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INTRODUCTION

Ever wanted to give a character the ability to make the longsword in his hand flaming or the arrows from his bow (or bullets from his gun) armor-piercing? For one *particular* magical or otherwise “special” weapon, this is relatively easy: buy the desired Affliction, Binding, or Innate Attack with suitable gadget limitations from pp. B116-117. But a few fictional heroes are capable of imbuing *any* weapon of a particular class – perhaps *every* weapon they use – with special properties. That’s a little more complicated!

The *Modifying ST-Based Damage* rules in *GURPS Powers* might seem appropriate at first. That prescription applies the desired enhancements to ST-based damage exactly as if it was a Crushing Attack of the same size, and uses the point cost of just the modifiers as the cost to alter the nature of your bare-handed damage. Unfortunately, that system was designed for unarmed, ST-based crushing damage, and is extremely difficult to extend to weapons – especially if they’re ranged, not crushing, and/or not muscle-powered (guns, for instance, have all three problems).

You could still try, of course. You could build the most expensive attack that you’re capable of creating by imbuing a weapon and modifying its stats – the attack with the best damage, range, RoF, etc. Then you could subtract the price of the basic advantage, read the point cost of the modifiers as that of the imbue ability, and only allow the modifiers to aid weapons that, once imbued, would be no better than this best attack. But that would be a delicate exercise before the game began *and* tedious in play – whenever you grabbed a new weapon, you would have to do hasty math to determine whether the imbue pushes it over the line!

This mediocre showing isn’t surprising. Enhancements in *GURPS* assume that you have a *specific* attack to modify. They misbehave when you’re after the ability to modify something as general as “anything that may come to hand” . . . because, really, there’s no fair price for modifiers when you have no idea what they might modify at some future point. A munchkin player might even point out – not without some justification – that because ordinary guns and swords don’t cost points in *GURPS*, enhancements on them would be multiples of 0 points and hence *free!*

Fortunately, there’s a way around this headache. *GURPS* already has a set of abilities that make weapons more effective. These potent traits can increase accuracy, lower target defenses, reduce DR, raise attack rate, extend the useful range of missile weapons, and many other things. They are, of course, *combat skills*. (For the curious, lowering defenses is simply Deceptive Attack, reducing DR is targeting chinks in armor, raising attack rate is Rapid Strike, and increasing accuracy and range are basic skill effects.)

Still, ordinary combat skills don’t quite cut it when it comes to adding genuine attack enhancements. No amount of *believable* training will let you pick up any pistol and fire armor-piercing shots no matter what its actual ammunition, or grasp any broadsword and set the blade ablaze. Such feats call for a new kind of skill – an *Imbue Skill*.

Imbue Skills are akin to both cinematic combat skills like Breaking Blow and Pressure Secrets, and magic spells like Flaming Weapon and Penetrating Weapon. They channel some exotic or supernatural force – such as mana, the wielder’s chi, or super-powered bioenergy – to give the user’s weapon special capabilities. While they’re priced and bought as skills, the GM is welcome to treat them as something closer to advantages.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sean “Dr. Kromm” Punch set out to become a particle physicist in 1985, ended up the *GURPS* Line Editor in 1995, and has engineered rules for almost every *GURPS* product since. During the *GURPS Third Edition* era, he compiled both *GURPS Compendium* volumes, developed *GURPS Lite*, wrote *GURPS Wizards* and *GURPS Undead*, and edited or revised over 20 other titles. With David Pulver, he produced the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*, in 2004. His latest creations include *GURPS Powers* (with Phil Masters), *GURPS Martial Arts* (with Peter Dell’Orto), and *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 1-4*. Sean has been a gamer since 1979. His non-gaming interests include cinema and wine. He lives in Montréal, Québec with his wife, Bonnie. They have two cats, Banshee and Zephyra, and a noisy parrot, Circe.

