



Bullet Points

FX Effects and Supernatural Creatures

by Charles Ryan

Welcome to the sixteenth 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.

The Evolution of a Game

In this installment, I'm going to answer a few questions about FX effects and supernatural creatures in the **d20 Modern Roleplaying Game**. But before I get started, I'd like to address one issue that's come up a couple of times in email and on the **d20 Modern** message boards here on the Wizards of the Coast website -- *Dungeons & Dragons* v.3.5. The revised edition of the **D&D** game has been out for nearly two months now, and if you're a **D&D** player, you undoubtedly already have your copies of the new core books.

The question plaguing some **d20 Modern** players is this: How will the rules changes to the **D&D** game affect the **d20 Modern** game? Will there soon be an updated version or second edition of the **d20 Modern Roleplaying Game** and the *Urban Arcana Campaign Setting* that incorporates the new rules, classes, spells, and so forth from the new version of the **D&D** game? Should players use the newer versions of spells and feats from **D&D** v.3.5 instead of those from the **d20 Modern Roleplaying Game**?

The short answer is an emphatic no. The **d20 Modern** game is not *Dungeons & Dragons*. Although they both use the d20 System, they're different games, so changes to one don't affect the other.

Besides, if you take a close look at the **d20 Modern Roleplaying Game**, you'll see that in many ways the rules are closer to **D&D** v.3.5 than they are to the unrevised 3rd edition **D&D** rules. That shouldn't be surprising, since as you may have guessed, the **d20 Modern** game was in design and development at much the same time as **D&D** v.3.5 was. What you probably didn't know is that I share an office with Andy Collins, the lead developer of the **D&D** v.3.5 *Player's Handbook*. There's always plenty of communication among the designers at Wizards of the Coast, but when two designers sit right next to each other all day, it's especially easy for them to sync up design strategy. Of course, even though the two projects overlapped a great deal, **d20 Modern** was many months further along than the new edition of **D&D** was at any given time. Thus, **D&D** v.3.5 continued to evolve long after **d20 Modern** was complete, and some of the rules naturally diverged during that time. And, of course, some rules are different simply because the two games have different settings and different needs.

It's not inconceivable that a revision to **d20 Modern** might come along sometime in the future, although no

such project is currently planned. And such a revision would probably incorporate some of the improvements to the d20 System that ended up in **D&D** v.3.5 but didn't make it into the first edition of **d20 Modern**. Keep in mind, however, that **D&D** has undergone some changes that do not impact the rules of **d20 Modern** at all.

Questions and Answers

I think I've talked enough about the impact of **D&D** v.3.5. Now let's get to some questions about **d20 Modern**!


 **Does the Occultist's scribe scrolls ability really just amount to "finding scrolls" (or researching where to find them)?**

In a word, yes. By doing arcane research, the Occultist gets new scrolls at each level by uncovering or piecing together spells and writing them in the form of one-use scrolls. He does not actually scribe them in the sense that a Mage (or a **D&D** wizard) does.


 **How "real" is a monster of the id? Can a werewolf created as a monster of the id give someone lycanthropy?**

For all intents and purposes, monsters of the id are 100% real. Thus, if you're bitten a monster-of-the-id werewolf, you can contract lycanthropy. Likewise, if you're killed by a monster-of-the-id vampire's energy drain, you become a spawn of that vampire.

The only caveat is that if such an effect would break the "rules of reality" for your campaign, it doesn't happen. For example, if you're running an Agents of PSI game in which psionics are real but other supernatural things (such as vampires and werewolves) aren't, then a monster of the id can't suddenly change the rules of reality and populate your world with real vampires and werewolves. Of course, since monsters of the id respawn in 1d20 hours, it's always possible that a new monster of the id might take the form of a spawned vampire or lycanthrope. Such a creature wouldn't really be a spawn of the original, though; it would just be a new iteration of the original id monster.


 **No critical range is given for the psi blade. I proposed to my group that it should be 19-20/x2 because there has to be a reason to get the psi blade over, say, a longsword. Is that correct?**

Nope. The critical range for the psi blade is 20/x2, just as it is for any weapon with no specified range. The advantages that it provides over a longsword (or any other higher-damage weapon) are that it can't be taken away from the wielder, it's infinitely concealable, and it gets a free enhancement bonus when its wielder reaches higher levels.

 **When a Battlemind imprints a tattoo, he has to make a Craft (visual arts) check. Failure means he's wasted his raw materials (for which he had to make a Wealth check and maybe lost Wealth). Yet the Craft (visual arts) skill is not a class skill for the Battlemind. Is that correct?**

No, it's not. Craft (visual arts) should be a class skill for the Battlemind -- and also for the Mage, for that

matter.

 **If a replacement is created of a character who smokes or is addicted to drugs, would the replacement share those addictions? What if the original has a disease, such as Alzheimers? Is that replicated as well?**

A replacement doesn't share the same life experiences as its original; therefore, it doesn't suffer any of the original's nonpermanent afflictions. The following situations offer some concrete examples.

- A replacement gets full hit points, even if the original was injured when the sample was taken.
- A replacement gets the original's normal ability scores (up to 12), even if the original had ability damage when the sample was taken.
- A replacement does not suffer the effects of poison or disease, even if the original was poisoned or diseased when the sample was taken.

Any permanent damage, however, is reflected in the replacement. For example, if the primary had suffered a permanent ability drain, the replacement would also have the new, lower ability score.


We don't really have rules for addiction and long-term congenital diseases; for the most part, such issues are best handled by your house rules or through roleplaying. However, it's reasonable to assume that a replacement would not suffer those afflictions, since they are a result of the original's life experiences. On the other hand, a replacement that was created to mimic an original who smokes might take up smoking in order to better replicate that character.

 **Where do *potions of cure light wounds* come from? What about scrolls of *raise dead*?**

Items such as these can come from either of two sources.

First, characters belonging to several of the advanced classes and prestige classes in the ***Urban Arcana Campaign Setting*** can create items such as these. If you want your character to create them, that's probably the most important source for you.

If you're simply wondering where those items come from, don't forget the other source: Shadow. When creatures come into this world from Shadow, they often bring objects with them. In fact, the game setting assumes that many magic items found in our world actually originated in Shadow.

 **An undead creature has no Constitution score. Is it possible for such a creature to make a Constitution check? How long can it hold its breath, run, or do other things that depend on its Constitution score?**

Undead are untiring and don't need to breathe, so they automatically succeed on any check or save related to fatigue or breathing. They are also immune to a great many effects, including any effect requiring a Fortitude save (unless it works on objects or is harmless). When the rules call for a Constitution check and the undead creature is not immune to the effect, it uses its Charisma modifier in place of its Constitution modifier. A lot of these same points are also true for constructs. See Undead on page 223 of the ***d20 Modern Roleplaying Game*** for full details.

How can you figure out the massive damage threshold for an undead creature?

Undead creatures are immune to massive damage.

Is it possible (or logical) that a creature with no Constitution score can take the Toughness feat? Its effect appears to derive from physical durability, which is based on Constitution!

The effect of Toughness is +3 hit points. That has nothing to do with Constitution, nor does the feat have any Constitution score requirement. For an undead creature, the feat just represents a slightly more solid body; for a construct, it represents a slightly tougher construction.

Is there a limit to the number of beings a vampire can dominate?

The only limit on the ability involves how often it can be used (one creature per round).

Can a vampire continually attempt to dominate someone who has succeeded on a saving throw against that effect, or does that person become immune to the vampire's domination after making a successful save?

The target does not become immune on a successful saving throw. The vampire can certainly attempt to dominate that same creature again -- but at the cost of another attack action.

Can a vampire use his domination ability to force a person to invite him into her home?

Absolutely. Because of its inviolate sanctuary weakness, a vampire can't enter a residence unless invited. But that doesn't mean it can't use its abilities on someone in the residence, if the situation allows it. So a vampire could, for instance, dominate the person who answers the door when he rings the bell. Alternatively, the vampire could dominate someone who is out on the town, then go home with his victim. Either way, once the victim invites the vampire into her home, he is free to enter. (And what victim, while held in unswerving allegiance to the vampire, wouldn't invite him in?)

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.



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