Bullet Points
Guns, Ammo, and Punches
by Owen K.C. Stephens

Over the past few weeks, a slew of questions about gun and unarmed attack rules have come in, which suggests a lot of campaigns have had a lot of fights recently.

When looking at these kinds of questions, a GM should be guided by two overarching principles. First, *d20 Modern* is a game, and keeping the rules fast and fun is as important as keeping them realistic. Most of us enjoy a number of movies and stories where reality is given at best a passing blush of consideration, and there's no reason to hold a game to a higher standard.

Second, when sacrificing reality, make sure it is for rules that are both fast (if you take thirty minutes to look up and answer or debate a rule, you've lost fast) and fun. Fun rules allow players to feel heroic, give characters multiple interesting choices, and keep enough game balance to make different characters useful in different situations. If you've developed rules that make a sawed-off shotgun the most powerful weapon in the game in all situations, that's not fun, because it removes the option of having an effective character using a Glock. Look at possible repercussions of a ruling, and don't be afraid to eliminate a bad ruling after it has a negative impact on your game.

I have questions about the Combat Martial Arts Feat Tree and Cybernetics that increase Unarmed Damage such as Total Organ Replacement (*d20 Cyberscape*), which increases untrained, unarmed damage to 1d6. How do they interact with each other? How do they interact with the living weapon class ability or the Brawl feat? How do cybernetics interact with Brawl?

When dealing with abilities that increase the base damage dealt by an unarmed attack, treat each enhancement as a one-step increase in the base damage die (but see a note about living weapon, below). The die steps for this are as follows: 1d2, 1d3, 1d4, 1d6, 1d8, 1d10, 1d12, 2d8, 2d10, and so on. This progression matches how Combat Martial Arts and living weapon work together, because the martial artist automatically has Combat Martial Arts (it's a prerequisite of the class). Thus a Medium-size, 8th-level martial artist with total organ replacement deals 1d12 with an unarmed attack.

Improved Combat Martial Arts and Advanced Combat Martial Arts effect unarmed attacks' critical threats in the same way, regardless of what the base damage done by the attack is.

If something simply adds to unarmed damage, such as cybernetic spurs, the amount of damage it adds is not affected by feats and class abilities that boost unarmed damage.

The Brawl feat is separate from Combat Martial Arts, and the two don't stack. Things that boost unarmed damage that are not related to Combat Martial Arts or the martial artist class can boost the base damage of a Brawl attack in the same way they boost normal, unarmed attacks. Thus a character with total organ replacement and Brawl receives a +1 competence bonus to unarmed attacks and deals 1d8 + Str nonlethal damage. Such a character may choose not to use the Brawl feat, resulting in an attack dealing 1d6 normal damage.

If a PC is in a wooden shack or abandoned building with weak wooden walls, could he shoot part of a wall down? Also, could he or she shoot door hinges to open it?

Sure he could ... if the GM agrees that it's reasonable. It's well within a GM's purview to decide that a given weapon can't break a specific inanimate object (the classic example being trying to cut rope with a hammer). A GM might decide a pistol can't shoot down a wall, but a shotgun or gyrojet rifle can. Similarly, it's certainly possible for a character to target the hinges of a door, though the GM has final say over how successful such an effort is (and hinges are likely to be a lot smaller and tougher than a wooden wall).

Bullet Points 23 (Character and Class Abilities) stated that you cannot apply Weapon Focus to an improvised weapon, even with the infiltrator's improvised implements ability. My question is: Could you apply Weapon Focus to throwing a firearm via the infiltrator's improvised implements? My instinct says no.

Your instinct is right, for the same reason you can't place Weapon Focus on an improvised weapon -- you're not proficient with the pistol as a thrown weapon. Because a pistol isn't a thrown weapon, when you throw it, you're using it in an improvised fashion and thus can't gain weapon familiarity with it. If a weapon is designed to be used both in melee and thrown (some knives and axes, for example), you gain both abilities with a single proficiency -- but not for weapons only designed to be used one way.

I would like some clarification on the Craft (Mechanical) Ammunition skill as it applies to *d20 Apocalypse*.

As I understand it, a player must first make a parts check and then a skill check in order to craft ammunition for up to ten rounds.

The part that bothers me is that, in order to create ammunition, a character needs to use five parts, which comes to a total of 25 lbs of extra weight to carry. If the player fails the parts check, he/she can try again only after they acquire another part, which raises their carried weight by 30 lbs, and so on. It seems unrealistic to assume that it would require 25 lbs of parts to come up with enough material to reload your spent brass. Will you please explain why it takes so much material to craft ammunition and why the rule should stand, or maybe offer a solution that wouldn't burden a player with excess weight?

I suspect the problem you're having is with the extremely generic nature of "parts," which are broken into just electrical and mechanical. That's intentional to keep bookkeeping simple but still have the scrounging-for-materials feel popular in apocalyptic games. If it's hard to see how you

would need 30 lb. of material to reload old brass, consider what those parts likely are.

You need something to make explosive powder out of. Because you're not likely to have the right chemicals ready, or even other ammo to raid it from, you're looking at finding it from scratch or raiding it from other materials. Where are you getting your saltpeter? If trying to leach it from guano or soil from old ruins where water can't get in, you could easily have many pounds of waste material. What about sulfur? Are you trying to use ammonium nitrate instead? Well, that's dangerous and may involve sifting fertilizer out of whatever materials it's been combined with. You don't need to use charcoal -- maybe you're making yours with sugar as the fuel. You need cups to grind in, a way to measure it all, something to carry it in -- all in all, a lot of junk. It's not much fun to roleplay the details, and not many publishers are actually going to go into enough details to let you know everything you need to pull it off for legal reasons. (And let me be clear. This isn't a useable recipe for gunpowder, and don't ever, ever try any of this at home.)

What about your rounds? If you have the ammunition kit, then you have molds, but you need a source of heat. An old butane torch, perhaps? Chemical burner? Where is the lead coming from? Do you need to melt it out of items that include harder metals? All of that adds weight, and a lot of it is old and breaks after a use, which is why you need more parts each time you do it.

Also keep in mind that mechanical "parts" can be used to make ammo, repair a car, or jury-rig a chainsaw. They aren't designed for any of those tasks, so there's a lot of waste when you force them to make do for a given problem. If someone manages to get pure materials appropriate for making ammo and not much else (say, some old shotgun shells, lead fishing lures, and chemical fuel for a hot fire), feel free to create ammunition "parts" that weigh less but can't be used for other mechanical repairs.

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 the **d20 Modern** website for *Bullet Point* updates.

About the Author

Owen Kirker Clifford Stephens was born in 1970 in Norman, Oklahoma. He attended the TSR Writer's Workshop held at the Wizards of the Coast Game Center in 1997 and moved to the Seattle area in 2000, after accepting a job as a game designer at Wizards of the Coast, Inc. Fourteen months later, he returned to Oklahoma with his wife and three cats to pick up his freelancer writer/developer career. He has author and co-author credits on numerous **Star Wars** and *Everquest* projects, as well as *Bastards and Bloodlines* from Green Ronin. He also has producer credits for various IDA products, including the Stand-Ins printable figures.

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