



## Bullet Points

### *Miscellany*

by Charles Ryan

Welcome to the twenty-seventh 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.

## Miscellany

In this installment, I'm delving into my inbox to answer questions that have been languishing for lack of a central topic. While I usually pick a general theme for each installment, this time I'm just going to address miscellaneous questions. So without further ado, let's get down to business!

 **In poor lighting conditions, does low-light vision grant a bonus on Spot checks, thereby negating some of the penalty?**

There are no hard and fast rules for penalties on Spot checks in poor light. However, if your GM chooses to impose, say, a -2 circumstance penalty on a Spot check because of poor lighting conditions, it makes perfect sense to allow a creature with low-light vision to ignore that penalty.

 **Does a character's Defense bonus stay with her even if she's surprised or caught flat-footed?**

A character loses her Dexterity bonus to Defense when flat-footed, but not her class Defense bonus.

 **I am unsure about which skills provoke attacks of opportunity when used. I am equally unsure about when Concentration checks come into play in relation to this topic. Could you clear this up?**

Of course--that's why I'm here!

Unfortunately, there is no specific rule that determines exactly which skills provoke attacks of opportunity when used and which don't. Any skill use that requires a character to divert his attention from the act of fighting provokes attacks of opportunity. Generally, that category includes any skill use that requires an attack action, a full-round action, or longer to complete. Skill checks that can be made as reactions, free actions, or move actions generally don't provoke attacks of opportunity.

If the skill check your character is attempting provokes attacks of opportunity, he can attempt a Concentration check. Essentially, that means he is attempting to concentrate on the skill while still staying on the defensive against attackers near him. Whether the Concentration check succeeds or fails, the character doesn't provoke attacks of opportunity. If he succeeds on the Concentration check, he maintains his concentration on the task long enough to attempt the skill check. If he fails the Concentration check, he was so distracted by the effort of remaining on the defensive that he couldn't focus on the skill, so he automatically fails the skill check. This sort of Concentration check is called for only when the character is attempting a skill check that provokes attacks of opportunity.

 **Does the bonus from the Dodge feat stack with the one from the Bodyguard's combat sense talent? Can a Bodyguard apply Dodge to one opponent and Combat Sense to another?**

Yes and yes.

 **When a character is surrounded by an air-based poison (knockout gas, for example) how often does she need to remake the saving throw? Also, how big an area does a single dose of gas fill, and how long does it last in an enclosed area?**

A single dose of an inhaled poison affects an area with a 5-foot burst radius -- in other words, four 5-foot squares (see the burst radius diagram on page 105 of the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game*).

A character can be affected only once by a single dose of a poison. So if your hero is caught within the area of an inhaled poison (or even passes through that area), she makes a saving throw. She does not have to make additional saving throws if she remains in the area for additional rounds (other than the normal secondary damage saving throw a minute later), or if she leaves the area and enters it again while the poison is still there. In other words, a single dose of poison requires only a single pair of saves. If a second dose is added, however, the character must save normally against that second dose.

An inhaled poison disperses after 10 rounds, though a moderate wind (11+ mph) disperses it in 4 rounds, and a strong wind (21+ mph) disperses it in 1 round. In a sealed area no bigger than that occupied by the poison, it might take longer to disperse, or possibly remain indefinitely if the area is airtight.

 **Can a character hold his breath to resist an inhaled poison and not have to make a saving throw?**

No. Inhaled poisons generally affect mucous membranes and other tissues that aren't protected by holding one's breath. The use of a gas mask does, however, prevent a character from having to make a save against an inhaled poison.

 **If a character impersonates someone with *change self*, does she still need a disguise kit and 1d4 x 10 minutes?**

Yes and no. Using the spell without doing anything else takes no time (other than the casting time of the spell) and requires no kit. However, the character does take the -4 penalty on the check. (If she goes this route, the kit doesn't do her any good, so she can't negate that penalty.) Of course, if she takes 10 on the check, with the +10 bonus from the spell, her check result is 16 even if she has no ranks. That's not too shabby.

A character can also use the spell in concert with the normal steps she takes to don a disguise. Doing so takes the normal 1d4 x 10 minutes and negates the -4 penalty if the character uses a disguise kit. Again, if she takes 10 on the check, she ends up with a check result of 20, even without ranks in Disguise or an ability bonus. Of course, the spell only lasts for 10 minutes/level, so she probably won't want to use up all that time preparing the rest of her disguise!

 **The descriptions of blindness in the Character Condition Summary on page 140 and in the *glitterdust* description are different. Which one is correct?**


Strangely, neither. Here's what it should say in the both places:

**Blinded:** The hero can't see at all. He takes a -2 penalty to Defense, loses his Dexterity bonus to Defense, and moves at half speed. He takes a -4 penalty on Search checks and on most Strength- and Dexterity-based checks. He automatically fails all Spot checks and cannot perform other activities (such as reading) that rely on vision. All opponents have total concealment with respect to him, giving him a 50% miss chance on all attacks.

 **Flying in *gaseous form* (from the *Urban Arcana Campaign Setting*) is silent, right? Can a gaseous creature move on foot? If so, does it get bonuses on Move Silently or Hide checks? What if it hides in a keyhole or other small gap?**

A creature in *gaseous form* can't move on foot per se because it doesn't really have feet. However, it can move along the ground at its normal land speed. In other words, a character with a land speed of 30 feet can move 30 feet in a move action while in *gaseous form*. All movement in *gaseous form* is effectively silent; the character gains a +20 bonus on Move Silently checks. *Gaseous form* does not affect Hide checks.


Although a character can fit through very small gaps in *gaseous form*, her actual size does not change. A Medium-size creature still takes up the space required by a Medium-size creature. So although a gaseous character can pass through a keyhole, she can't hide in one.

 **I have a question about the rules concerning starting occupations. Some occupations allow the character to choose one or more permanent class skills from particular lists. Do those skills count against the character's starting skill points?**

If you buy ranks in them, yes. If you choose a skill as a permanent class skill, it becomes just that -- a class skill. As with any other class skill, you can purchase ranks in it at the cost of one skill point per rank. If you choose not to purchase ranks in it, it doesn't cost any skill points.

 **The feline moreau text seems to imply that all feline moreaus get claws, but the statistics block says that only overt moreaus get claws. Which is correct?**

The statistics block is correct. Only overt moreaus have retractable claws that function as natural weapons.

 **When a character takes damage in excess of his Constitution score from a single hit, he takes massive damage and must save or be reduced to -1 hit point. That's fine for a human, but what about a powerful creature? What happens if an ancient dragon with a Constitution score of 23**

## takes 24 points of damage?

The dragon suffers the same fate as a human character would: save or take massive damage. That's one of the big differences between **d20 Modern** and **D&D**. Even in a high-magic **d20 Modern** game, a character or creature, no matter how powerful, can be taken out by a single powerful hit.

Of course, the dragon has a number of advantages. First and foremost is a high base Fortitude save and a +6 Con bonus, which make failure very unlikely. The dragon could also use one or more of its many feat slots to take the Improved Massive Damage Threshold feat and increase the amount of damage it can take before having to save against massive damage.

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Do you have a rules question about the d20 Modern Roleplaying Game? Send it to [bulletpoints@wizards.com](mailto: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!

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## 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.

