



Bullet Points

Characters and Class Abilities

by Charles Ryan

Welcome to the twenty-third installment of *Bullet Points*. I'm Charles Ryan, one of the designers of the **d20 Modern Roleplaying Game**. I'm here to answer your questions about the game, offer advice on tricky issues, and give you a little peek into the minds of the designers. You'll be hearing from me every couple of weeks.

If you've checked out the earlier installments of *Bullet Points*, you know the format. Every two weeks I pick an issue that's provoked a lot of questions or comments, begin with a general discussion of the topic, and then answer specific questions related to it. If there are any unrelated but pressing questions in my mailbox, I might tackle them at the end of the column, but only if there's room and they can't wait for an appropriately themed column.

Characters and Class Abilities


Once again, questions on characters and class abilities have filled up the mailbox. I've already answered a bunch of questions about class abilities in this [May 2003 Bullet Points](#) column and this [July 2003 Bullet Points](#) column, so you might want to check out those articles if you have questions that you don't see answered here. Also, *Bullet Points: Characters and Class Abilities* offers a little insight into the design philosophy behind the character classes if your question pertains to why a particular class was designed the way it was.

Questions and Answers

Now let's move on to this issue's questions. We'll start with some general-purpose character-related questions, then move on to specific class abilities.

 **Is there any reason why a character could not take two (or more) advanced classes if he met the requirements for both?**


Absolutely no reason. A character is free to multiclass as he sees fit in **d20 Modern**, using any desired combination of base classes, advanced classes, and even prestige classes for which he meets the requirements.

 **When a character attains 4th level (or 8th, or any level that's a multiple of 4), she gets to increase an ability score by 1 point. If she increases her Constitution score and thereby her Con bonus, she gets more hit points for every previous level as well as for the level she just attained. For example, if at 8th level my hero raises her Constitution bonus by +1, not only does she get 1 more hp at 8th level, but she also gets 1 more hp for each of her previous seven levels. Does the same principle apply to Intelligence and skill points?**


Nope. Skill points cannot be increased retroactively, regardless of subsequent increases in Intelligence.

 **Can a character collect and keep action points, or is he allowed to keep only a certain number of them?**

There is no limit to the number of action points a character can accumulate. When he gains action points by attaining a new level, you add his new points to any points he currently has. You don't have to "throw away" action points from previous levels that he hasn't used yet. Thus, in theory, a character could accumulate action points throughout his entire career without spending any and have a huge pool of them (maybe even a couple hundred) available by the time he got to 20th level!

 **Let's say a hero takes levels in an advanced class that gives her a feat she has already taken. Does she get to pick another feat instead, or does she simply get no benefit for that level?**


In general, if a class gives you a feat you already have, you don't get to exchange it for anything else. However, if the feat is one that can be taken more than once, the character gains a second iteration of it. In other words, if a hero already has the Toughness feat, and a class gives it to her again, she just racks up another 3 hp because she's allowed to take Toughness multiple times. In the case of Weapon Focus, she would get the feat again but would have to apply it to a new weapon.

 **In the first edition of the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game*, the GM could just give out increases in Reputation when the characters did cool or important things. But in the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game*, the only rules I could find for increasing Reputation are associated with level advancement. Are there situations in which a character can increase his Reputation score without advancing a level?**


Basically, no. Reputation, like base saves, base attack bonus, and Defense, is level-based in the **d20 Modern** game. As written, the rules do not allow GMs to give out ad hoc increases to Reputation any more than they allow ad hoc increases to base attack bonus.

However, there's no reason you can't apply a circumstance bonus to Reputation checks when you think it's appropriate. A +2 bonus is typical for most situations, but you could make it any value you wish. For example, if the heroes' actions in their last adventure were really high-profile, you might consider giving each of them a +2 circumstance bonus on all Reputation checks for their next adventure.

Reputation is a strange statistic in that its importance varies significantly from one campaign to another -- much more so than base attack bonus, base saves, and other fundamental statistics do. In my own post-apocalyptic campaign, for example, Reputation is completely useless. But when I ran a Charismatic hero in another game, I really played his Reputation to the hilt. The point is that the degree to which you're willing to bend the rules on Reputation may depend on how frequently it's used in the game.


 **The military starting occupation lists *Combat Martial Arts* as a bonus feat, but that feat has a +1 base attack bonus as a prerequisite. Does that mean that only a Strong hero can choose it as a bonus feat, since only the Strong hero class gives a +1 base attack bonus at 1st level?**

Yes. Characters from other classes who choose the military occupation must choose one of the other bonus feats it grants, namely Brawl, Armor Proficiency (light), or Personal Firearms Proficiency.


 **Let's say that my Techie uses his extreme machine ability to give his gun a +3 bonus on damage rolls. Can he then use that same ability to give his laser sight a +3 equipment bonus on attack rolls? What about other uses? Can he use extreme machine to improve his medical kit so that it grants him an equipment bonus on Treat Injury checks?**

Extreme machine applies only to machines. As the first sentence of its description states, a machine can be souped up "if it has mechanical or electronic components." In many cases, the question of whether a given piece of equipment has such components is up to the GM, but I don't think a medical kit qualifies.


As for generating several bonuses that work together (such as increasing a weapon's damage and a laser sight's equipment bonus), sure, your Techie can do that. Just remember that each use of extreme machine costs him an action point.

 **A character with the Techie advanced class can build robots, and the construct frame DC depends on the frame's size, shape, locomotion, external components, and remote range. One of the external component options is manipulators, which "are necessary for a robot built to use any skill except Listen or Spot." Can these manipulators also wield Tiny weapons like the ones often seen in robot fighting shows on TV?**


It's certainly possible for a robot to pick up and carry a weapon, but not to wield it properly. A Techie's robot cannot make attacks; its actions are restricted to those given in the first paragraph of the build robot talent.

 **I assume that the description of the Investigator's sixth sense talent really means "roll the same dice, but keep one more," whereas the similar description of the Negotiator's no sweat ability means "roll one extra die and keep it instead."**


With sixth sense, the Investigator makes the skill check as normal, and then rolls 1d6 and adds that result to her check result. Ignore the example (the sentence that starts "So, if a 4th-level Dedicated. . ."). It's very poorly worded and only makes the ability more confusing.

 **Do the benefits of the coordinate and inspiration talents stack? Since they are unnamed bonuses, I always assumed they did; however, I began to doubt that assumption when I noticed that the text specifically mentions that inspiration and greater inspiration stack, but says nothing about inspiration and coordinate. Of course, if they do stack, the combo could yield (with greater inspiration) a +4 bonus on allies' attack rolls!**

Your instincts about unnamed bonuses were correct...they do stack. Keep in mind the limitations (in particular the time limit) when you use them, though!


 **Does the benefit of the Weapon Focus class feature (Gunslinger or Soldier) stack with that of the Weapon Focus feat? If so, would a hero be able to multiclass into Gunslinger and Soldier, have the Weapon Focus feat, and end up with a total bonus of +4 from Weapon Focus?**

No. The weapon focus class abilities are, in effect, the same as having the feat. That's generally the case any time a class ability has the same name as a feat. Thus, each time a hero gains any version of Weapon Focus, she must apply it to a different weapon, just as if she had taken the feat multiple times.

 **As a side note to last question, if a hero selects two types of guns for Weapon Focus, do his Gunslinger abilities apply to both, or only to the gun he chose for the Gunslinger's weapon focus ability?**

I assume you're talking about the greater weapon focus class ability. If a hero has the Weapon Focus feat for one firearm and the weapon focus class ability for another, he can choose either one (but not both) as the subject of the greater weapon focus ability. Bullseye applies only to the weapon that the character has selected for the greater weapon focus ability.

For example, let's say that your hero has the Weapon Focus (Glock 17) feat, and when he gains the weapon focus class ability, he applies it to the HK MP5K. When he gets to 8th level and gains the greater weapon focus class ability, he must decide which of those two weapons to apply it to. If he chooses the Glock 17, then when he gains the bullseye ability at 10th level, it also applies to that weapon.

 **With the improvised implements talent, the Infiltrator no longer takes a -4 penalty when wielding improvised weapons (such as a chair, a heavy book, or a full can of bad Pepsi). The next time she gains a normal feat, could she take Weapon Focus for a particular improvised weapon, such as Weapon Focus (soda can)?**

In a word, no. A prerequisite for the Weapon Focus feat is proficiency with the weapon in question. Although the Infiltrator no longer takes the -4 penalty, she isn't actually proficient with improvised weapons.

Indeed, although it may be possible to develop a given object into a weapon and then become proficient with that weapon, as a general rule a character can't become proficient with improvised weapons.

Do you have a rules question about the d20 Modern Roleplaying Game? Send it to bulletpoints@wizards.com. For the quickest possible answer, please put the topic of your question in the subject line and keep the question as succinct as possible. If you have more than one question, feel free to send two or more emails -- but for best results please include only one question per email unless your questions are very closely related to one another. Please don't expect a direct answer by email. Check back here every other week for the latest batch of answers!

About the Author

Charles Ryan was one of the designers of the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game*. He has been designing and editing games for more than twelve years. His other credits include such diverse titles as the *The Wheel of Time Roleplaying Game*, *Deadlands*, *Millennium's End*, *The Last Crusade*, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, *Dune: Chronicles of the Imperium*, and *Star Trek: Red Alert!*, to name just a few. Charles served as Chairman of the Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts & Design, the professional organization of the games industry, from 1996 through 2001. He lives in Kent, Washington with his lovely wife Tammie, three cats, two rats, and a dog. He works for Wizards of the Coast, Inc.



©1995-2005 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Wizards is headquartered in Renton, Washington, PO Box 707, Renton, WA 98057.