

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	5
<i>About the Authors</i>	6
WHAT IS ROLEPLAYING?	7
<i>Mini-Glossary</i>	7
<i>Materials Needed for Play</i>	8
QUICK START	8
<i>Metric Conversions</i>	9



1. CREATING A CHARACTER	10
Character Points	10
Character Concept	11
<i>How GURPS Works: Realism and Game Balance</i>	11
Character Types	12
<i>Example of Character Creation: Dai Blackthorn</i>	12
Character Creation Checklist	13
SAMPLE CHARACTER SHEET	13
<i>Things Not Shown on the Character Sheets</i>	13
BASIC ATTRIBUTES	14
<i>How to Select Basic Attributes</i>	14
<i>Handedness</i>	14
<i>How GURPS Works: IQ, Sentience, and Sapience</i>	15
SECONDARY CHARACTERISTICS	15
DAMAGE TABLE	16
<i>Machines and Fatigue</i>	16
BASIC LIFT AND ENCUMBRANCE TABLE	17
<i>Example of Character Creation (cont'd)</i>	18
BUILD	18
Size Modifier (SM)	19
<i>How GURPS Works: ST, Mass, and Move</i>	19
<i>Shopping for the Big, Tall, Thin, and Small</i>	20
AGE AND BEAUTY	20
Age	20
Physical Appearance	21

Other Physical Features	21
<i>Example of Character Creation (cont'd)</i>	22
SOCIAL BACKGROUND	22
Technology Level (TL)	22
Culture	23
Language	23
<i>Sapience and Language</i>	23
<i>Accents</i>	24
<i>Broken to Broken</i>	24
<i>Example of Character Creation (cont'd)</i>	25
WEALTH AND INFLUENCE	25
Wealth	25
<i>Starting Wealth</i>	26
Reputation	26
<i>Tech Level and Starting Wealth</i>	27
Importance	28
<i>Classless Meritocracies</i>	28
<i>Special Rules for Rank</i>	29
<i>Example of Character Creation (cont'd)</i>	30
Privilege	30
Social Restraints	30
FRIENDS AND FOES	31
Associated NPCs	31
Contacts	31
IDENTITIES	31
<i>Alternate Identity vs. Secret Identity</i>	31
2. ADVANTAGES	32
Types of Advantages	32
Advantage Origins	33
<i>Potential Advantages</i>	33
<i>What's Allowed</i>	34
Turning Advantages Off and On	34
ADVANTAGE LIST	34
<i>Frequency of Appearance</i>	36
<i>Limited Defenses</i>	46
<i>Alternative Attacks</i>	61
Perks	100
MODIFIERS	101
Enhancements	102
<i>Attack Enhancements and Limitations</i>	102
<i>Turning Enhancements Off and On</i>	102
Limitations	110
<i>Optional Rule: Limited Enhancements</i>	111
<i>Examples of Modified Attacks</i>	114
Gadget Limitations	116
<i>Example of Character Creation (cont'd)</i>	116
NEW ADVANTAGES	117

Modifying Existing Advantages	117
Designing Entirely New Advantages	118
3. DISADVANTAGES	119
<i>Disadvantages for Heroes</i>	119
Restrictions on Disadvantages	120
Types of Disadvantages	120
<i>Secret Disadvantages</i>	120
Self-Control for Mental Disadvantages	120
<i>Self-Imposed Mental Disadvantages</i>	121
"Buying Off" Disadvantages	121
DISADVANTAGE LIST	122
<i>Example of Character Creation (cont'd)</i>	162
QUIRKS	162
Mental Quirks	162
<i>Example of Character Creation (cont'd)</i>	164
Physical Quirks	165
NEW DISADVANTAGES	165
Modifying Existing Disadvantages	165
Brand-New Problems	166



4. SKILLS	167
Controlling Attribute	167
<i>Choosing Your Beginning Skills</i>	167
Difficulty Level	168
Technological Skills	168
<i>Tech-Level Modifiers</i>	168
Prerequisites	169
Specialties	169
<i>Grouped Skills Familiarity</i>	169
BUYING SKILLS	170
<i>Skill Notation</i>	170
Improving Your Skills	170

SKILL COST TABLE	170
MEANING OF SKILL LEVELS	171
Probability of Success	171
Relative Skill Level	171
<i>Choosing Your Skill Levels</i>	172
SKILL DEFAULTS: USING	
SKILLS YOU DON'T KNOW	173
SKILL LIST	174
<i>Optional Rule: Wildcard Skills</i>	175
<i>Geographical and</i>	
<i>Temporal Scope</i>	176
<i>Planet Types</i>	180
<i>Physiology Modifiers</i>	181
<i>Skills for Design,</i>	
<i>Repair, and Use</i>	190
<i>Example of Character</i>	
<i>Creation (concluded)</i>	227
TECHNIQUES	229
Creating Techniques	229
Buying and Improving	
Techniques	230
TECHNIQUE COST TABLE	230
Using Techniques	230
Sample Combat	
Techniques	230
<i>Double Defaults and</i>	
<i>Techniques</i>	232
Sample Noncombat	
Techniques	232
5. MAGIC	234
<i>Glossary of Magical Terms</i>	234
LEARNING MAGIC	235
Prerequisites	235
<i>Mana</i>	235
CASTING SPELLS	235
Distraction and Injury	236
Caster and Subject	236
Time Required	236
Energy Cost	236
<i>Critical Spell Failure Table</i>	236
Magic Rituals	237
Limits on Effect	237
Duration of Spells and	
Maintaining Spells	237
<i>Canceling Spells</i>	237
Casting Spells While	
Maintaining Other Spells	238
<i>Ceremonial Magic</i>	238
DIFFERENT KINDS OF MAGIC	239
Colleges of Magic	239
Spell Classes	239
<i>Area Spells on a Battle Map</i>	239
<i>Magic Staffs</i>	240
<i>Dissipating Held Melee</i>	
<i>and Missile Spells</i>	241
<i>Long-Distance Modifiers</i>	241
<i>Alternative Magic Systems</i>	242
SPELL LIST	242
Air Spells	242
Body Control Spells	244
Communication and	
Empathy Spells	245
Earth Spells	245
Enchantment Spells	246
Fire Spells	246
Gate Spells	247

Healing Spells	248
Knowledge Spells	249
Light and Darkness Spells	249
Meta-Spells	250
Mind Control Spells	250
Movement Spells	251
Necromantic Spells	251
Protection and	
Warning Spells	252
Water Spells	253

6. PSIONICS 254

<i>Glossary of Psi Terminology</i>	254
POWERS, TALENTS, AND ABILITIES	254
Psi Effects	255
Gaining New Psi Abilities	255
USING PSI ABILITIES	255
PSIONIC POWERS	255
Antipsi	255
ESP	255
Psychic Healing	256
Psychokinesis (PK)	256
<i>Psionics and Magic</i>	256
Telepathy	257
Teleportation	257
<i>Examples of Psionic Powers</i>	257
<i>Other Powers</i>	257

7. TEMPLATES 258

CHARACTER TEMPLATES	258
How to Use Character	
Templates	258
<i>Are Character Templates</i>	
<i>"Character Classes"?</i>	259
Sample Character Templates	259
<i>Uniqueness</i>	259
RACIAL TEMPLATES	260
How to Use Racial Templates	261
Sample Racial Templates	261
<i>Omitting Racial Traits</i>	262
META-TRAITS	262



8. EQUIPMENT 264

<i>Money</i>	264
COST OF LIVING	265
COST OF LIVING TABLE	265
<i>What Cost of Living</i>	
<i>Gets You:</i>	
<i>A Modern Example</i>	266
BUYING EQUIPMENT	266
<i>Legality Class</i>	267

WEAPONS	267
Choosing Your Weapons	267
Weapon Statistics	268
<i>Glossary of Arms and Armor</i>	268
<i>Optional Rule:</i>	
<i>Modifying Dice + Adds</i>	269
Melee Weapons	271
<i>Silver Weapons</i>	275
Muscle-Powered	
Ranged Weapons	275
<i>Bodkin Points</i>	277
Hand Grenades and	
Incendiaries	277
Firearms	278
<i>"Smartgun" Electronics</i>	278
<i>Optional Rule: Malfunction</i>	279
Heavy Weapons	281
ARMOR	282
Armor Tables	282
Wearing Armor	286
SHIELDS	287
<i>Carrying Weapons and</i>	
<i>Other Gear</i>	287
MISCELLANEOUS EQUIPMENT	288

9. CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT 290

IMPROVEMENT THROUGH	
ADVENTURE	290
<i>Traits Gained in Play</i>	291
<i>Money</i>	291
<i>Quick Learning</i>	
<i>Under Pressure</i>	292
IMPROVEMENT THROUGH STUDY	292
<i>Jobs</i>	292
<i>Finding a Teacher</i>	293
<i>Optional Rule:</i>	
<i>Maintaining Skills</i>	294
Learnable Advantages	294
TRANSFORMATIONS	294
Body Modification	294
Mind Transfer	296
Supernatural Afflictions	296
Death	296

TRAIT LISTS 297

ADVANTAGES	297
DISADVANTAGES	299
MODIFIERS	300
SKILLS	301
TECHNIQUES	304
SPELLS	304

ICONIC CHARACTERS 307

COMBAT LITE 324

COMBAT TURN SEQUENCE	324
MANEUVERS	324
RANGED ATTACKS	326
ATTACKING	326
DEFENDING	326
DAMAGE AND INJURY	327
RECOVERY	328
FATIGUE	328

INDEX 329

CHARACTER SHEET 335

INTRODUCTION

GURPS stands for “Generic Universal RolePlaying System.” It was originally a joke . . . a code word to describe the game while we looked for a “real” name. Years went by – literally! – as the game developed. We never found a better name, and now that the Fourth Edition is in your hands, the name is more appropriate than ever.

“Generic.” Some people like quick, fast-moving games, where the referee makes lots of decisions to keep things moving. Others want ultimate detail, with rules for every contingency. Most of us fall somewhere in between. **GURPS** starts with simple rules, and – especially in the combat system – builds up to as much *optional* detail as you like. But it’s still the same game. You may all use it differently, but your campaigns will all be compatible.

“Universal.” I’ve always thought it was silly for game companies to publish one set of rules for fantasy, another one for Old West, another one for science fiction, and another one for super powers. **GURPS** is *one* set of rules that’s comprehensive enough to let you use *any* background. There are worldbooks and supplements that “fine-tune” the generic system for any game world you want. But they *are* still compatible. If you want to take your Wild West gunslinger and your WWII commando fortune hunting in Renaissance Italy . . . go for it! And because that’s exactly the kind of game that so many of our fans play, the Fourth Edition adds an overarching background created to support just such campaigns.

“RolePlaying.” This is not just a hack-and-slash game. The rules are written to make true roleplaying possible – and, in fact, to encourage it. **GURPS** is a game in which you take on the persona of another character – and pretend, for a little while, to *be* that character.

“System.” It really is. Most other RPGs started out as a simple set of rules, and then were patched and modified, ad infinitum. That makes them hard to play. **GURPS**, more than ever in

the Fourth Edition, is a unified whole. We’ve gone to a great deal of effort to make sure that it all works together, and it all *works*. **GURPS** will let you create any character you can imagine, and do anything you can think of . . . and it all makes sense.

GURPS has been in print now for nearly 20 years. It was not designed in a vacuum; every game builds on the ones that came before. We learn from our successes – and from the successes of others. I think the best games are those that are simple, clear and easy to read, and I’ve tried hard to make **GURPS** “friendly.”

One important influence was Hero Games’ **Champions**, for the flexibility of its character-creation system.

Another was Flying Buffalo’s **Tunnels & Trolls**, for its appeal to solitaire gamers. Finally, M.A.R. Barker’s **Empire of the Petal Throne** remains noteworthy, even after decades of competition and imitation, for the detail and richness of its alien game world.

But there’s more to **GURPS** than trying to repeat past success. The failures of earlier systems are important, too. In **GURPS**, I’ve tried to achieve several things I think earlier designs missed.

First and foremost, of course, is the *flexibility* of a “universal” system. Others have tried this, but have fallen into the twin traps of watered-down combat (where a lightning bolt is just like a .45 pistol) or incompatibility (where players have to learn so many alternate rules for each new game and characters don’t easily cross over). **GURPS** presents a single, unified system that allows for great diversity without losing its coherence. This Fourth Edition incorporates dozens of rules that originally appeared in supplements published for the Third Edition. They seemed important enough to bring into the **Basic Set** – so here they are.

Second is *organization*. Every gamer has had the experience of hunting frantically through one book after another, looking for a rule . . . and not finding it.

GURPS is extensively cross-referenced, with a Table of Contents, an Index, and a Glossary of terms used in the game.

Third is *ease of play*. In **GURPS**, most of the detailed calculations are done before you start play . . . they are entered on the character sheet, and saved until you need them. Once play actually begins, it should not be complex. I’ve tried to make **GURPS** as fast-moving yet realistic as possible. It’s up to you to decide whether I succeeded.

Most roleplaying systems depend for their success on a continual flow of “official” supplements and adventures. **GURPS** is different. True, we’ve released a lot of material already, and we plan to do much more; a totally universal system offers great leeway, and we’ve got a supplement list as long as your arm. But **GURPS** is designed to be as compatible as possible with supplements written for *different* games. The reason? Simple. Suppose that you’re a **GURPS** player. You’re at the hobby shop, and you see a really interesting supplement package. But it’s by another publisher, for another game.

No problem. The **GURPS** system breaks everything down into plain English and simple numbers. Distances are given in feet and miles, rather than arbitrary units; times are given in minutes and seconds. That’s what makes it generic. That also makes it easy to translate. If you see an interesting supplement for another game, go right ahead and get it. You can use it as a sourcebook for **GURPS**.

Likewise, if your gaming group favors other systems . . . you can still use your **GURPS** adventures. As long as that other game uses units that you can translate into feet, minutes, and other plain-English terms, you can import your **GURPS** adventures.

When **GURPS** was launched, we dreamed of its becoming the “standard” roleplaying system. The hobby has grown hugely since then! There will never be a single standard . . . but **GURPS** is *one* of the standards, and that’s fine. We have never tried to drive others out of the market, or even to force them to conform to us. Instead, we are conforming to *them* – by producing a system that will work with *any* clearly written adventure.

