



Bullet Points

Player Tactics, Part 2

by Charles Ryan

Welcome to the eighteenth 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.

More Player Tactics

Welcome to the 18th installment of *Bullet Points*. Let's pick right up where we left off last time, answering questions about combat and tactics.

Questions and Answers


Below are more thoughtful questions about what you can and can't do in a **d20 Modern** game.

 **My character fights with a chain. If she's 10 feet away from an opponent and makes a disarm attempt to take away her opponent's metal baton, does that opponent get an attack of opportunity?**

The opponent is too far away to hit your character with a metal baton. However, an attack of opportunity is still allowed, and the opponent can use it against your hero's weapon by making a sunder or disarm attack.

The situation is a little different if the attacker's reach is based on size. If your hero was attacked by a troll from 10 feet away in a manner that provoked an attack of opportunity, she could use it to attack the troll. Since the troll has reach because of his long arms and Large size, your hero can hit his arms as he reaches out toward her.

To make a long story short, if your hero can't reach an opponent but he can reach her because of his size, she can still make attacks of opportunity against him. If she can't reach him but he can reach her because he has a reach weapon, she can make attacks of opportunity only against his weapon.

 **A prone target receives a +4 bonus to Defense. Does this rule work the same when the target is prone at the attacker's feet? Last week, a character in our game went prone and an NPC walked right up next to him and fired. The GM, with general agreement from the rest of the group, ruled that being prone gave no benefit in this situation. The player felt a bit cheated and thought his**

character should have received the +4 bonus. Who was right?

For starters, keep in mind that an adjacent target isn't really "at your feet" -- it's 5 feet away. For an opponent to be at a hero's feet, the two would have to be in the same square. But an attacker can't enter a target's square without making an overrun attack.

That said, however, the GM was correct -- both in his specific ruling and in the assumption that modifiers such as this one are always subject to GM judgment. To back him up, here's a specific ruling.

Footnote 1 under Table 5-4 should read: "1 Does not apply if target is adjacent to attacker. This circumstance may instead improve bonus to Defense granted by cover. See Cover, below."



You can draw a weapon as part of your movement. But even if you don't move, it's still only a move action to draw your weapon. So why would anyone want to take Quick Draw as a feat?

Some people think it's really important to be able to use a full round for attacking, even in the first round of combat. This is especially true for a character with a high enough base attack bonus to gain multiple attacks, or one with a high initiative modifier. In the latter case, the character can reasonably expect to act before her opponents in the first round of combat, or to get the drop on them in a surprise round. In such a case, she may want to use her advantage for attacking instead of wasting her action drawing a weapon.

For many players, these issues aren't important enough to warrant using up a feat slot. But then, the same is true of any feat.



When trying to conceal a weapon or object, do the modifiers for the object's size stack with those for clothing and other factors? For instance, do the bonuses for a Tiny weapon (+4) and loose clothing (+2) provide a +6 bonus on Sleight of Hand checks?

Yes. When determining the total modifier on Sleight of Hand checks made to conceal a weapon or object, add together the modifiers for all the applicable factors on Table 4-3.



My character uses the Barrett Light 50 -- the most powerful rifle in the game. I read the rules you gave in a recent *Bullet Points* about using the bipod. What happens when the character doesn't have time to set up and wants to start shooting his Huge weapon on the fly?


A Huge weapon cannot be wielded by a Medium-size character without a bipod or other mount. If your character cannot get into a firing position and take the move action to deploy the bipod, any shots he fires are simply wasted. If he can't deal with the requirements of a Huge weapon (or simply doesn't want to), he's better off with something more manageable. There are plenty of weapons available that aren't Huge, don't need a bipod, and still deal 2d10 points of damage. On average, that's only 1 point less than a weapon that deals 2d12 points of damage.




If my character's weapon has a scope, does she have to use it? Can she choose to ignore the benefit of the scope if she doesn't want to spend an attack action acquiring the target?

The short answer is yes. Even if your hero's weapon has a scope, she can choose to use its normal sights instead. She gains no benefit from the scope in that case, but it doesn't slow her down, either.

Future **d20 Modern** products may feature some firearms -- particularly sniper rifles -- that aren't equipped with normal sights (usually called "iron sights"). The weapon either comes with a scope or is expected to be used with one. A hero who uses such a weapon without a scope takes a -1 penalty on attack rolls.

 **A scope multiplies a weapon's range increment by 1.5, effectively giving the wielder a 50% increase. The Far Shot feat does the same thing. If my character has the Far Shot feat and uses a scope, do the two bonuses stack, effectively doubling the normal range?**

Yes, that's exactly what happens. In the d20 System, when two or more factors each increase an ability by 50%, you apply the additional 50% to the base number each time. In other words, if a weapon has a range increment of 100 feet, a scope increases that by 50 feet, and the Far Shot feat also increases it by 50 feet. Thus, the total range is 100 + 50 + 50, or 200 feet. Some players make the mistake of multiplying the base number by 1.5 and then the result by 1.5, which in this case would give an incorrect total of 225 feet.


 **I like the trick talent, but I'm not really sure what it represents. Can you give an example (a description in roleplaying terms) of what a trick using this talent might be?**

"Look! A monkey!"

The description of the talent says that a tricked character is dazed for 1 round. All that means is that he loses his next action (see the Character Condition Summary on page 140 of the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game*). Anything the Smart hero can do or say to confuse or distract his foe momentarily is a reasonable trick. Thus, a trick could be a comment that gets an opponent to look the other way, to stumble briefly over a rock, to hesitate for a moment before deciding who to attack, and so on.

 **Most guns can be used as melee weapons by making a pistol whip or rifle butt attack. What kind of action is it to switch from ranged attack mode to melee attack mode? Can my hero make attacks of opportunity with her firearm?**

Switching modes is not an action. A character can do it freely at any time. So if your hero is armed with a longarm, she can make a rifle butt attack if someone provokes an attack of opportunity in a square she threatens. Likewise, she can make a pistol whip attack with a handgun. She doesn't have to do anything special beforehand to prepare for such an attack.

 **So if someone tries to disarm my character when he's using a firearm, he gets an attack of opportunity. According to an earlier *Bullet Points* question, if he last used his firearm as a melee weapon, then any disarm attempt against him uses the melee weapon rules. If someone tries to disarm him, and he makes an attack of opportunity by pistol whipping the foe, do we then use the rules for disarming melee weapons instead of ranged weapons?**

Yep, that's exactly right.

 **When do you ever use the disarm rules for ranged weapons, then?**

You use them for most ranged weapons that aren't firearms, and in cases when the target is using a firearm but can't (or doesn't) make an attack of opportunity against you.



How do you disarm someone when you're using a ranged weapon? In other words, how do you shoot a gun out of someone's hands?

You can't. A disarm attempt is a melee attack; you can't try to disarm someone with a ranged attack. You can, however, shoot your opponent's weapon and break it. See the rules for attacking an object on page 149 of the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game*.

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.

