Institute (even though that would mean more pay and privileges), she keeps this power secret.

Appearance: Jessica Fivedawns is a 5'6" tall woman with long, straight black hair often tied back in a braid. When not in her scout armor, she typically wears pilot jumpsuits and other such unisex clothing.

OTHER GENRES

Although the seven genres described above are certainly the most common ones found in roleplaying games, they're not the only ones — and since the *HERO System* can simulate any genre, gamers often use it to create unusual campaigns involving strange subgenres. Some other genres you can play with the *HERO System* include:

Horror

A *Horror Hero* game involves suspense, paranoia, and of course fear. Characters are typically Standard Heroic (at best) — if they're much more powerful than that, it becomes hard to frighten them. Typically they hunt monsters, investigate occult conspiracies, and cope with similar threats to life, mind, and soul. Given the *HERO System's* flexibility, GMs can use it to tailor monsters and other threats to suit the campaign and give the players the maximum scare.

To represent the long-term problems caused by stress and sustained fear, many *Horror Hero* GMs come up with a new Figured Characteristic to represent a character's capacity to withstand the effects of horror. For example, you might create a *Sanity* (SAN) Figured Characteristic, derived from $EGO + (PRE/2) + (CON/2)$. Characters lose Sanity like they lose STUN, but only from effects that are particularly terrifying, gruesome, or disturbing — the GM assigns a "Sanity Damage" rating (in d6) to each such phenomena. If a character drops to 0 SAN, he snaps and becomes completely insane (and an NPC under the GM's control) until he recovers his wits. Characters may regain lost SAN with REC, just like STUN, but do not get Post-Segment 12 Recoveries and can only make SAN Recoveries when they are in calming, non-stressful, non-frightening situations (*i.e.*, rarely in the middle of a scenario, but only between adventures). Many other versions of SAN (or the like) are possible; each GM sets it up to represent the feelings of horror he most wants to simulate.

Post-Apocalyptic

After society collapses — typically due to nuclear war, biological warfare, or some other holocaust that leaves the world in ruins — scavengers, scattered tribes of people trying to eke out a living, radiation-altered mutants, and the like are all that remains on Earth. This is the world of *Post-Apocalypse Hero*, the sort of setting depicted in Paul Williams's *Pelbar Cycle* novels and the *Thundarr the Barbarian* cartoon.

Post-apocalypse games are usually Standard Heroic campaigns, though the GM may allow more points if he wants all (or most) of the characters to have beneficial mutations or other strange powers. To set the campaign up, the GM needs to decide on several things, including: what caused society to collapse; how advanced was society when the collapse occurred; how much time has passed since the collapse; what is society (or various societies)

like now? He may need to institute special rules for mutations (for example, maybe anyone with a mutation must also take a Dependence, Susceptibility, or other specified Disadvantage), technology (the knowledge of which may largely have been lost), and if he wants it to exist, magic.

Swashbuckling

Bold musketeers swinging from chandeliers and duelling each other with rapiers. The pirates of the Spanish Main. Court intrigue in the time of Richelieu. Such are the stuff of swashbuckling adventure!

Both *Swashbuckling Hero*, which focuses on adventures in Europe (particularly France) in the early 1600s, and *Pirate Hero*, which focuses on the golden age of piracy in the Caribbean and the Atlantic, cover this genre/time period. Both use Standard Heroic characters, with few or no "weird" elements (unless the GM wants to introduce voodoo- or alchemy-like magic just to liven things up a bit). Most characters have Fencing (or Weapons Combat) as a martial art, but social skills are every bit as important as martial ones (at least in Europe).

Adventures feature court intrigue, ship-to-ship combat, war in Europe, and exploration of the New World.

Victorian

The Victorian era — typically meaning, for adventure gaming purposes, the latter half of the 1800s (particularly 1880-1900) — is similar to the pulp era in many respects. The world is opening up, but by no means fully open; there are lots of strange, unexplored places for adventurers to visit, and mysteries for them to plumb. Technology is advancing, and many wondrous devices are possible, but technology is nowhere near as prevalent or powerful as it is in the modern day. This is the world depicted in the writings of Verne, Wells, Doyle, R. Talsorian Games' *Castle Falkenstein* RPG, and Alan Moore's marvelous *League Of Extraordinary Gentlemen* comic book.

Victorian Hero campaigns are typically Standard Heroic campaigns. Most start in, or are based in,

London, the greatest city in the world during this era — though travel is as common, and as interesting, as in pulp times. Magic and other “weird” phenomena rarely make an appearance, though “steampunk” science sometimes does (GMs may need to come up with special rules for technology, to simulate the right “feel” and prevent characters from trying to do things like design lasers or the Internet a century early).

Western

Who can resist the allure of the Wild West, with its gun-toting cowboys, wild Indians, gold fever, vast unexplored lands, range wars, gambling, and vicious desperadoes in need of a good bullet-knockin’? In a *Western Hero* campaign, you can relive this amazing era and its adventures. *Western Hero* games usually have Standard Heroic characters (unless the GM introduces weird elements, like steampunk technology or magic, in which case he may want characters to have more points to work with).