

CHAPTER 2 BASICS



Game mechanics are about procedures and results, with everyone empowered to use their instruments in pursuit of them. The main instruments for everyone, game master and players alike, are their hero sheets. They are most like musical instruments in that they provide specific opportunities and features; but the human holding them determines what they do in the moment, and playing together shows us how they interact with one another.

There's no consensus, no negotiation, no scene construction conferencing, no "how about" workshopping, no story points, no adjustment of rolls, no massaging of outcomes – you do it to do it, and you get what you get.

THE SHEET

Every group, or table, is creating its own unique comics title, beginning with framing statements. To understand someone's hero sheet, you must know the statements they used to create it. This example is taken from a game based on these:

- ▶ A superhero stands for something and means it.
- ▶ You got family in my politics! You got politics in my family!
- ▶ It was set in Hartford, Connecticut, at the suggestion of a player who'd grown up there.

Your game doesn't have to be more politically charged than you collectively want it to be, but superhero comics have always leaned that way. This playtest's statements follow that leaning, and the heroes show it. (1)

This hero was made for this game: **RUBY RAY**. She's conceived from these ideas:

- ▶ *The person: rejects mainstream lifestyles, rebel soul; very close family and friends, abstracted toward everyone else; Dark Web DJ, underground reputation and income*
- ▶ *The powers: zooms around as a bright red laser beam, almost "zaps" from place to place, public appearances and heroic actions, legitimized by facing a dangerous supervillain*
- ▶ *The problems: marginalized, disaffected, unfairly criminalized, in danger from both "sides" of the law*

The sheet begins with her Situations because these, more than anything else, provide the material for how the player and game master describe what she's doing and what's happening around her during play.

Situations

Public Identity

Psych: Stands up for marginalized person's selfhood (often)

Psych: Brash (sometimes)

Psych: Fun-loving (sometimes)

Vulnerable: 2x Knockout from red-colored attacks or hazards

Dependent non-player character: Bri, her brother (secret identity)

Hunted: Killer Coil (individual, super-powered, ruinous)

Hunted: Federal Communications Commission (organization, manipulative)

Ruby Ray's difficult circumstances should be pretty clear. She's a principled outlaw hero, so she has enemies at both ends: the establishment FCC, a real-world organization well known for its secure hold on entertainment, media content, and economics, and a dangerous criminal supervillain. These are made tougher because she's "out" to the world in all ways, in terms of her real name and general availability.

That openness carries some more weight given that her "super weakness" is not easy to hide; and that her brother and ally, Bri, has his own reasons to keep the relationship and his activism entirely secret. A Dependent Non-Player Character (NPC) is defined by the phrase, "their problems are your problems," so Ruby Ray helps with that secrecy.

That leaves the three psychological Situations. How are they used? Most casually, they give everyone playing a good indicator of what impressions Ruby Ray makes on other people, and how often. They do not include the words "always" or "cannot" – they provide a good baseline for her inclinations, but it's the player's choice how Ruby Ray acts toward or against them at any given moment. They are windows of vulnerability for Ego-based powers, but they can also be sources of bonus dice when they're spontaneously invoked.

How are these Situation things used, exactly? Extensively, because there is no pre-conceived story to find or follow. Instead, the game master and players have jobs to do.

- Game master jobs: play the Hunted and Dependent NPC Situations proactively; introduce people and hazards which are relevant to the Psychological issues; describe or request details regarding how the Identity is addressed by strangers or handled by the character; be ready for Vulnerabilities and other limiting factors to be invoked by events.
- Players' jobs: put the Psychological issues into action, whether to indulge or resist them; be proactive regarding the Dependent NPCs' Situations; address concerns about Identity; and cope with the Hunted Situations as best you can.

Although the two jobs concern different fictional entities, they're more similar than they're different, because both *introduce actions* and events. It's not about players waiting for the game master to do something to them. As far as where play happens and what anyone is doing there, the players "GM" the game master as much as he or she "GMs" them, just because they say what their heroes are doing.

Characteristics

Endurance cost

Strength 2d6/- +6d6 Strength only when flying/Presence 3d6

2/+6

Body 14/- Recovery 14, Stunned 14, Knockout 28, Endurance 42/Speed 4/Defense 10

Dexterity 13/Intelligence 12/Ego 11

Two of the Characteristics, Strength and Presence, work similarly. An ordinary person has a score of 2d6 for each, and each additional die roughly doubles its magnitude.

The Strength Chart in *Chapter 9: This is the World We Live In* shows how strong Strength is. When Ruby Ray isn't flying, she's no stronger than an ordinary person. When she's flying, she's incredibly strong, able to bring a medium-sized truck along, to smash through a solid wall, or to meet and possibly stop an oncoming small plane. However, that's not a maximum. Anyone can push harder to go above their listed value at the risk of hurting themselves.

When she's exerting Strength against some opposition or trying to break or hold something, you roll the score with dice: 8d6 for Strength if she's flying, or 2d6 if she's not. This is a magnitude roll, or "damage" if you like. You don't have to roll to hit just to exert force.

For example, Killer Coil has grabbed her with those robotic tentacle-coils, and Ruby Ray tries to tear out of there by flying. Here, I'll roll eight dice: 1, 3, 4, 4, 4, 5, 6, 6.

You read them in a coded way called the Core result.

- For each 6, count two points
- For each 1 count zero points
- For anything else, count one point.

For Strength, the Core indicates the genuine damage that it does, or how much it opposes whatever countervailing force she's up against. In this case, the result is $0 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 2 + 2 = 9$.

When you're striking someone, you read the same dice another way, simultaneously: you add the showing values for a grand sum. This is the Knockout, in this case, 33. Since our particular case is a contest of grab vs. escape, we only care about the Core, which is contested by a similar roll made by Killer Coil. The Knockout result is only used for fisticuffs and blast'em powers damage.



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All this exertion doesn't come from nothing. You pay for it with Endurance, at the same rate of 1 per 1d6 of Strength. In rolling to break the grab, successful or not, Ruby Ray spends 8 points of Endurance; in fact, more than that, because it costs Endurance to fly too. She can also "push" her Strength and Powers past the listed limits, which burns up Endurance a lot faster.

Ruby Ray is noticeably more "present" in a social or communications situation than most people. Presence affects play differently from physical features and powers: it's a free action, you only count the Core value, and it costs no Endurance. It's subject to a lot of immediate modifiers, so Ruby Ray could be looking at a pretty wide range of possible total dice to roll. Presence Attacks are wonderfully easy and effective, but they require intelligent timing or you'll be looking at a measly one or two dice.

To evaluate its effectiveness, compare the Core rolled on the dice with the Core rolled by the target's Presence, and consult the Presence effects in *Chapter 10: Fightin' Words*. For example, Ruby Ray is trying to awe a crowd of panicked people into proceeding around the corner in an orderly fashion, rather than rushing about frantically. She'd roll her base Presence for 3d6, but modified for -3d6 for going against the targets' prevailing mood. That's terrible, so I make sure she's using a power (+1d6), saying something very sensible and dramatic (+2d6), and it also so happens that this is happening at a benefit concert that features a huge picture of her and a light-show, so that's an appropriate setting (+2d6), for a final total of 5d6.

I roll 2, 3, 5, 6, 6, for a Core of 7. That's a lot better than the targets' Presence result of 2 (they're ordinary people, collectively rolling 2 dice) According to the listed effects, that's enough to break up their current activity and to get them to consider what she says. She hasn't hit the total that would command instant or uniform compliance, but it's good enough to keep them from turning into a danger to themselves.

The Dexterity, Intelligence, and Ego characteristics are used differently: not for magnitude, but for success or failure. You roll 3d6 and add the rolled values, and if you hit the listed number or less, she succeeds.

The sheet includes no mundane skills, social status, or wealth. Does that mean Ruby Ray is incapable in those things? Not at all. She's a skilled DJ, knowledgeable musicologist, successful promoter, and effective navigator and user of the Dark Web, as well as anything else that seems related. She has all the resources, contacts, and knowledge that go with it, as well as with anything to do with her own personal background. All of those things are bonafide skills that Ruby Ray may use during play, and they don't have to be detailed beforehand. To use them in ordinary situations doesn't require dice rolls. But if the outcome is consequential or dangerous, then resolve them as Dexterity, Intelligence, or Ego rolls as seems appropriate for the moment.

For Intelligence, Ruby Ray might be compiling obscure music for an online protest. Another use for Intelligence rolls is perception, when she might notice that her web activity is being monitored. For Ego, she might be steeling herself to fly through a corridor lined with glowing red fluorescence.

The rules include several formal Skills, though very few compared with most role-playing games. These are super or comic-book versions of whole skill-sets, applied well beyond how they'd credibly work in most fiction. You might even think of them as powers hand-waved into skill descriptions.

Some of them are resolved with Dexterity or Intelligence rolls, like Detective Work, Security Systems, Stealth, and Computer Programming. Others provide advantages in certain circumstances, such as bonuses or specialized maneuvers. Still others modify whole situations, such as Luck. Both of Ruby Ray's listed skills are the second sort.

Skills

Acrobatics

Skill level: +1 with Move Attack

Acrobatics provides a defensive bonus given a minimum amount of movement, and the Skill Level is a customizable bonus, in this case applied to attacks that are based on movement. Neither requires a roll to be put into action.

It's good to customize any of these listed skills, so that one person's Martial Arts is known to be Tiger-Claw Kung Fu, and another's is Capoeira. In Ruby Ray's case, the Acrobatics is not so much circus or performance art, as her awareness and orientation concerning angles of flight or of incoming threats. These descriptions fuel more visualization and useful applications in action.

Powers

Endurance cost

Elemental Control: Red Laser
Transformation

Laser Zap: Flight 20 hexes/linear only, 4
cannot go less than half-speed

Hard Glow: Force Field 16 8

Light Up: Flash 4d6/only at end of flight 8
path, no range

Every power is named, and that's a big deal. In play, they will have properties and effects based on that name and its implications. Sometimes a named power will include more than one power from the rules, i.e., you name the power you want and make it work by combining powers.

The effects use Core results as with the Strength and Presence dice, or they interact with those types of results in some way. For instance, the Light Up attack uses the textual power Flash, which requires a combat roll to hit, and if it does, it's then rolled with 4d6 and counts the Core result to see how long the effect lasts. Her Hard Glow, on the other hand, is based on the textual power Force Field, thus soaks damage that hits her, reducing both Knockout and Body damage by 16 points.

They also require spending Endurance. The Light Up requires 2 per 1d6, and the Laser Zap is based on distance, at 1 Endurance per 5 hexes. (A “hex,” by the way, is a person-sized area in three dimensions.)

That Elemental Control thing is a Power Framework, which holds related applications. A framework is optional and there are three kinds. Its relevance here is that the powers in it aren't traded off or managed in some way; Ruby Ray can use any of them in any combination based on the actions she's taking.

These hero sheets are more than just lists. It's good to read them like a Wall of Crazy in a moody detective movie, as if each item had strings pinned to one or more other items. For Ruby Ray, the most important connections lead to and from her Laser Zap (Flight). The obvious ones are that when she's using it, she's very strong, and she gets a bonus on her Combat Value when she's fighting by flying past and into people or things. More subtly, since she can only fly in a straight line and can't drop below half speed, her Acrobatics allow her to turn hard corners during a given movement action. Clearly Ruby Ray is very oriented toward high-speed, powerful actions, which is why she's especially good at clotheslining opponents or barreling into them, with her Skill Level.

Every hero is most understandable and playable when you see those “pinned strings” across pieces of the sheet. Any number of heroes might happen to include Strength, Flight, and Flash, but they are not Ruby Ray and she is not them, in concrete and consequential ways during play.

SPACE AND TIME

A person running around gets up to 6 hexes for a given effort at movement. When Ruby Ray flies, or rather, light-zaps herself along a fixed path, the textual power Flight allows up to 20 hexes, which in her case can't be reduced below 10 hexes. How far and fast is that?

The hex unit is equivalent to one ordinary human's personal space, roughly just above a person's height, surrounded by arm's reach. If you must quantify, it's “about two meters,” in quotes because it's intentionally vague at the boundaries, or in American English, “over six feet.”

If you want, you can use a hex grid for organizing complex situations like fights, but you don't have to; the unit is quite intuitive and works well for theater of the mind play when referencing typical architecture and areas.

Sometimes standard measures are easier to use, so there's a conversion chart in Chapter 11: Fighting Words. At 20 hexes/move with Speed 4, Ruby Ray's maximum un-pushed flying speed is about 60 mph/96 kph, and out of combat, it's double that for the same Endurance cost. However, once you get into significant travel, these rules don't scale up, and other rules apply.

In a complicated situation when a bunch of characters are moving around and (probably) trying to hit or zap one another, actions are organized by Speed and either Dexterity or Ego. Here's the Speed Chart:

Speed Chart

		Segment					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
Speed	6	•	•	•	•	•	•
	5	•	•		•	•	•
	4	•		•		•	•
	3		•		•		•
	2			•		•	
	1				•		

Play proceeds through the segments 1-6, then wraps and repeats with no break of any kind. Your Speed sets which segments are available for you to act; e.g., with a Speed of 4, Ruby Ray "goes" on 1, 3, 5, and 6. These are called her Phases.

For characters who go on the same Phase, they proceed in order of their Dexterity or Ego values, depending on what sort of action they're taking.

Ordering the action isn't entirely robotic or predictable. You can wiggle your character's Phases "off sequence" a little, and dialogue is utterly free, delivered whenever you like. And remember Presence? Presence Attacks are considered dialogue for purposes of timing, so they can strike at will.

FIGHTING

So! It's one of your Phases and your turn to go, and you want to hit someone or zap them with a power. To hit them, use Dexterity or Ego depending on the action, and roll 3d6. However, this one is a little more complex than the usual Dexterity or Ego roll.

- ▶ It's subject to modifiers based on how much you've moved and what you're doing, so the adjusted, instantaneous value gets a name of its own, Combat Value.
- ▶ The difference between the attacker's and defender's Combat Value is applied to 11, and the result is the number you must roll equal or under in order to hit.

For example, Ruby Ray is zooming past someone and striking in passing. Her Dexterity is 12, but this maneuver is -2, and she's using her Skill Level for +1, so her Combat Value is 11. Her agile and maneuvering opponent's value has ended up at 13, so she has to roll 3d6 with a target equal to or under $(11-13) + 11$, or 9. Which isn't great.

It'll work much better when she times her attack to follow up immediately on her pal Grimfire, who's grabbed the opponent with his Hellish Fury Blaze aura going and thrown him or her into the side of that cement mixer over there. She'll get a +1 for a surprise hit, and if all that mayhem has momentarily stunned the opponent, then his or her Combat Value drops to 6, in which case Ruby Ray is rolling equal to or under $(11-6) + 11$, or 16.

Even better! She can target the cement mixer instead, which is easy to hit, and in motion she's strong enough to crack it and pour cement goop all over the opponent.

(A little pro tip from the comics: even the noblest heroes typically fight pretty dirty.)

A successful hit does damage or otherwise exerts some effect depending on the powers involved. For straight-up damage such as Ruby Ray might deliver with that fly-past attack, it's treated as a Strength roll, delivering its two values as described earlier. We'll use the same roll.

- ▶ The sum total, 33, is Knockout damage, and whatever gets past defenses will appropriately reduce the target's Knockout score. If it goes to zero, the character is unconscious.
- ▶ The Body total, 9, is Core damage, and after defenses, similarly reduces the target's Body score. If it goes to zero, the character is dying.

In both cases, the target's total Defense soaks up the incoming amounts. If someone had a total Defense of 20 against that attack, then they would subtract 13 Knockout and 0 Body. Body isn't overly threatened by most punches and

powers, but some attacks and hazards feature end-runs around defenses that can be dangerous.

The system is appropriately generous in that you get one “stand up and keep going” after hitting 0 for either Knockout or Body, such that your unconscious or dying status was more like a warning. And even being taken to 0 Body after that is only comic-book dying – actually being killed isn’t required by the mechanics.

Keep an eye on that Stunned value, too, because if the Knockout damage that gets through exceeds that amount, then the character is Stunned until the end of their next phase, and quite vulnerable. (I referenced this effect with Grimfire’s attack, above.)

Using Strength or powers costs Endurance, usually 1 point per 1d6, but sometimes more. Keep in mind that missing a target still costs you the Endurance.

Ruby Ray is a spend-high, get-it-done type of character, so she can’t fight stupid with powers blazing Phase after Phase, trusting only to her soak defenses for protection. If she Laser Zaps past someone for a clothesline hit, that’s 20 hexes (4) + 8d6 Strength (8) and if she has her Hard Glow on (8), that’s 20 Endurance. If she has to push her Strength or powers at some point too, that will rip up Endurance even faster.

You can keep acting at Endurance 0, but at that point you’re burning Knockout instead, which might also be getting racked by attacks on you, obviously. Even small amounts of Knockout from those attacks make it that much easier for your own heroics to take yourself right out.

That leads us to the remaining value on the sheet, Recovery, which is how much Knockout and Endurance you can restore by taking a Phase off. It’s a bit risky because your Combat Value drops low, which is why “Cover me!” and ducking behind site barriers aren’t merely window dressing.

It’s better to fight smart. Set up surprise hits, save maximal blows for an opponent at a disadvantage, learn how to use powers flexibly and reactively, and take phases for Recovery as safely as possible. And don’t forget those perfect Presence moments!

SUMMARY OF DICE MECHANICS

What is used	What to roll	Reading the result	
Effects	Strength/Presence/ Powers	Multiple d6	Core/For Strength or Blast, also sum the total values for Knockout
Resolution	Dexterity/Intelligence/ Ego/Utility Skills	3d6	Sum of values/Success: Characteristic or less
Attacks	Dexterity or Ego	3d6	Success: 11 + attacking combat value – defensive combat value, or less

DETAILS AND ODDBALLS

Superhero comics include conventions that certain rules encourage, based on visual effects, character concepts, and our enjoyment of what's happening.

- ▶ Thinking of comics panels rather than a single screen permits very effective play, especially for simultaneous events, and turns the Speed Chart into an artistic device rather than a metronome.
- ▶ A related concept is the gutter, the narrow blank space between panels, which permits time and motion effects to “wiggle” as needed.
- ▶ Word balloons, thought balloons, and captions aren't desperation devices at all! They permit considerable context, opinions, necessary minor explanations, and above all, critical emotional connections, and in terms of play/action timing, are wonderfully free.
- ▶ Visual sound effects fit very well into table-top dialogue, describing big chubby letters and punctuation almost as if they were actually there.

Playtesting has shown that these things are more than just “style,” because they contribute to everyone knowing what's going on, jumping in to describe what's happening, and helping to move things forward.

Fighting gets its own menu of comics content. In addition to the familiar damage from a successful hit, many attacks include Knockback, the nonsensical jet-propelled displacement that's so much fun to draw. If you get knocked into something, that'll do damage too, so it's an effective tactical consideration, as is affecting and disrupting opponent's preferred positions and movements.

Play is also open to opportunity bonuses, typically a +1 to a roll or an extra die for effect, on the loosest of criteria: simply that whatever was just said seems fun and spot-on for the moment. It can be style or content, or in character or out of character. You can think of this as genre reinforcement if you want, or social acknowledgment, or anything, really – it doesn't even need a name.

Some heroes also feature a mechanic called Luck or Unluck, and some even have both. It throws one more wild card of effect into play, which cannot override direct dice-based outcomes, but certainly twists them into new forms.

Finally, all of the mechanics are considered to be expressions of the fictional naming and descriptions of everything, to the extent of the character as a whole. Therefore the mechanics are not treated as fixed and maximal descriptions of what a power or anything else about the character can do, but only as what they can reliably do “inside” the broader applications. This feature is so important and central to play that it gets its own chapter.

REFERENCES

(1) Captain America provides several political snapshots, none of which are neutral. The World War 2 stories in *Captain America Comics* are unequivocally anti-Nazi, but that doesn't mean the hero is just a true-blue boy scout. His slam-bang superheroics are contrasted with being constantly picked-on as a lowly, apparently incompetent private. This side-eyed view of the brass is similar to many enlisted-men's cartoons like William Mauldin's *Willie and Joe* cartoons in *Stars and Stripes*, *Sad Sack* by George Baker in *Yank*, *the Army Weekly*, and the postwar newspaper strip *Beetle Bailey* by Mort Walker.

The Fifties stories are straightforwardly McCarthyite, in which he battles extreme racist stereotypes who spread communism right here in the U.S.A. with mind-control devices. These appeared briefly in *Young Men/Men's Adventures*, and *Captain America* (1953), by an unknown writer, Bill Everett, Carl Burgos, and John Romita Sr. among others, published by Goodman Publications using the Atlas Comics imprint.



As written by Stan Lee during the 1960s, published by Magazine Management using the Marvel Comics imprint, he is very decent but also alienated, delivering little or no “my country this and that” patriotic speeches even when up against the anti-American Hydra. The 1950s portrayal is negated by the narrative of his being frozen before the war ended. He never speaks in favor of American intervention in Vietnam. In this case absence is not neutrality; this portrayal repudiated the flag-waving John Birch Society, a fierce public topic at the time.

During the Decent Interval phase of the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal, Cap faces a long list of domestic crises in *Captain America and the Falcon* #153-176, including:

- ▶ Battling the racist, right-wing 1950s Cap, retconned to be a different person (in fairness, not all the prior Captain Americas were Steve Rogers).
- ▶ Discovering that the President of the United States is the leader of the heinously corrupt Secret Empire; when Cap confronts him in the Oval Office, he shoots himself in the head. The president’s face isn’t quite shown but it’s only a caption away from explicitly being Richard Nixon.
- ▶ Defying the National Security Council and refusing to work for the espionage and security establishment, thus renouncing being Captain America, at the time intended to be permanent.

All of these were by Steve Englehart and Sal Buscema, published by Cadence Industries using the Marvel Comics Group imprint.

During the early 1980s when AIDS finally become public knowledge, gay subculture and homosexuality in general endured a new wave of dismissal and contempt, especially from the Reagan administration and public policy in general. It intensified the demonization made public by such figures as Pat Robertson and, worse, mainstreamed it, making the mass deaths into a nation-wide acceptable joke. By contrast, Captain America unequivocally supported his gay friend Arnie Roth in the first open, naturalistic treatment of the issue in superhero comics and, as happened more than once at Marvel, in defiance of the company policy. Arnie was fully introduced in *Captain America* #270 (1982), by J. M. DeMattheis and Mike Zeck, publisher credits as above. Arnie and his lover Michael became ongoing supporting cast members, including the chilling “Things Fall Apart” story in #296 (1984; pencilled by Paul Neary), probably influenced by Martin Sherman’s controversial play *Bent* (1979).

CHAPTER 4 SPECIAL EFFECTS



BARE ESSENTIALS

Most of the rules in this book are about numbers and timing; they're mechanics. But when it comes to the fiction, the "what is it" of these moments, the mechanics are buck naked.

All the mechanics are governed by a single fundamental rule: that all play, everything in it, whatever anyone says about anything, must be specified in fictional terms. On the hero sheet, as well as in play, you have to say what it is before you can apply mechanics to see how well and how much it works. These what-it-is are called special effects: "nova blast," "mystic mastery," "spider-y things."

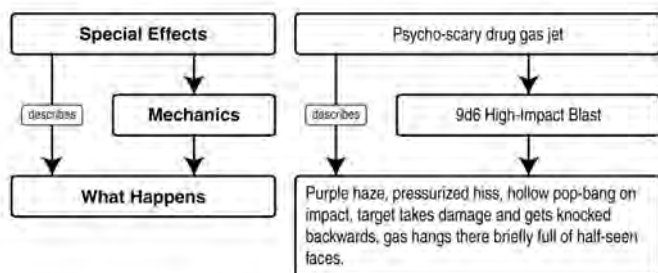
That's why the names for the powers mechanics are so neutral. One person's Concealment may be a brooding pool of shadow, but another's could be the least-dark thing imaginable, like filling the air with mystic glitter. It helps to look at the cause in one direction only: because you generate a brooding pool of shadow, you can use the game-mechanic called Concealment.

This isn't semantics – it's really a thing, that the special effects "are" what is happening in the imagined events, and the mechanics are used to create its impact, rather than defining it.

WITH TEETH

Here's a hero to illustrate, named Miasma, whose powers are based on scary hallucinatory vapors, such that she's practically part of them. Attacks' impact affects her less, she can intensify this effect to move through solid objects and for attacks to pass right through her, and she can expand the mists into a fog of distorted faces or focus it into a jet-blast.

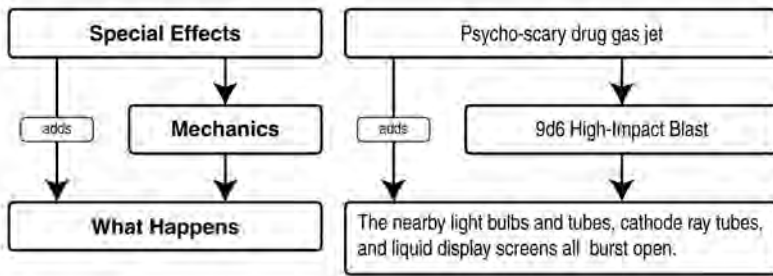
How does this conceptual specification get applied in play? The easiest, most familiar use for the **special effects** is just "skin:" we *describe and visualize* that she's shooting loopy-looking drug gas and not, for example, ice or butterflies, then you use the mechanics listed on your sheet, and that's it.



However, the descriptions are more than just skin. A lot more. The special effects have rules of their own. They can be applied to situations in play as if they were mechanics, as solid and effective as the specific numbers described in the textual rules. These consequences may aid or hinder the acting hero, depending on the circumstances. The gas jet, for instance, might hit harder, it might do half effects, it might not work, it might shut down the thing or foe it's hitting entirely, or it might do some wild thing that no one intended or knew could happen.

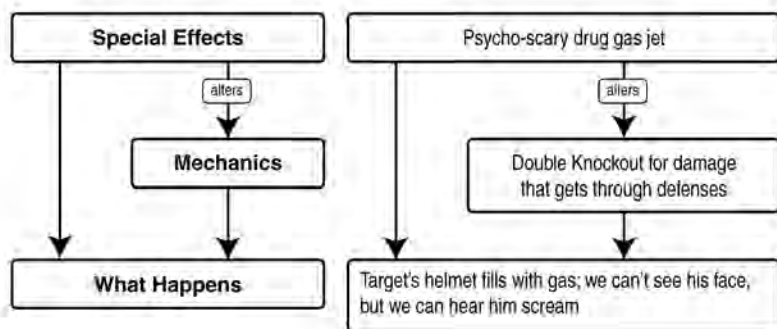
This procedure has no point total, no pre-arranged parameters, no number-of-use limits, no “metagame mechanic,” nothing in rules terms beyond a standing permission to do it. The decision formally lies with the game master, but in practice, suggestions for such things pop up from anyone more or less regularly.

It works in three ways. The first is for the special effects to include concrete consequences alongside the mechanics-based outcome. Let's say that you direct that psycho-scary drug gas jet attack in a cool laboratory situation, with tubes and fluids and energies all over the place.



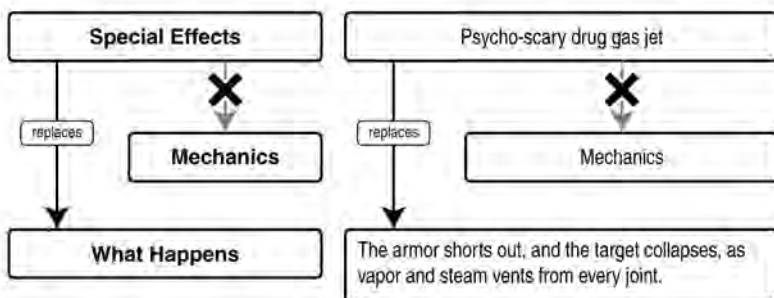
This technique is often obvious: hit someone with a fire-blast in a paper warehouse, and no one will blink when the narration includes everything catching on fire. The less obvious point is that such effects are completely optional and decided upon in the moment, not as fixed effects, and they're not expected to be consistent. They don't have to happen. It's strictly a matter of fun and significant consequences when they occur to you, meaning to anyone.

The second way is for the special effects to alter how the mechanics are applied in a particular instance. For example, if that attack were directed toward someone in techno-armor with a face-plate, the gas might be deemed extra effective as long as any of it manages to get in there.



Again, applying the rule in the hero's favor is not guaranteed. I was thinking of armor with some environmental containment, but not so complete as to provide its own internal atmosphere. Armor with that capacity might have the opposite effect against a gas jet attack, ignoring the damage and only applying the impact (Knockback) of the attack.

The third way takes this effect to the extreme, in which the special effects *override* the mechanics, typically making a power totally effective or ineffective.



In this game, you don't say, "just special effects," meaning no effect beyond the skin. Here, the special effects *do* things. The mechanics never fully tell you what happens in the fiction; the mechanics are only there so the special effects have something to work with.

AT THE TABLE

"Naked" also means vulnerable. If you're using special effects with teeth in the mechanics, play is now vulnerable to negotiation about whether or not a special effect is going to have a unique impact on the mechanics. It's risky, but that's how it is for anyone creating a comic, especially in terms of finishing this issue right now.

Comics creators are generally unconcerned with fans' notions of what a power is or can do, and much more concerned with how they see the hero in the conflicts immediately at hand. Powers get conceptually squishy because:

- ▶ Prior standards or claims always take second place to whatever is most cool right now.
- ▶ Every creator has his or her own notions about the powers, often not carefully thought-out, about what's right or most fun to draw.
- ▶ Overwork, deadlines, and other stresses can turn what would be a playful stretch of a concept into an incredible exaggeration. The boundary is never clear until afterwards.

The group in play is like that creator. You don't have to apply teeth to the special effects. But you can. The atmosphere and rules-use can be a bit like free jazz: loose, occasionally pushing the envelope, always reaching for the best, tolerant of missteps. Liberating. Comics sometimes rise to great heights this way, and sometimes fall on their face. The game works the same way. (1)

Therefore be consistent, but not with the powers as such. Instead, be consistent in how they're socially and creatively handled. Here's a recommended sequence.

- ▶ Describe powers' incidental effects all the time and play incidental bystanders' reactions and exclamations. Better yet, ask everyone to describe them, early and often.
- ▶ When everyone is used to what the mechanics do by default and already enjoys seeing powers' unique fictional effects, then putting teeth in them once in a while is easy.
- ▶ Put in the teeth only rarely, when powers really clash directly, or when the immediate situation just begs for it, like the warehouse full of paper.
- ▶ Given the choice, favor the heroes: apply generous, helpful interpretations of their special effects more often than otherwise. The players made up these powers, so what better reward than seeing them proved to be the "right" ones for the job? Also, they become willing to accept the same for their opponents, once in a while.
- ▶ Stay a little flexible. If someone displays unmistakable signs of buzzkill due to a special effect's consequences, dial it down.
- ▶ Accept suggestions for special effects, especially those which seem spontaneous and enthusiastic. When you don't, instead of shutting it down, say, "maybe next time," and indeed do it next time.

These practices lead to play in which someone grins or groans when the special effects' teeth show up; but either way, says "Of course!"

MODIFIERS

Ruby Ray and the other hero examples in the Appendix include Modifiers for many of their Powers. When you organize a hero's mechanics with points, Advantages use more points and Limitations use less. But what are they? It's still about the special effects.

- ▶ **Advantage:** Grimfire has the Weaken Power, against Presence, Modified to be a Strike attached to his punch. This means being hit by him is worse than just the damage; he is so fell and scary that it demoralizes you.
- ▶ **Limitation:** Ruby Ray's Flight is Constrained, specifically that it won't work if she goes under half speed. This effect emphasizes that it's a laser zap, not a hover float.
- ▶ **Advantage + Limitation:** when Anybug takes on his Stink Bug form, he can bonk you hard with the Blast Power, which is modified to be Reactive, responding to being hit. It is also Conditional, along with everything else in his transformations, to be fully effective only if he keeps his power pack on, which is itself on a Focus Limitation, meaning pretty easily grabbed or broken.

Using Modifiers doesn't give your power the special effect you want, because you already have it, by definition. Using Modifiers says, let's not rely on in-the-moment inspiration to modify the mechanics, instead, let's bake it in using points so it'll become mechanics. You include Modifiers when you like a given nuance of your power's special effect so much that you want to see it in action all the time.

Consider a hero whose powers are defined as powered armor. Let's say in addition to the literal armor, he flies, projects beams of some kind, and relies on a battery.

- ▶ Version 1 has no Modifiers at all, so that he's built the same as anyone whose powers are intrinsic to their body.
- ▶ Version 2 has Modifiers here and there, to make specific features of the armor always work in particular ways as mechanics.
- ▶ Version 3 builds the whole set of armor under unified Modifiers and perhaps subsets for specific parts.

The most famous armored hero from the comics provides further insight due to the varying plot-importance of such features. During his first decade, he was in effect a disabled hero due to the focus on his heart condition and the high-energy demands of his armor. After these were written down a little, then his problems arose more from his alcoholism and his uncertain control over the armor. Therefore its variations by creator aren't only in the explicit designs, colors, and invented features, but in its plot-affecting properties, including how vulnerable some piece of it may be, how quickly its batteries run out or recharge, and how dependent he is on it or how responsible in its use. (2)

In these rules, there isn't a single way to build a hero like this one, because you don't have to say, "In order to have armor at all, I must take this or that Modifier." It's already armor because you said so, and therefore it won't work if he's not wearing it, its battery can run low on energy, and it has lots of properties based on its materials and engineering. These were the powers' special effects from the start and will always be the special effects no matter how many Modifiers it has or doesn't have. The only Modifiers you need are those you want to cause consistent, dramatic consequences in play.

STORY POWER

That's quite a handful of concepts: wide-open non-listed special effects, opportunistic mechanical consequences, developing a group look-and-feel for when they apply, and Modifiers as options rather than requirements. Clearly each individual group will arrive at its own spin on enjoying the full use of special effects in play, and no single crystal-clear example is possible.

What are they for? I can give you one thing they're not for, and one thing they are.

- ▶ Special effects are not there for one person to make the story go where they want. They aren't a plot hammer or fiat.
- ▶ Special effects are there to honor the potential for the imagined powers to affect what's happening, because of what they are, for good or ill.

The way to maintain the difference is to describe and use special effects based on what's already obvious in play at the moment, without inventing new reasons for this or that power to have some privilege or deficit. It's very effective: you'll stay authentic for your own enjoyment, rather than manipulative about the situational outcome. Everyone in play appreciates it and they soon join in.

The result is vivid, unforgettable, and, for the group as a whole, entirely your own.

REFERENCES

(1) Two little square-thingies are egregious examples of do-anything McGuffins, but also, against expectations, have fueled compelling stories. The Cosmic Cube first appeared in *Tales of Suspense* #79 (1966), by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, published by Magazine Management, using the Marvel Comics Imprint. Mother Box first appeared in *The Forever People* #1 (1971), by Jack Kirby, published by Warner Communications using the DC Comics imprint.

(2) Iron Man first appeared in *Tales of Suspense* #39 (1963), by Stan Lee, Larry Lieber, and Don Heck, published by Magazine Management. The significant shift from health-based to resource-based problems occurred in *Iron Man* #85 (1976), by Len Wein, Roger Slifer, and Herb Trimpe, published by Cadence Industries using its Marvel Comics Group imprint. The similar shift to problems of addiction occurred in the "Demon in a Bottle" storyline, *Iron Man* #120-128 (1979), by David Michelinie, Bob Layton, and John Romita Jr, from the same publisher.

CHAPTER 5 HERO MAKING

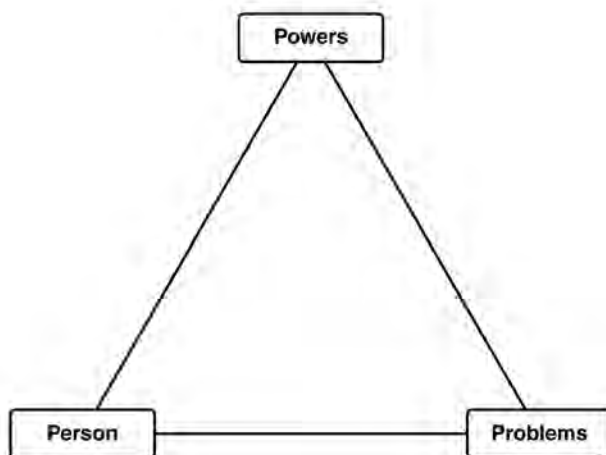


This is it! You've seen the two statements for your game, and you don't have to guess what they mean; the game master is waiting to find that out from you.

The pressure is lower than it might look. What you do now barely begins your hero, like one of those one-page promotional illustrations that gets people excited about the upcoming debut. You even get some wiggle room to re-adjust after seeing how play goes.

THREE CORNERS

To begin the process of hero creation, fill in your notions at each corner of a triangle: the person, the problems, and the powers (actually powers, characteristics, and skills). Scribble a detail in one, skip to another, and skip back, in no particular order – you'll find that each one informs both of the others as the creative process moves along.



The **person** has an ethnic, national, and economic background, age, gender, somewhere to live, and some current or working identity in those terms. He or she necessarily participates in or displays some subculture, employment, important personal quality, or lifestyle too. Ordinary standards of attractiveness fall into this category as well, as they are usually an amalgam of literal appearance and social variables. You don't have to say much, but say something. Brief phrases here capture whole shelves of skills, knowledge, acquaintances, and resources.

When it comes to this real-world stuff, be honest and interested. This isn't to please an audience, but to please yourself. Powers can be cool, problems can be sympathetic, but this person is someone you like.

The **problems** arise directly from your hero's identity, standing, priorities, activities, and situations, super-powered or otherwise. They're also the meat and potatoes of actually being a hero, so you want them to hit hard. He or she may wail piteously about it, but not you. You're doing this on purpose.

Think about:

- ▶ The hero's social position, based on ordinary human circumstances as well as on anything to do with powers and super-stuff, and certainly as related to appearance or reputation
- ▶ Any direct difficulties from the powers themselves, whether they cause problems or open up vulnerabilities to other effects
- ▶ Physical and emotional disabilities, which are often tied directly to specific powers in a hundred possible ways
- ▶ Strong opinions and deeply-felt positions, about things that might crop up a lot, or that might prompt unthinking reactions
- ▶ - These don't have to be weird or unreasonable in content, and might even be admirable
- ▶ Relationships of all kinds, especially family, romance, and work, but also related to super-stuff, as with personal enemies and too-interested entities.
- ▶ - Relationships don't have to be problems and might be associated with one or both of the other corners instead, but when they are, they really are
- ▶ Then there's plain bad luck. There's a lot of truth in the notion that no one wants to be the hero of a story – it kind of sucks, a lot of the time.

Plenty of this can and will happen without points. But if there's one sector of hero making that stands above the rest, it's which problems you'll choose to be represented mechanically from those you've brainstormed here.

For **powers**, don't look at the lists and points in the next chapter. Instead, scribble in the special effects: what the powers look like, in action, against what sort of opponents, in what sort of situation, and accomplishing what. Don't explain anything. This is about the visuals, like an artist's concept sketching, especially if you think of the hero doing something rather than floating there.

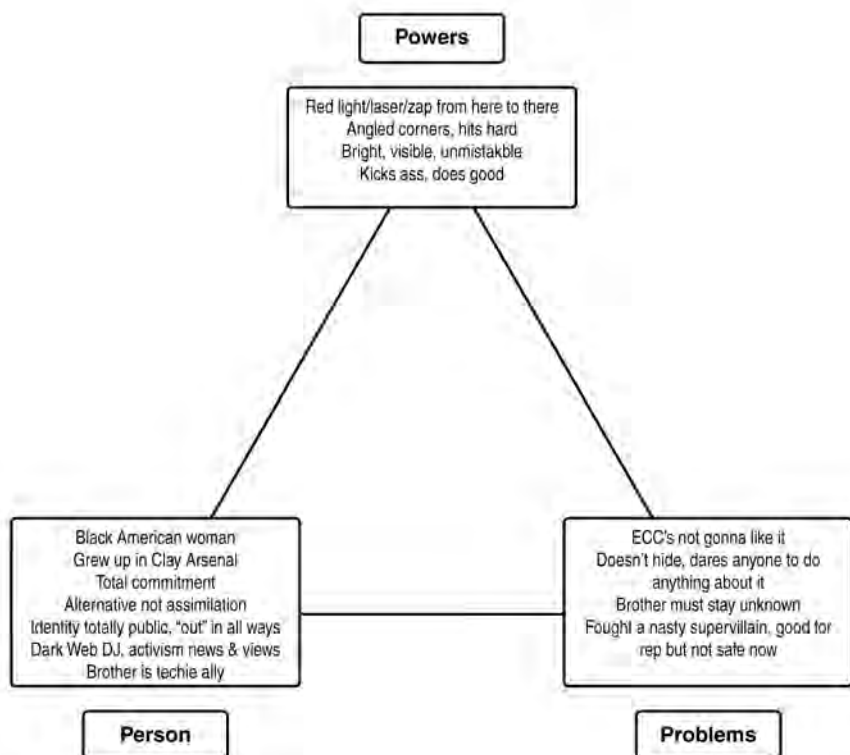
It may be hard to believe, but you really are free to name whatever powers you like: tap into the space-time continuum, control any microbe, channel a god or a whole pantheon, turn into your favorite creature (or all of them). The mechanics express their scope and impact, but for what the power is, that's all you.

Here are the three corners for Ruby Ray. I start with the two big statements for our game, which is set in Hartford, Connecticut.

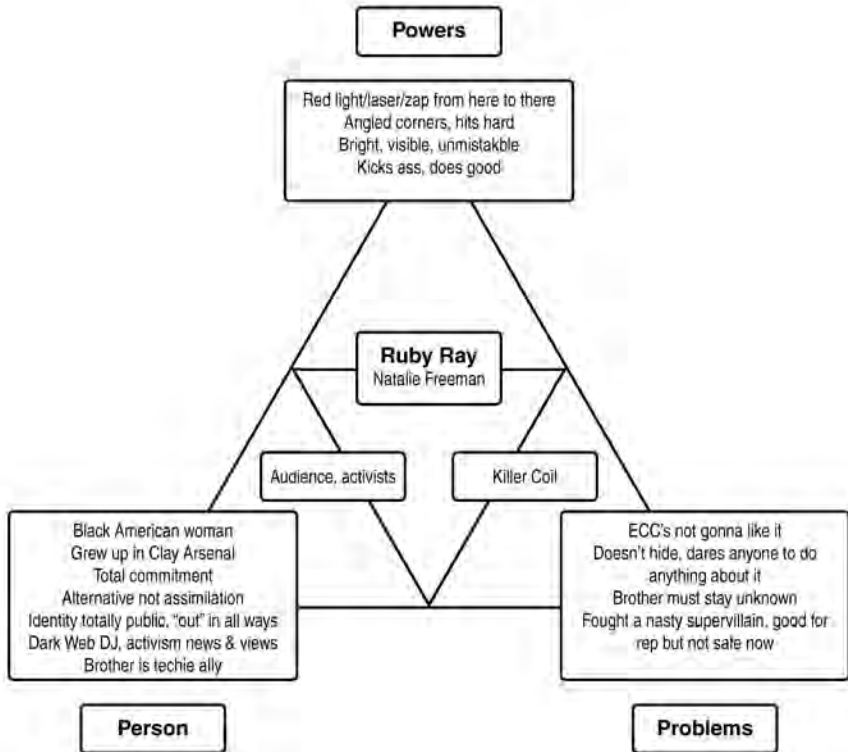
- ▶ A superhero stands for something and means it.
- ▶ You got family in my politics! You got politics in my family!

For the person corner, I know where I'm coming from right away. That whole "politics" phrasing and, I admit, the location get up my nose, specifically about feel-good smug activism that never really does anything. So my hero will be someone who completely disavows compromise and establishment power, a total doer. OK, I'm already filling in every corner, especially her ("her," I suddenly realize) powers: one hundred percent bright and obvious, not too subtle, as classic super-physics hero as you can get.

That's how the triangle works – without hardly trying, whatever you put into one corner feeds into the others, and "someone" starts to appear in the "middle." The powers create problems, the person chooses what to do with the powers, the problems make the choices matter, and a vision begins to form of the hero in action, with things about to happen to them.



Without even trying, all this pops the name Ruby Ray into my head, and now it feels like someone I'm discovering rather than inventing. Certain things that draw from all three corners now feel obvious, and if I could draw, I'd sketch her in the middle. Instead, since I'm getting enough sense of the people who are associated with her, I write them there, including her own name and also a cool adversary name.



UNCONVENTIONAL NOTIONS

You are now the master of idiom, not the slave of genre. Consider shaking off some genre habits from comics fandom and role-playing conventions.

Originality is over-rated. Copy like hell, rip off anything and everything – shoot, nab your favorite mask design and color it some other color. The best and most famous superheroes all began as rip-off salads, because original powers and appearance never made a character good. What did that is what someone did with it, their way, all the way. (1)

Origin stories are over-rated even worse. Yes, a few of them are very good, but not many, and a lot of those become significant well after the hero's first appearance. You may be tempted to write up a complicated text piece about the origin of the character's powers. I can't stop you, having succumbed to temptation myself, but try to make it about *why our story starts here*, rather than maundering about little Sally who dreamed of flying.

Comics adaptations have worsened the origin problem by bloating a six-page flashback piece of a longer story into whole movies and seasons of episodes, creating the impression that superheroes have nothing better to do than get originated. That, and going on forever about “Oh no, what’s happened to me? I’m staring at my hands! What are these strange powers? Whatever shall I do?” Bah. Make up a hero who’s figured that stuff out, even if it was just a few moments before play begins. (2)

Names are also no reason to stress. There seems to be no such thing as a “dumb” superhero name in comics. Effectively, if you write and draw a great hero, the name becomes great, no matter how lame it looked originally, and the converse is true as well, with a clever or arguably iconic name belly-flopping due to presenting a crap hero. A simple iconic noun seems to have been acceptable throughout comics history. Certain conventions were observed at various points, like nearly universal endings with “-man” or similar terms in the 1940s and preserved for some time; “doer” names throughout the 1960s and 1970s, as in “what do they do;” animal names that proliferated in the 1970s even for heroes with none of the corresponding animal’s features; the near-perfect correspondence with music celebrity or band names during the 1980s; or non-hyphenated noun-noun compounds, whether from the dictionary or never before seen by human eyes, as in the 1990s.

For people names, the original convention was stricter, originating in the pseudonyms used by authors and actors whose names were deemed too ethnic to be marketable, and applied to the characters as well. They are so neutral as to have an Uncanny Valley quality, as they are typically built from two given (first) names with vague English origins, or a given name of that sort with a Germanic surname connoting strength or otherwise threatening. The 1960s strongly shifted to naturalistic ethnic names and corresponding identities for the heroes, and comics naming has featured a blend of the old and new conventions since. (3)

You can relax notions of superhero types. Not only does the group not need “one of these, one of these, and two of those,” but you don’t need to be any kind of “these.” Again, the best heroes from the source materials tromp all over such distinctions. Do what you want from the two statements, categories be damned.

Similarly, there are plenty of tactical games for mission success and combat survivorship, and this isn’t one of them. Never mind making well-rounded utility packages, neatly constructed in four quadrants of offense, defense, movement, and perception. And forget about armoring up into invulnerability either. Believe it: your hero is going to get hit and, sometimes, to hit the dirt.

What about weird heroes? Aliens, androids, visiting demon nieces ... all fantastic, when combined with recognizable material throughout the corners, so the hero’s unusual exaggerations and deficits highlight all the same real-people problems real-people have. Those effects might be seen in his or her or

its acquaintances. For example, you might go all the way into deliberately blank space, whether it's amnesia or "just created yesterday" or too alien and alienated to know what anything is. If you ground that with a rich supporting cast, then the person corner is as full as ever, and it works great.

ALL ABOUT POINTS

You get a few game mechanics without using points. If you stopped here, your hero would be one hex in size, have six hexes of running, two hexes of swimming, Strength 2d6, Presence 2d6, Body 10, Speed 1, Defense 10, and Dexterity, Intelligence, Ego, and Perception rolls of 11 points each.

You don't use points for most things concerning the hero's personal, social, or economic identity. Whatever you want, say so, and it's free. That includes any and all wealth and skills that pertain to work and play, where they're from, or what job they may have, or what they want from life.

The points can illustrate or nail down these things in specific ways. For your hero to be a "famous actor," you only have to say so, but using points to increase Presence gives mechanical weight to his or her actor's charisma and steadiness under pressure.

You can do the following in any order, and wherever you start, you'll skip around them as you go along.

- ▶ Which Situations are evidently demanded by the concept so far.
- ▶ What your Characteristics will look like, especially if one or more are super-powered.
- ▶ Which Skills you'll have.
- ▶ Whether you'll use a Power Framework, and if so, which one.
- ▶ How strong your powers are, mechanically, and how they might be modified.

Mathematically, these are related like this:

100 + total Situations points = Characteristics points + Skills points + Powers points

You get 100 points for free, then add as many points as your Situations provide. You'll use all of them; don't bank any points for a starting hero.

How many for the total? The recommended value for a beginning hero is 200. If the group wants to start higher, they can, but everyone should use the same value and the game is not built to start over 220.

The next chapter lists points for all these things, but crucially, some of them can be reduced by various details called Limitations. That leads to a much more important quantity than merely the obvious point total: the Ratio. It's calculated for a whole hero like this:

[The point total calculated without Limitations / The point total] x 100

For the first part, leave everything else the same, all the mechanics you'll see in the examples and next chapter, the Frameworks, Advantages, everything.

Here's the rule: a hero's ratio may not exceed 119. Limiting features of the concept which would lead to a higher ratio must be left to non-point Special Effects.

NUTS AND BOLTS

The **Situations** don't "balance" the hero's good stuff with some equivalent amount of bad stuff. Situations are, themselves, good, and the equals sign in the equation serves only as a useful cognitive device to make you stretch a little on whichever side needs it.

The Situations are categorized:

- ▶ Identity
- ▶ Vulnerability
- ▶ Susceptibility
- ▶ Side Effects
- ▶ Enrage
- ▶ Psychological
- ▶ Physical
- ▶ Dependent NPC
- ▶ Hunted
- ▶ Unusual Looks
- ▶ Unluck

You may have several in one category in most cases, but the combined values within it cannot exceed 50. The Exception is Unluck, which is capped at 15 points, and believe me, that's plenty.

It's all right to be hazy on some of your Situations' details, but give each one a name.

It so happens that the Hartford game was set at 200 points for all the heroes at the start. Ruby Ray's Situations pretty much write themselves, landing on the designated total almost as if by magic.



Situations	Points
Public Identity: Natalie Freeman	10
Psych: Stands up for marginalized person's selfhood (often)	15
Psych: Brash (rarely)	5
Psych: Fun-loving (rarely)	5
Vulnerable: 2x Knockout from red-colored attacks or hazards	15
Dependent non-player character: Bri, her brother (secret identity)	15
Hunted: Killer Coil (individual, super-powered, ruinous)	20
Hunted: FCC (organization, manipulative)	15
Total points = 100 free + 100 = 200	

To clarify a little bit of the processing, I focused on her identity, opinions, relationships, and social situation. I could have added more onto the cartoon physics of her powers, perhaps making her Susceptible to the color red, and I'd probably go that way if we were working with a higher point total. I was determined not to tap into any “out of control” tropes for Ruby Ray, so Enrage and Side Effects were right out.

The characters embedded in there will need a little development using points of their own, but that's not important to this total, which is 200 points to use for Characteristics, Skills, and powers.

Here's a useful point to know from the outset: the Psychological Situations aren't locked-down thespian commitments. They matter, or rather, using them as Situations means you want to see them in play, but they do not dictate your hero's precise behavior in a moment of crisis. They aren't phrased as "always" or "will not."

Therefore although Ruby Ray doesn't *like* compromises about marginalized people's selfhood (rights, e.g.) and may well take laser-zapping stuff-breaking action about it, that doesn't mean she's a robot who parrots the same line and flies off the handle every single time it's at issue.

The **Characteristics** are Strength, Dexterity, Body, Intelligence, Ego, Presence, Speed, and Defense. These provide the basis for most skills and physical feats, combat capability, and some specialized applications like Presence Attacks.

You build them up from a base value with points, at varying amounts.

Characteristic	Base value	Points	Details
Strength	2d6	5/+1d6	
Presence	2d6	5/+1d6	
Defense	10	1/+1 ordinary/5/+1 resistant	Ordinary Defense 15 is 5 points/Resistant Defense 5 is 20 points

You can use 4 points to upgrade a base point to be resistant

There are two ways to go with Defense.

- Bulk it up here with some or all the points being resistant. This works for intrinsically tough bodies, automatic defensive features of certain powers concepts, or for armor.
- Leave this value at baseline or maybe a little more, and get one or more powers that increase it instead.

Body establishes the hero's physical frame.

Characteristic	Base value	Points	Example
Body	10	10/+1	Body 12 is 20 points

You don't increase ordinary movement like running or swimming with Points. If you want to go faster than the listed values, then you push with extra Endurance, as described in Chapter 11: Fighting Words.

It sets the values for Recovery, Stunned, Endurance, and Knockout, which may not be directly increased with points. They aren't bought; you just get'em based on Body.

Characteristic	Derivation
Recovery	Body x 1
Stunned	Body x 1
Knockout	Body x 2
Endurance	Body x 3

Speed is your number of actions relative to everyone else.

Characteristic	Base value	Points	Example
Speed	1	10/+1	Speed 4 is 30 points

- Speed 2 is a bit slow for a hero but not absurdly so; it's still twice as fast as an ordinary person. 3-4 may be thought of as standard for comics heroes, and 5+ is surreally active and reactive.
- Don't be greedy for speedy! It's very easy to overrun your energy reserves that way.

Dexterity, Intelligence, and Ego work entirely differently: their values are target values for resolution rolls using 3d6.

Characteristic	Base value	Points	Secondary values
Dexterity	11	10/+1	
Intelligence	11	10/+1	Intelligence sets the base (free) target number for perception
Ego	11	10/+1	

Ruby Ray's Characteristics focus on energy, impact, and speed.

Characteristics	Points
Strength 2d6	0
+6d6 Strength only when flying	20
Presence 3d6	5
Body 14	40
Recovery 14, Stunned 14, Knockout 28, Endurance 42	
Speed 4	30
Defense 10	0
Dexterity 12	10
Intelligence 11	0
Ego 11	0

See that additional Strength? It should be 30 points, but it's qualified by a key phrase called a Limitation. You can read about the details in the next chapter, but for now, recognize that sometimes things may use less points.

You don't need points for the hero's naturalistic skill-set, including resources, contacts, and property. As mentioned in Chapter 2: Basics, Ruby Ray has an impressive array of such abilities and connections, and so will any other hero.

The listed **Skills** are best conceived as super-skills, situated far into the concept of popular or fantastic adventure. They deliver over-the-top applications and effects that a real skilled person, even an expert, cannot do – for lack of a better word, they are “comic-booky.”

They differ in groups based on certain point structures:

- ▶ Utility: Climbing, Computer Programming, Detective Work, Security Systems, Stealth
- ▶ Maneuver: Acrobatics, Martial Arts (Attacks, Moves, Find Weakness)
- ▶ Situational: Skill Levels, Luck

The Utility Skills' emphasis on sneakiness isn't Ruby Ray's thing, so she focuses on the other types to work closely with her Powers and the Characteristics they rely on.

Awareness	Force Field	Shrinking
Blast	Force Wall	Specialized Defense
Concealment	Growth	Stretch
Density Increase	Images	Surfaces
Desolid	Instant Change	Telekinesis
Drain	Invisibility	Telepathy
Entangle	Life Support	Teleportation
Extra Limb	Mind Control	Tunnel
Flash	Missile Deflection	Weaken
Flight	Regeneration	

The points for the formal Powers can be organized simply and their specifics left to Special Effects during play, or they may turn into a bit of a design mini-project. You can arrange powers' relations to one another, set their values, define Characteristics as Powers and mess with them accordingly, integrate Powers with Skills, and more. You can also arrange their relations with one another with Power Frameworks and significantly change their specific rules-effects with Modifiers, either Advantages or Limitations.

You don't have to use a Power Framework, but if you do, choose one: Elemental Control, Multiform, or Variable Power Pool. It's a good option if your hero's powers show off some special effect so consistently that you'd say, "fire powers," or "commands magnetic forces," or "son of a star (like an actual sun-type star)," or even something oddball like "master of the color blue."

Advantages

Adaptive Effects	Group Effect	Reactive
Affects Desolid	High Impact	Separate
Area Effect	Invisible Effects	Sever
Aura	Lethal	Strike
Destructive	No Endurance Cost	Usable at Range
Ego-based	Persistent	Usable on/for Others
Expanded Scope	Piercing	

Limitations

Activation	Costs Endurance	Linked
Always On	Focus	No Knockback
Burnout	Increased Endurance	No Range
Conditional	Involuntary	Shutdown
Skill-based	Tricky	

For Ruby Ray’s Powers, it’s about raw visuals, inspired by some comics characters but turned into her very own signature person-glow zap form, full of punishing impact and lighting up the place.

Powers	Points
Elemental Control: Red Laser Transformation	20
Laser Zap: Flight 20 hexes	
- Constrained: linear only, Constrained: cannot go less than half-speed	10
Hard Glow: Force Field 16	20
Light Up: Flash 4d6	
- Constrained: only at end of flight path, No Range 10	

Her powers show a lot in just a few lines and will help you understand the next chapter’s applications.

- ▶ Every one of them has an in-fiction name which, again, carries a wide range of momentary applications or consequences that have nothing to do with points. Many Powers’ interior mechanics need to be specified by consulting your concept for it, with the name as the primary reference.
- ▶ They’re organized into a Power Framework, an Elemental Control, because they are collectively just one fictional power being used in a variety of ways.
- ▶ -Without the Elemental Control, they’d be 40 points each. However, this Framework reduces the points for whatever’s in it, so each one is 20 points instead. Each one is rated at a value which happens to be based on 40 points. Force Field, for example, gets you 2 Defense per 5 points.
- ▶ Two of the slots also have Limitations like her extra Strength did, cutting down the already-reduced points in half in both cases.

The Elemental Control is the least constraining Framework, so she can vary the amount of Defense her Hard Glow provides, for example. The two Limitations nail down exactly how I'd like her Special Effects to apply reliably, focusing her powered actions into the high-speed high-impact imagery I've associated with her from the beginning.

Here's a point about the Special Effects. Ruby Ray glows bright red; it's implicit in the name "Red Laser Transformation" and it's explicit in "Hard Glow." I don't need to spend points so she can glow, I can describe it how I like during play, and I can use it in minor, or even significant, ways.

AT A GLANCE

Take a once-over moment for your worksheet. First, review your total points: $100 + \text{Situations} = \text{Characteristics} + \text{Skills} + \text{Powers} = 200 \text{ to } 240$, or the specific value in that range that was set for this group.

Given the structure of the Situations, their total will be a multiple of 5. If the Characteristics + Skills + Powers side is not, then add the few you need to bring it up. The easiest place for that is Defense.

You might have to go back into design if the totals are really different. If you like the Situations right where they are, but you find that they provide more points than you've built into the characteristics, skills, and powers, then bonus! Go get more stuff there to make up the difference.

Conversely, maybe you've built the other side of the equals sign to a certain amount, and you're wondering how to fill up the Situations to match, thinking maybe all those hassles will ruin your hero. That's a good thing too, because, typically, when you provide a new angle with one more strong Situation, or beef up a couple you have already, you provide the clincher that makes the hero active and full of life.

The more important final glance before play is qualitative: whether you have found, or think you can find, your hero's heart. I like Ruby Ray. She takes no shit from anyone, herself included, and she's put herself on the line for a lot of others who probably don't like her very much. She's not a smug do-gooder, but a genuine rebel and radical, smart enough to concentrate on the meaning of what she does, not just hitting things. But if things need hitting, she'll do that too.

This is a good time to consider her supporting cast as well, especially to think more about her brother Bri and her adversary Killer Coil.

Transfer the information from your worksheet to the shiny use-in-play sheet. The game master has to do some more work; but you are ready.

REFERENCES

(1) Ruby Ray is influenced by Captain Marvel (Monica Rambeau), first appearing in *The Amazing Spider-Man Annual #16* (1982), by Roger Stern and John Romita Jr., published by Cadence Industries using the Marvel Comics Group imprint; by Jetstream, first appearing in *The New Mutants #16* (1984), by Chris Claremont and Sal Buscema, by the same publisher; and also by The Ray, whose first version appeared in *Smash Comics #14* (1940), by Lou Fine, published by Quality Comics (purchased by National Periodical Publications in 1956).

(2) Superman's extraterrestrial origin as originally presented was a single panel, quickly dismissed as a justification for his strength as he engaged in immediately earthly goals and adventures. Familiar elements and some which were abandoned were introduced piecemeal, but the origin was not developed into the familiar science fiction saga until 1958 under Mort Weisinger's editorship. Batman's origin was presented more quickly after the hero's debut, about six months, but again, not as the opening story (*Detective Comics #39*). Many origins were throwaway or *pro forma*, sometimes framed as an extreme contrast, like Steve Rogers being a "weakling" before becoming Captain America, or Barry Allen being a "slow" person before becoming the second version of the Flash.

Some heroes' origins were more relevant at the outset and often featured as the hero's first story, as with Hawkman in *Flash Comics #1* (1940), by Gardner F. Fox and Dennis Neville, published by All-American Publications, absorbed by National Comics in 1944. This approach was repeated and explored from many angles by most heroes co-created by Stan Lee, especially Doctor Strange, Spider-Man, Iron Man, the Hulk, and Daredevil, but not all of them. Ant-Man and the Wasp, Thor, and the Fantastic Four all had *pro forma* origins to move past immediately.

(3) Hollywood history is full of names like Kirk Douglas (Issur Danielovitch) and Cary Grant (Archibald Alec Leach), and so are the pulp authors and heroes. In comics, two-first-names include Clark Kent, Bruce Wayne, Steve Rogers, Reed Richards, Peter Parker, Donald Blake, and more. The pulps also established the tough names, especially "Doc" Clark Savage Jr., who set the model for many like Ben Grimm, Johnny Storm, and Tony Stark.

Stan Lee introduced ethnic naturalism to some heroes' personal names, including Henry Pym, Janet Van Dyne, Matthew Murdock, and Warren Worthington II. For super names, he favored the "cool noun" approach, e.g. Magneto, Abomination, but recommended the "doer" approach if you get stuck. When Gerry Conway was stuck on the name for his expy of Mack Bolan's Executioner, Lee asked him, "What does he do," Conway answered, "He punishes people," and so it was.

CHAPTER 6

STRUCTURAL MECHANICS



Here is the big encyclopedia of mechanics for the game. Later chapters develop how they're used, but these are all the tools and pieces.

SITUATIONS

In play, the Situations are the hero's story-framing devices, both externally and internally.

Your hero's point total is 100 + the points provided by Situations. For a starting hero, the permitted range for the total is 200-240 points, and a specific number may be set for the group. You may receive up to 50 from each type, with the exception of Unluck which is maxed out at 15 points.

Identity

Identity	Your hero's identity matters a lot to many people, including significantly powerful sectors of society. Without an Identity-based Situation, your hero's personal information may or may not be well-known, but it isn't interesting or important to anyone either.	
Secret Identity	People want to know who you are, and there are reasons you don't want them to	15 points
Public Identity	You are a public and easily-located figure, and it's important to people	10 points

Unusual Looks

Unusual Looks	People react negatively to your hero's presence or mention, whether for appearance or reputation. It must be a specific hostile emotion or aversive response, so a hero can have more than one sort of Unusual Look. The reaction is checked once upon any NPC interacting with the hero or considering them in conversation or reflection. If the Situation is not triggered, their reaction is rational considering the information they have. Unusual Looks may or may not include physical appearance; it may be defined as something less tangible, like a smeared reputation or creepy aura. Unusual Looks affects Presence Attacks negatively, never positively.	
Roll 8-	5 points	
Roll 11-	10 points	
Roll 14-	15 points (maximum per Unusual Look)	

Vulnerability

Vulnerability	Your hero takes double points of effect from an attack, before defenses are applied. It applies to all forms of effect, e.g., both Body and Knockout damage from an attack which does both.
One specified Power	15 points
All Powers associated with a special effect	25 points

Dependence

Dependence	Your hero requires a substance or environment, either constantly or at regular intervals no greater than 12 hours. In a situation using the Speed Chart, 3d6 Destructive Knockout damage applies per Phase, with no defense. In other situations, the hero is debilitated, as if Drained for 3d6 Destructive effect, regarding any use of Strength or Dexterity. For more severe consequences, see Side Effects.
Ordinary	10 points
Uncommon or weird	20 points

Susceptibility

Susceptibility	Your hero takes 3d6 Destructive Knockout damage from contact with or close proximity to a harmless substance, with no defense applied.
Uncommon or weird	10 points
Ordinary	20 points
Includes Core damage to Body	+5 points

Side Effects

Side Effects	Choose one or more attack powers. This automatically damages or affects your hero at no Endurance cost and no defense upon specific circumstances. They may be defined as a specific action by the hero, a specific action by someone else (anyone who does it, not a specific person), or a specific condition or situation the hero is likely to encounter.
Active Points (maximum 50)	= in points

Physical

Physical	Your hero has a disability that affects ordinary empowerment or interaction. It may concern anatomical function or other aspects of health, communication, or cognitive function, although not to the point of removing personal understanding or responsibility.	
Frequency	Occasional	5 points
	All the time	10 points
Severity	Significantly limiting; may be compensated with appropriate devices or practices	5 points
	Severely limiting; it may be managed but cannot be compensated to ordinary levels of function	10 points

Psychological

Psychological	Your hero holds a well-defined, deeply-felt position or opinion. Its justification, morality, or rationality are not rated in points.	
Provocation	Happens sometimes	5 points
	Happens a lot	15 points
Response	Stated opinion, visible expression	0 points
	Irrational	5 points
	Meltdown, defined as collapse, flight, or otherwise non-functional response	10 points

Enrage

Enrage	Your hero may exhibit a violent, retributive response when provoked in a specific way or under specific conditions, to attack whatever they perceive to be the cause. It must be their primary attack at full power, toward the provocation. Defensive maneuvers or strategic movement are not possible while triggered. Recovery is a 0-Phase action at the start of every Phase, requiring a successful Ego roll; a successful recovery is complete and the hero regains full control over his or her actions.	
Provocation	Uncommon or weird	0 points
	Ordinary or likely	5 points
Response	Roll 11-	10 points
	Roll 14-	15 points

Hunted

Hunted	Someone is dedicated toward your hero in a way he or she definitely does not desire. You decide how much you know about them. They are not affected by the Hero's Presence.	
Who	One person	0 points
	Small group	5 points
	Large organization	10 points
Resources	Ordinary	0 points
	Extensive and/or unusual	5 points
	Includes superpowers	10 points
Intention	Manipulative	5 points
	Ruinous or murderous	10 points

Dependent Non-Player Character

Dependent Non-Player Character	Your hero is invested in the Situations of another person, for reasons or emotions as you define. A DNPC may not have a DNPC, and their Hunted, if any, may not be the same as the hero's Hunted.	
	They are not affected by the hero's Presence	
Situations	5 to 50 points	= Situation value for hero

Unluck

Unluck	When something goes well for your hero, roll all the Unluck dice and apply the Core value as described for the relevant situation.	
1d6	5 points/15 points maximum	
	Unluck effects may be prefaced with "due to bad luck," and they range from 0 to 6.	
	0: Fortunately, no effect	
	1: Your attention is divided or you're badly positioned	
	2: Tables turn: they spot you, or danger unfairly targets you instead of others	
	3: One of your Situations becomes relevant for no reason	
	4: As #1 and risks to others appear or are increased	
	5: As #2 and it applies to an ally as well	
	6: As #3 and applies to all the heroes in the situation	

CHARACTERISTICS

Without using any points, a hero has all the characteristics at their base values, as well as 6 hexes of running, 2 hexes of jumping, and 2 hexes of swimming.

Characteristics may be modified or included in Frameworks, affecting their points.

Characteristic	Base	value	Points	Details
Strength	2d6	5/+1d6		
Presence	2d6	5/+1d6		
Defense	10	1/+1 ordinary/5/+1 resistant		You can use 4 points to “upgrade” a base point to be resistant

Characteristic	Base value	Points	Example
Body	10	10/+1	Body 12 is 20 points
Speed	1	10/+1	Speed 4 is 30 points

Characteristic	Derivation
Recovery	Body x 1
Stunned	Body x 1
Knockout	Body x 2
Endurance	Body x 3

Characteristic	Base value	Points	Secondary values
Dexterity	11	10/+1	
Intelligence	11	10/+1	Intelligence sets the target number for perception rolls
Ego	11	10/+1	

SKILLS

These capabilities are coded as “trained” in the fiction, but they operate well beyond the familiar and professional scope we know from life.

Skills cannot be Modified or included in Power Frameworks.

Utility Skills

These skills provide capabilities and are resolved by Characteristic rolls. They may be used rapidly in stressful circumstances or over time with care and resources, with no difference in target numbers but differing in their appropriate described actions and narrated effects.

5 points

	Resolution	Description
Climbing	Dexterity	The hero has no fear of heights and may move and perform some actions on walls, ledges, and similar places, as well as stay up there in circumstances other people find uncomfortable. It does not defy gravity and is not stealthy.
Computer Programming	Intelligence	The hero alters or negates the function of computer hardware or software, including programming new tasks. It may be used to damage a system or to protect it against damage. It may be used in tandem with Security Systems and Detective Work for combined effects, or provide useful context for the other Skills, but cannot replace the specific effects of any other Skill.
Detective Work	Intelligence	The hero deduces facts, past events, connections, motivations, and relationships which are otherwise secret, obscure, or forgotten. It may be applied either as technical analysis or as a flash of intuition, but requires a dedicated attempt in either case; it cannot be performed by accident. A successful roll does not permit the player to invent information, but requires the game master either provide backstory information or to invent some that will be of use.
Disguise	Intelligence	The hero conceals his or her personal identity from observers of any kind during ordinary observation or interaction. The hero may be seen as entirely anonymous by filling a social role appropriate to the circumstances, or they may impersonate someone specific, if they have enough information or resources to employ toward this end.

Utility Skills

Security Systems	Intelligence	The hero bypasses technological and organizational means to prevent entry or movement within a controlled area, as well as neutralizing or avoiding mechanized surveillance. Its targets include locks, alarms, cameras, and beam detection. It does not include personal stealth but finds windows in procedures. It may be used to benefit others as well as oneself.
Stealth	Dexterity	The hero evades ordinary perception in circumstances when one's presence would be noticed by living beings or would be recalled by a casual observer. It includes non-technological hiding, timing, and silence, but not disguises. It is limited to oneself and does not provide the same benefit to others.

Maneuver Skills

These skills provide more options.	
10 points	Description
Acrobatics	+2 DCV with a minimum of 2 hexes movement/Permits Dexterity roll to reduce Knockback effects/May be combined with a ½ Phase Action Defensive Maneuver
Martial Attacks	Martial Punch and Martial Kick
Martial Moves	Martial Dodge, Martial Block, Martial Throw, and And Out
Martial Arts: Find Weakness	Designated for single, specific attack Requires successful use of the attack, which does no damage Subject to range modifier/Adds 1 die of effect per successful roll against a target
	Cumulative
Mental Discipline	Ego Evade, Mindscape, Id Rush, Mind Bar, Mind Stab, Self Mastery

Situational Skills

These skills provide bonuses and alter situations.		
5 points/increment		
Description		
Skill Levels	+1 to a single Maneuver, Power-based attack, Skill roll, or Power-based perception roll. A Skill level provides a permanent increase to a Skill or perception roll. As a Maneuver or Power-based attack, it is applied as a 0-phase action. It is assigned either to attack or defense, and may be shifted otherwise as a 0-phase action.	

Situational Skills

Luck 1d6

When something goes badly for your hero, roll all the Luck dice and apply the Core value as described for the relevant situation. You may not exceed 15 points of Luck.

Luck effects may be prefaced with “due to sheer luck,” and they range from 0 to 6.

0: Unfortunately, no effect

1: You're in a good position considering the situation

2: You perceive the situation's dangers or consequences better

3: You are absurdly able to take advantage of the situation

4: as with #1 as well as a useful insight or realization

5: as with #2 and it applies to an ally as well (for no reason)

6: as with #3 and dangers to others or to relevant things are briefly reduced

POWERS

Although we call these “powers” for convenience, they aren't. They're rules to punch the powers' special effects into play. A hero's power may be composed of one or more of them, and many of them require internal tuning. For example, if the description includes the word “or,” you must choose an option and exclude the others. If you want multiple options, you must use points for separate additions to your worksheet. The same applies for descriptions that include a bulleted list with additional options at different point values.

So far we've talked about Character Points, or just Points, which now must be specified slightly as **Power Points**. Power Points are what you use for the effectiveness of a power based on the values in this list. They set the scope of effect, Endurance cost, range and area, the number of effect dice, additions to other values like Characteristics, duration, protection, and more, depending on the specific power.

The eventual Character Points you use for the power may be different from the Power Points due to Modifiers and Frameworks, but that value always determines the quantitative effect.

Awareness

This power heightens senses or transforms ordinary senses into new forms, allowing for greater scope for perception. The default form orients the hero regarding his or her immediate surroundings, so that they have no “side” or “behind” for purposes of combat. It compensates for ordinary darkness or similar deprivation, although it does not reveal details that light is specifically needed for. It also compensates for missing or impaired senses under ordinary conditions, although it does not replace their specific deficits. See Chapter 12: Dynamic Mechanics for its interaction with the Stealth Skill or the Concealment and Invisibility Powers. This power may have the Expanded Scope Advantage.

Power Points	Minimum: 20
Additions	Utilizes a medium different from ordinary senses: +5 Power Points
	Ignores Flash and Concealment: +10 Power Points/Analyze, permits identifying specific individuals or effects, permits applicable Skill use to investigate further: +10 Power Points/Perceives abstractions: “danger” or metaphysical phenomena: +10 Power Points
Endurance	No Endurance cost

Blast

This power attacks at range, resolved with an attack roll. The target is harmed by Knockout and Body damage and is also subject to Knockback.

Power Points	5/+1d6
Modifiers	Range: 5 hexes * Power Points/Distance: -1 per 3 hexes
Endurance	1 Endurance per 5 Power Points of effect

Concealment

This power impairs ordinary sight, hearing, and smell within or through an area, reducing attack and perception rolls by -3 and adjusting range modifiers to -1/hex. The hero is affected by it to a minor extent determined by Special Effects. The hero may use the effect to disperse or reverse an effect similar to its own. This power may not include the Area Advantage.

Power Points	10/+1 hex radius
Additions	Completely prevents the affected senses’ perception: +5 Power Points
	Affects all perception, physical and otherwise: +10 Power Points
Modifiers	Range: 5 hexes * Power Points/Distance: -1 per 3 hexes
Endurance	1 Endurance per 5 Power Points of effect

Density Increase

The hero becomes more dense and heavier without significantly altering shape. Its use is easily perceived.

Power Points	10/[2x mass, +2 Stunned, 1 unit of Special Defense: Knockback, and either +5 Defense or +1 Resistant Defense]
Endurance	1 Endurance per 5 Power Points of effect; must be spent for each Phase the Power is used

Desolid

The hero moves through solid objects by becoming insubstantial. While desolid, the hero does not take Knockback, cannot be perceived by hearing, sonar, radar, or other “pingback” senses or detection methods, and emits no scent. He or she cannot affect physical objects or attack anything or anyone that is not itself Desolid. This power includes protection against many physical hazards but does not provide life support or protection from Presence Attacks. It is rated in 10-point units. One substance or condition is impenetrable.

Power Points	10/[2 Body of substance that can be passed through, 5 hexes Flight while moving through solid objects for additional 1 Endurance per 2 hexes, 2 Resistant Defense]
Endurance	1 Endurance per 5 Power Points of effect; must be spent for each Phase the Power is used

Drain

This power attacks with no range, resolved with an attack roll. It decreases Endurance according to the rolled total, similar to Knockout. No other feature may be Drained.

Power Points	5/+1d6/10/+1d6 if Endurance is transferred
Endurance	No Endurance cost

Entangle

This power attacks at range, resolved with an attack roll. The target is restrained in movement (running, swimming, climbing) to 0 hexes and also in ordinary motions, preventing physical attacks and reducing Dexterity-based combat value to 6 for purposes of defense. Certain attacks may be possible at Combat Value 6, depending on the situation’s special effects. Ego-based combat is unaffected.

The Entangle effect operates as a physical object. The Body of the effect is equal to the Core result and its Defense is equal to 1 per 10 Power Points. It may be contested by Strength, movement, or the Blast Power. The attempt requires a full-Phase action, although if a single attempt removes all the remaining Body, then it becomes a ½ Phase Action.

Multiple Entangles on the same target are treated as a single effect with Defense equal to the single highest Defense of the separate Entangles and with Body equal to the single highest Body of the separate Entangles +1 per additional Entangle. If the Area Advantage is included, the affected area is considered “sticky” to those caught within it or entering it, using the Entangle mechanics.

In the context of combat, it persists until it is broken, and in the long-term its duration is determined by the special effects. This Power may not include the Persistent Advantage.

Entangles do not provide protection for the target. It may or may not take damage from attacks directed at the target depending on special effects. The Entangle may be targeted, in which case the hex is attacked, and the target only takes damage if the roll is missed.

Points	5/+1d6 for 1d6 (Core) Body and 0 Defense/10/+1d6 for 1d6 (Core) Body and 1 Defense
Modifiers	Range: 5 hexes * Power Points/Distance: -1 per 3 hexes
Endurance	1 Endurance per 5 Power Points of effect; no further Endurance is required past the initial cost

Extra Limb

The hero has an additional arm, leg, tail, tentacle, or whatever, capable of ordinary human limb functions. It may be permanently present and visible, or it may “pop out” when desired, depending on its special effects. Each extra limb provides +1 to attack rolls in hand-to-hand fighting. This Power may not include the Persistent Advantage.

Power Points	10/+1 limb
Endurance	No Endurance cost, except for Strength cost when the limb is used

Flash

This power attacks at range, resolved by an attack roll. It affects the target's sight, reducing his or her combat value and perception rolls to 6. It also disorients the target, so that they cannot be sure which direction is which. The latter effect may be corrected with an appropriate Skill or an Ego roll. Flash may also be defined to affect other physical senses, but it may only affect one unless its points are increased using the option below. The effect lasts 1 segment per Core result. This Power may not include the Persistent Advantage.

Power Points	10/+1d6
Additions	Affects all perception: +10 Power Points
Modifiers	Range: 5 hexes * Power Points/Distance: -1 per 3 hexes
Endurance	Endurance cost: 1 Endurance per 5 Power Points of effect

Flight

The hero flies. Special Effects determine the details beyond the basic move mechanics, including environments in which it is impossible, whether hovering is possible, and potential problems for sudden stops or turns. In flight the hero takes an additional d6 of Knockback. This power may have the Expanded Scope Advantage.

Flight may be redefined as a different mode of travel, in each case treating gravity, friction, and momentum very casually, more like “flight” than the nominal special effect would indicate.

- ▶ Gliding: level or downward most of the time
- ▶ Super-leaping: cannot change direction, must arc and land
- ▶ Super-running: surfaces only
- ▶ Super-swimming: in or at the surface of water
- ▶ Swinging: requires Acrobatics in use, requires surfaces, limited to arcs

For “walking on air” or other super-powered versions of ordinary movement, see Surfaces.

Power Points	10/+5 hexes per Phase
Endurance	1 per 5 hexes moved or fraction thereof

Force Field

The hero’s Defense is increased with resistant points. This power is restricted to the hero’s immediate person and does not create an external shield or wall. Special effects matter greatly, as it may represent low density or even amazing agility; the implied surface barrier is merely one option. The strength of the Force Field is not altered by attacks, regardless of whether they exceed the defense.

Power Points	5/+2 Resistant Defense
Endurance	1 per 5 Power Points; must be spent each Phase the Power is used

Force Wall

The hero creates a barrier which is placed at range, separate from the user's body. To create a full globe or similar enclosure around a person requires 8 units (six sides + top + bottom), or 7 if you leave the floor open.

It operates as a wall to everyone including the hero who created it and must be breached to get an attack through from either side. Unless the Body of Blast, Tunneling, or a Strength-based attack exceeds its Defense, no damage gets through and the Defense is unchanged. If it's breached, that section of Force Wall is destroyed and the Knockout and remaining Body get through. What happens then depends on whether the attack was specifically upon the barrier or directed toward someone or something, which would be resolved by the attack roll. It will impede a Desolid person if it has the Affects Desolid Advantage.

The hero may create a "window" either to attack through or to let someone through as a ½ Phase action, and the window may be closed with a 0 Phase Action.

The hero may vary the effect's size relative to the strength (Defense), but the Endurance cost corresponds to whichever is higher. The hero may move the barrier at running speed, up to 6 hexes, as a ½ Phase action at additional Endurance cost as per running. Breaches in a larger Force Wall may be repaired or the existing hexes may be re-shaped by spending the relevant amount of Endurance. It does not require further Endurance to be maintained and may be discontinued as a 0-Phase action.

This power may not include the Persistent Advantage or Usable on/for Others Advantage.

Power Points	5/+[1 Resistant Defense for 1 side of 1 hex]
Modifiers	Range: 5 hexes * Power Points/Distance: -1 per 3 hexes
Endurance	1 per 5 Power Points

Growth

The hero increases in size, maintaining proportions or mostly so. The values on the table are approximate, such that the listed number of hexes is where height or reach extends, not their precise values. Their standing area or occupancy expands disproportionately but not entirely realistically, given the drawing conventions of giant characters in comics.

Levels of Growth	Height in hexes	Reach in hexes	Area
none	Under 1 hex	adjacent	½ hex
1	1 hex*	adjacent	½ hex
2	1+	1+	½ hex
3	2	2	1
4	2+	2+	1
5	3	3	1½
6	4	4	2
7	5	5	1½
8	6	6	3
9	8	8	4
10	10	10	5

* at 1 level of Growth, the hero fills the hex so is at least two full meters tall and could be a little taller

The hero’s reach is extended accordingly, permitting close-range attacks beyond adjacent levels to his standing area. A hero with a higher Growth level than an opponent gains the added Knockback effect of a lengthy striking instrument and may direct a blow downward, so that the ground or floor strikes back. The hero can exert +1d6 Strength even over the Growth-augmented Strength upon structures at his or her scale, due to leverage, and may receive generous special effects considerations regarding blocking, interposing, and similar actions.

The hero may use an increase from ordinary size to augment an attack, adding 1d6 damage for each Growth level and gaining a surprise bonus even if the target knows they can do it.

Although attacks upon him or her may seem easier, the freakish effect of size with mobility counteracts the effect of a larger target, so ordinary range modifiers apply. All physics and anatomy that aren't fun are hand-waved, including the cube-square ratio and problems with balance. Body damage to the extra points from Growth do not persist upon returning to normal size.

Growth or its reversal requires Endurance for the appropriate shift at each instance of use, but it doesn't have to be continually spent to stay at any one size.

Power Points 10/[2x mass, +1d6 Strength, +1 Body (not derived characteristics), +1d6 Presence, +2 hexes Running, 1 level of Knockback Defense]

Endurance 1 Endurance per 5 Power Points of effect; see above for required use

Images

This power attacks at range using Ego for attack value, causing the target to perceive phenomena of the hero's choice. The images or impressions or whatever can be placed anywhere in the target's perceptual range, even if that exceeds the hero's. Images has many blatant and subtle applications which are discussed in Chapter 12: Dynamic Mechanics.

Value rolled	Person or object	Environment	Perception
1-2	Fleeting impression	None	One sense
3-6	Static	None	One sense
7-10	Moving, talking	Weird embellishments	All senses
11-14	Interacting	Dramatic changes	Knockout damage
15+		Subtle changes	Knockout and Body damage

Power Points 5/+1d6

Modifiers Range = perception; no distance modifier

Endurance 1 Endurance per 5 Power Points of effect

Instant Change

The hero changes appearance dramatically as a 0-Phase action, or out of the combat timing sequence, instantly, without the ordinary actions of doing so and without certain realistic considerations except insofar as you'd like to have them. This power does not organize or specify other abilities, and its nuances for different concepts are presented in Chapter 12.

- ▶ Clothes
 - Into a specific outfit and back again: 5 Power Points
 - Into any outfit: 10 Power Points
- ▶ Form
 - Into one specific physically different person: 10 Power Points
 - Into a variety of persons or forms, either pre-specified or improvised: 10 Power Points

Power Points	As determined by application above
Endurance	No Endurance cost

Invisibility

The hero cannot be seen beyond 1 hex and is difficult to see at close range. When adjacent to someone else, that person may spot them as a 0-Phase action with a perception roll, at least enough to know that someone is there, with specific information as determined by special effects. Success means the person may target the hero with an attacking value of 6. However, if the hero attacks someone at close range, the Invisibility has no effect until and unless he or she moves farther away. If circumstances arise such that someone attacks them at range based on guessing where they are, the attacker first states the targeted area in enough detail for the game master to determine whether the hero is or is not there. If they are, then the attacking value is reduced to 6 and is subject to range modifiers.

Power Points	Minimum: 20
Additions	Includes all ordinary senses +5 Power Points/Includes Awareness: +10 Power Points/Remove close-range perception and targeting perception (attacking negation cannot be removed): +10 Power Points
Endurance	1 per 5 Power Points; must be spent for each Phase the Power is used

Life Support

The hero is protected from dangerous environments or does not need resources to survive in them. The effect may apply to any environment, subject only to special effects, and with one specified exception. Alternately, the effect may be customized to one of the following environment or by combining more than one:

- Under water or similar conditions: 5 Power Points
- Vs. gases breathed or absorbed: 5 Power Points
- Vs. radiation: 5 Power Points
- Vs. vacuum and high pressure: 10 Power Points

Power Points	30/Complete/Or customized as above
Additions	No required biological functions: +5 Power Points
Endurance	No Endurance cost

Mind Control

This power attacks with Ego at range to force, influence, control the actions of another person. The effect is immediate and the target loses no time, taking his or her next action as indicated by the Speed chart. The hero must communicate their commands successfully. This requires no special perception or action unless conditions are making communication tough for everyone, but as long as it uses ordinary communication, others can witness and comprehend the command and evident control.

Core rolled	Viable commands	Psychological Situations
1-2	None, but they know what you want	N/A
3-6	What they are inclined to do anyway	Often, ordinary response
7-10	What they wouldn't mind doing	Often, irrational response
11-14	What they're normally against doing	Rarely, irrational response
15+	What they're violently opposed to doing	Contradicting

The control stays on with no further Endurance cost, but commands past the first are dropped one level in effect. This reduction can be avoided by paying Endurance. A target who receives no orders is inactive or performs any common-sense activity to maintain his or her own position or safety; as long as the effect is 10 or higher, they cannot perform other volitional acts. Nuances of the power are described in Chapter 12: Dynamic Mechanics.

Power Points	5/+1d6
Modifiers	Range = perception; no distance modifier
Endurance	1 Endurance per 5 Power Points of effect

Missile Deflection

This power functions similarly to a Maneuver, permitting a Dexterity roll to deflect the damage of Dexterity-based ranged attacks which the hero can perceive coming. It is performed as a free action once between Phase Actions and does not require canceling the upcoming Phase. It protects only the hero unless the Usable for Others Advantage is included.

The attacks it may deflect include thrown objects less than 1 hex in size, gunfire, Blast, and other attacks as determined by special effects. It does not protect against Ego-based powers, Flash, Entangle, or attacks with the Area advantage, although special effects may modify these restrictions, e.g., if the attack is delivered by a bullet-like projectile.

Power Points	Minimum: 20
Additions	Each additional use between Phase actions: +10 Power Points
Endurance	No Endurance cost

Negation

This power attacks at range to stop or suppress one Powers-based hazard or a maintained or Persistent Power. The targeted Power's special effects must be vulnerable to the special effect of the Negation; otherwise it is unaffected. To affect Ego-based Powers, it must have the relevant Advantage.

The Negation roll's Core value decreases the current effect 1d6 or the equivalent, such as 1 Body for Entangle or 1 segment for Flash. If directed at a Multiform or Variable Power Pool, the pool is directly affected, altering the ceiling values of all its applications.

The targeted Power continues to operate at its reduced value as long as the Negation is maintained, which costs its user full Endurance as if it were not Negated. If the Negation stops, then the Power resumes at full value. However, if at any point the Core of the Negation reduces the Power's effect to 0, then one hex of the hazard is eliminated, or the Power is turned off or stopped.

Negation's effect may be increased by attacking again, which requires both the Endurance to maintain it and for the new, "stacked" effect.

Power Points	10/+1d6
Modifiers	Range: 5 hexes * Power Points/Distance: -1 per 3 hexes
Endurance	Endurance cost: 1 Endurance per 5 Power Points of effect

Regeneration

The hero regains additional Body per Recovery action as shown by the total dice results. The hero recovers Destroyed Body per Recovery action equal to the rolled Core results.

Power Points	10/+1d6
Endurance	No Endurance cost

Shrinking

The hero decreases in size, becoming more difficult to perceive and gaining many opportunities that are left to immediate situations of play. If the hero is Stunned or knocked out, they return to normal size by default but this may be subject to special effects interpretations. The hero’s own movement rates may be maintained at the lower levels, but are subject to adjustments in comparison with larger characters if necessary. Their perception of the environment does not shift scale under 8 levels, at which point they are effectively operating in different “worlds.” Similarly, below level 8, the hero’s own movement and ranged attack Powers may or may not be subject to size modification depending on special effects, but at level 8 they shift to inhumanly small scales of effect. Feel free to hand-wave any physics that aren’t fun, including audibility and surface adhesion.

Levels of Shrinking	Size	Visibility	Movement
none	Normative adult	No effect	No effect
1	Little person, pre-teen child	Significant modifiers	Minor modifiers in comparison
2	Medium-size dog, toddler		
3	Doll, action figure, most tools or toys	Effective Concealment	
4-5	Most desk-top objects, books, utensils		Adjusted to scale
6-7	Pocket-size, loose change	Effective Invisibility	
8	Too tiny to recognize, insect		
9	Speck	Luck only	Insignificant to ordinary scale
10	Out of scope of ordinary experience	Impossible	
11+	Increasing weirdness		

The hero may use a return to ordinary size to augment an attack, adding 1d6 damage for each un-shrinking level and gaining a surprise bonus even if the target knows they can do it.

Shrinking or its reversal requires Endurance for the appropriate shift at each instance of use, but it doesn't have to be continually spent to stay at any one size.

Power Points	10/+[½ size, 1/8 mass, ½" Running, + 3 hexes Knockback]
Endurance	1 per 5 Power Points of effect; see above for required use

Specialized Defense

This power defends against a specialized attack as Defense, with no required action. Multiple units of each may be used.

- ▶ Versus Ego based attacks: Negates the highest-value die of effect
- ▶ Versus Find Weakness: Negates highest-value die of an attack enhanced by Find Weakness
- ▶ Versus Flash: Reduces the duration of Flash by 1 Segment
- ▶ Versus Drain and Weaken: Negates the highest-value die of Drain attack
- ▶ Versus Knockback: vs. ordinary Knockback, -1d6 hexes (read the value showing on the dice); vs. High Impact, negates the advantage and the ordinary Knockback rules are applied

Power Points	5/+1 removed d6
Endurance	No Endurance cost

Stretching

The hero extends his or her body, or some part of it, to punch, lift, carry, grab, throw, or, if perception permits, to manipulate or do skilled work. Running is also increased by the reach, if the power is used to enhance it. The special effects matter greatly, applied to action/reaction, grabs and Entangles, shape distortions or the distribution of the stretching across one's body, and the effects on points of perception. The implications for skill use and powers combinations are legion, including getting through unusual spaces and integrating shape change with size change.

Power Points	5/+1 hex additional reach
Additions	
Endurance	1 Endurance per 5 Power Points; re-stretching or shaping a stretched body costs additional Endurance; no cost for maintaining a given length or shape, or for returning to ordinary shape

Surfaces

The hero's Running operates unusually on surfaces, and he or she does not become disoriented by unusual positioning. Surfaces does not alter or otherwise provide special effects for the hero's rate of movement. It must be defined as one of the following:

- ▶ Clinging is only nominally related to Climbing despite usually being visually similar, as it works on almost any surface without considerations of available protrusions or even aspects of gravity if the hero is touching a surface. Under circumstances that may remove the hero from the surface, the Clinging may be used to resist in the form of Strength.
- ▶ The Air-walking version permits the hero to travel along horizontal surfaces as if he or she was touching them, but at any altitude he or she cares to walk to.
- ▶ The Escher version does not “stick” to surfaces but instead treats “up” as the hero desires; it costs Endurance to maintain.

Power Points	Clinging: 5/+1d6 Strength/Air-walking: 10/Escher: 25
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Endurance	No Endurance cost per for Clinging or Air-Walking beyond that of movement or Strength exerted/Escher costs 5 Endurance to maintain per Phase
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Telekinesis

The hero lifts, carries, holds down, grabs, and throws physical objects from a distance. He or she must be able to perceive them. Unwilling targets must be successfully attacked using Ego. Telekinesis cannot be used as transport or suspension for oneself. It cannot be used to squeeze for damage or to contest an Entangle or grab. The interaction is not subject to action/reaction physics, and the hero cannot feel through the contact or extend it into unperceived areas. By itself it does not have surfaces or borders and cannot grasp fluids or energy. More complex versions and other nuances are presented in Chapter 12.

Power Points	10/+2d6 Strength
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Additions	Fine work permitting Characteristic or Skill rolls: +10 points
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Modifiers	Range: 5 hexes * Power Points/Distance modifier of -1 per 3 hexes
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Endurance	1 per 1d6 Strength
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Telepathy

The hero sends or receives thoughts across distances. The default interpretation is equivalent to talking and listening, like a mobile telephone call, subject to special effects. No roll is required to begin such a conversation with someone whom the hero can perceive, and who is willing, or to maintain it if perception is lost. Visual contact, or an equivalent, and an Ego-based attack roll are required to establish such a link with an unwilling subject, and also to continue such contact per Phase. Additional people can be added with 1 more point of Endurance spent on maintenance if they are willing, and with attack rolls and appropriate Endurance expenditure if they are not.

Value rolled	Accuracy	Psychological Effects
1-2	Send a single thought	None
3-6	Read or send surface thoughts, frequent Psychological Situations, recent Presence Attacks	None
7-10	Read or send hidden thoughts, rare Psychological Situations, Secret Identity	None
11-14	Read or send memories	Alter the wording of relevant Psychological Situations
15+	Read or send into unconscious and values-based thinking, alter memories	Add a new Psychological Situation equivalent to 15 points

Telepathy does not track the other person's location or provide access to their senses. More intrusive or stressful uses of the power are described in Chapter 12: Dynamic Mechanics.

Power Points	5/+1d6
Modifiers	Range = perception; no distance modifier
Endurance	1 Endurance per 5 Power Points; must be spent for each Phase the Power is used

Teleportation

The hero moves from place to place without traveling in between them, instantaneously. It counts as a move action for all timing and distance mechanics. The default is that they need to perceive where they're going in order to use the Power, but this and many other details are subject to widely-varying interaction with other Powers and Modifiers, as described in Chapter 12: Dynamic Mechanics. This power may have the Expanded Scope Advantage. The hero may maintain a single memorized location where he or she may teleport regardless of perception, as long as it is within noncombat range. It may be re-assigned as a ½ Phase action when the hero desires, but only at that location.

Power Points Minimum: 20/10 hexes

Additions Per 5 hexes additional distance, with additional Endurance cost: +5 Power Points/Per 2x mass, permitting transporting others or big objects: +5 Power Points/Per additional memorized location: +5 Power Points

Usable as a close-range attack to teleport a target: +30 Power Points

Endurance Endurance cost: 1 Endurance per 5 hexes moved

Tunnel

The hero moves through solid objects by opening them. The Power can either leave a tunnel behind or close it up as it goes along, or either as desired, as determined by the special effects. It cannot be used to attack living things. If the user changes directions while moving through the object, he or she must succeed with an Intelligence roll in order to arrive at the desired destination, unless an appropriate version of Awareness is employed.

Power Points 10/+[1 hex per Phase, vs. Defense 3]

Additions 5/+[2x mass, permitting transporting others or big objects]

Endurance 1 Endurance per hex traveled

Weaken

This power attacks with no range, resolved with an attack roll. It decreases one Characteristic according to the Core of effect rolled. Strength or Presence are reduced by removing dice equal to the rolled Core; Speed, Dexterity, Intelligence, or Ego are reduced by subtracting the rolled Core. No other feature may be Weakened.

Power Points 10/+1d6

Endurance 1 Endurance per 5 Power Points of effect

Frameworks

A Framework organizes several powers into a unique, related point structure. They permit Power Points to be shared across Powers or sets of Powers, altering the Character Points which account for them in building the hero.

Each type is a different spin on the same concepts:

- ▶ The Pool, a designated amount of Active Points that may be customized into specific powers
- ▶ Slots, representing named and quantified powers
- ▶ The Control, a point value associated with the shifts or distribution of the powers in use.

You can't put one Framework inside another, and no powers can share or split slots across more than one Framework. Skills cannot be included in Frameworks. A hero may have more than one Framework but not more than one of each type. Also, having **No Framework** is valid. These heroes are very straightforward, as what you see is what you get, and each item is Modified independently. They typically have some high Characteristics and some specialized form of alertness. They always have one or more interesting Skills as well as carefully-tuned Skill Levels.

Historically, these heroes are defined less by their powers than by their cultural and psychological situations, with stark iconography. Their Situations are distinctive, so mutually supporting, and so intense that they make the character's super-name and appearance iconic.

The **Variable Power Pool** has a Pool and a Control, but no Slots, so it allows the hero to use every Power. The player constructs new powers as notes, even on the fly during play, so that, at any given time, the hero has some in a current array.

- ▶ The Active Cost of any single power in the array may not exceed the value of the Pool, and the Character Points of the entire array may not exceed the value of the Pool.
- ▶ The array of powers may be changed outside of combat, in relative calm.
- ▶ For 5 additional Points, you may invent a Control Skill which begins at 11- and which may be used to alter the array of powers as a ½ Phase action during combat or other stressful situations.

This must be a new skill, not listed in the rules; give it a name appropriate to its special effects.

You're stuck with the powers in the array until you get a chance to change them in the ways described above.

- ▶ The Points represented by the Pool cannot be modified and will always be bought outright.
- ▶ The Points for the Control are half the Pool, but may be modified.

A Variable Power Pool typically maximizes either flexibility or modularity. The flexible version works well for “mastery,” as in “master of” some relatively abstract or dramatic force, as well as for heroes whose powers’ effects are extremely conditional, not only taking on features of the environment or other immediate experiences, or dependent on things or situations, but altering what they actually do as well. The modular version treats the Framework as a bag of tricks with never-ending effects, often of the one-after-another variety. This works well for weaponry with varying ammunition, or for inventing things for limited use until you invent another one, or for spells based on memorization and rituals.

The **Elemental Control** has Slots and a Control, but no Pool, so it is free from the conditional or temporary features of the other two Frameworks. It works well for heroes who have what they have and do what they do in an energetic, distinctive, and consistent way.

- ▶ Assign a value to a Control.
- ▶ List all the Slots you want in the Elemental Control.
- ▶ A Slot contains one or more Powers (Characteristics may not be included)
- ▶ Powers in the Slots must require Endurance (Powers that apply Strength are eligible, e.g. Stretching, Extra Limb, Telekinesis; Strength is also eligible, but no other Characteristics)
- ▶ Powers in the same Slot must be used together, and when used at lower power, must vary proportionately.
- ▶ Each Slot’s total Active Points must be at least twice the Control.
- ▶ The Control “covers” its own value for each slot; therefore, each Slot only requires Points over and above the Control value.

The Slots are not constrained by a maximum value, but rather by a minimum, and the Slots are not “firewalled;” the hero may use the Powers freely across them relative to one another, with Endurance costs setting the only hard limit.

The **Multiform** has Slots and a Pool, but no Control. It works well for heroes whose powers can be split into modular options, so that they use either one combination of them or another.

- ▶ A slot’s Active Point total may not exceed the pool’s Power Points total.
- ▶ The total Active Points of the slots in use cannot exceed the Active Points of the pool
- ▶ Each slot is one-fifth the Active Points of its contents

The pool may be as big as you like within the confines of the total character points. (Yes, your entire hero may be expressed as varying slots within one huge Multiform!) Conversely, the Multiform may be one small aspect of your character, like a modular weapon.

A slot is capped at the pool's total, including Advantages. It can contain any number of powers in that total. Its Active Point total must be a multiple of 5.

The slots are used as toggles, so that the pool's Active Points total is shaped into separate, full-use applications. The number of slots that can be employed at once depends on how many Active Points each represents, so slots whose combined internal totals do not exceed the pool may be used simultaneously.

- ▶ If all your slots are maximal size, then you have a whole-pool trade-off among separate versions.
- ▶ Conversely, if many or all of your slots are under-sized, then you have a mix-and-match combo menu.

You may use one or some powers in a slot and not others, as long as they are not tied together locally, and you may use the powers in a slot at less capacity than their total Active Points. In either case, however, the full Active Points are still committed insofar as slot use is concerned.

If and when you're using enough slots to account for your pool, then the other slots are locked out of use or consideration of any kind. You can't use half a slot and half of another one; if you want two slots to be able to trade off among halves like that, then get four small ones. Also, the slots are firewalled away from one another, so you can't have two attacks tied to each other across slots, or link things in one slot to things in another, for example.

Changing slots is a ½ Phase action, always.

Modifiers

A Modifier alters the function of a power or a Framework, reflected in increased or decreased Points based on advantageous or limiting effects. You do not have to use a Modifier in order to conceive and play a Power in a certain way, ever – the feature you want is defined by special effects, which are always relevant during play, if variably so. Modifiers make particular special effects constant if you want them to be. But once established, they aren't detachable at will. To have different modified versions of Blast, for instance, you'll need to get each Blast.

MODIFIERS: ADVANTAGES

An advantaged Power is increased in points, yielding a new term:

Active Points = Power Points x (1 + sum of Advantage ratings)

For example, that 9d6 vaporous Gas Jet from Chapter 4: Special Effects has the High Impact Advantage, with the value of $\frac{1}{2}$. Therefore its Power Points are 45, which is multiplied by $1\frac{1}{2}$ for an Active Points total of 67.5. It is now established that the jet will knock its target around, according to the rules for that Advantage, rather than occasionally doing so.

Adaptive Effects

The Power's special effects are derived from immediate circumstances. They aren't customized to taste, but instead must respond to external input of some kind.

- ▶ If the power has its own special effects which are modified or stacked upon ($\frac{1}{2}$)
- ▶ If the power requires the external input in order to work at all ($\frac{1}{4}$)

This is a key advantage for many powers concepts, including reflecting attacks (in combination with the Reactive Advantage) or taking on the properties of or manipulating local materials or elements.

Affects Desolid ($\frac{1}{2}$)

The Power ignores defenses or the general properties of the Desolid power. There is no reversed "Desolid character affects solid target" advantage.

Area Effect

The Power targets a hex rather than a person, and the effect extends into hexes adjacent to it. The target hex has a defending value of 6. All individuals in the affected area roll defense separately against the same attack roll which hit the hex, and they may not use reactive defense maneuvers (but they may use defensive Powers).

- ▶ Explosion: drop 1d6 of effect with each hex outwards from the target hex in three dimensions ($\frac{1}{2}$)
- ▶ Single-hex ($\frac{1}{2}$)
- ▶ Sphere or cone with radius 1 hex per 10 Power Points in the attack ($\frac{3}{4}$)
- ▶ Add $\frac{1}{4}$ to Advantage value if targets may be selectively chosen inside the affected area

Aura (½)

The Power (Blast, Entangle, Flash, Telepathy, Mind Control, or Drain) has no range and is not used as an attack action. It operates against someone else's grab, touch, or contact-based attack as a free action, with no attack roll. It operates similarly when accompanying the hero's Grab maneuver. It must be activated and Endurance is spent to maintain it (similar to Force Field). Aura damage is voluntary, i.e., the hero can keep it from hurting others at will. If you want it to be less voluntary, take the Tricky Limitation. It provides no defense and does not add to Punch or Kick damage.

Destructive (½)

Damage delivered by the Power is not restored by recovery actions and is recovered only via special effect or the Regeneration power.

Ego-based (½)

The attack value for the Power uses Ego, or the protective power's Defense stops Ego-based effects in addition to its listed effects. The Power may be targeted anywhere the hero can perceive and is not subject to range modifiers. There is no "reverse" version of this Advantage.

Expanded Scope

This Advantage significantly alters the function of Flight, Teleport, or Awareness to operate at an entirely different scale. For Flight or Teleport, the Power is used as a full move regardless of the distance traveled within the designated scale. If necessary to compare with others' actions, regional or planetary travel requires a full turn (six segments), and the larger or weirder scales' duration of travel is determined by special effects. It may be used in a fight only to leave the situation entirely or to return or arrive there. For Awareness, the Power permits perception to orient one's own position in the entirety of the designated scale. With the Analyze option, it may also be used to understand phenomena and to locate individuals or objects within it. If the target of such an attempt is known to the hero either personally or through the operation of a relevant Skill like Detective Work, then the perception roll is unmodified; otherwise it must operate at value of 9. A Power with Expanded Scope may only have one scale, and no scale includes any of the others. To operate at multiple scales, the Power must be taken more than once.

- ▶ Regional (¼)
- ▶ Planetary (½)
- ▶ Space/Interstellar (1)
- ▶ Dimensional (1)
- ▶ Psychic (1)

Group Effect (1)

Instead of targeting individuals or areas, the Power targets everyone of a specific category, and no one else, in the range of the user's perception. Targeted individuals roll individually for defense. "Category" is defined by the acting person's viewpoint, cannot be an adjustable or momentary condition or behavior, and must have a clear, relevant exclusion boundary. It may be boring, e.g., observed features with no particular controversy in definition, or it may express compartmentalizations, prejudices, or delusions. A power with this Advantage may be given context by extreme Psychological Situations which establish or rely upon such categories, in which case encountering targets who do not fit the categorization will result in irrational or meltdown responses.

High Impact (½)

This Advantage applies to Blast. The Knockback delivered equals the rolled Body damage.

Invisible Effects (1)

The Power's special effects are not perceived through ordinary senses. It still has special effects which may be perceived by appropriate Awareness, and there must be one condition or Power which reveals its use to ordinary perception.

Lethal (½)

The attacking Power which would otherwise do no Body damage (Entangle, Telepathy, Mind Control, Flash, Drain) applies Body damage as rolled in addition to its other effects. It is reduced by the appropriate Special Defense, or by resistant Defense for Entangle, not by Defense.

No Endurance Cost (1)

Straightforwardly, the Power requires no energetic support from the hero. It may not be Pushed. It cannot be applied to part of a single Power; however, certain Frameworks or Limitations which separate Powers into different forms may permit them to be parsed in this way.

Persistent (1)

The Power (Density Increase, Desolid, Force Field, Growth, Invisibility, Shrinking, Surfaces) requires no additional Endurance to be maintained per Phase. The Power still requires its initial Endurance cost to be used, and maintaining it, or turning it off, is still a 0-Phase action. If the Power is turned off or stopped in some way, it does not re-activate automatically and must be begun again using Endurance.

Piercing (½)

Body damage from Blast ignores non-resistant defenses.

Reactive (½)

The attack Power is attached to a defensive Maneuver or to the Missile Deflection Power. The power is used as a free action when triggered by an attack and must be directed toward the attacker unless it has the Usable vs. Others Advantage. It may be used regardless of whether the triggering attack hits. The defensive Maneuver or Missile Deflection operates normally but the power itself adds no defense

Separate (¼)

The Power, Strength, or Multiform slot moves and acts independently from the hero's body; it can be attacked without affecting him or her. It has Dexterity and Ego as the hero for purposes of attack and defense. It has Body 1 per 5 Power Points and Defense is determined by rolling 1d6 per 5 Power Points and counting Body. It has Endurance equal to 3x its Body and cannot recover; the hero may donate Endurance to it which will not recover until the Power is discontinued. It disappears when it runs out of Endurance, or the hero may turn it off before then as a 0-Phase action.

Its default action is a simple task, including the basic attack and defense maneuvers, with little or no flexibility or comprehension. Directing it to change tasks is a ½ Phase action. The hero knows and understands what the Separated Power is doing as long as it is within his or her perception.

- ▶ If the Separated Power acts autonomously according to what the hero would do given its perceived situation, so is effectively another “you,” increase the Advantage rating to ½
- ▶ Per additional “copy:” ¼ Advantage rating each – built exactly as the first, no deviation.

The precise psychological interplay between the hero and his or her Separated Power is adjusted by the options taken and by accompanying Modifiers, but is ultimately defined by special effects, including whether the Separated entity's experiences are known to or internalized by the hero when the Power stops.

Severe ($\frac{1}{2}$)

The Knockout damage delivered by Blast ignores Defense. It is reduced or stopped by one (and only one) of the following:

- ▶ Resistant Defense, which reduces it by value
- ▶ One textual power (e.g. Force Field), which negates its effect entirely
- ▶ One special effect, which negates its effect entirely

Strike

The attack Power (Blast, Drain, Entangle, Flash, Images, Mind Control, Telepathy, or Weaken) is attached to an attack Maneuver (Punch, Kick, Martial Punch, Martial Kick, or either Move attack). The attack has no range. Additional Modifiers to the attack Power apply only to its effects.

Regarding Blast, there is little point to assigning Strike instead of more Strength in one construction or another. However, if one or more other Modifiers is included, then many possible applications flow from there, as discussed in Chapter 12: Dynamic Mechanics.

- ▶ Replaces Maneuver damage with power damage ($\frac{1}{4}$)
- ▶ Adds power damage to Maneuver damage ($\frac{3}{4}$)

Usable at Range ($\frac{1}{2}$)

Straightforwardly, the Power is used at range, with a maximum distance of 5x Power Points in hexes. If it is a targeted attack, it is subject to the standard range modifier of -1/3 hexes. In conjunction with Usable on/for Others, this Advantage significantly expands the conceptual breadth of the whole powers list.

Usable on/for Others

The Power is used toward a person other than the hero, at close range, under the hero's control and Endurance cost. It either replaces or accompanies use for oneself as determined by special effects.

The basic version is usable for Life Support, Force Field, Invisibility, Regeneration, or Special Defense on or for another person. The extreme version is usable for any Power, conceived as conferring control over the Power and its Endurance cost to the receiver as long as the hero provides it in the first place, which requires a 0-Phase action to maintain. This Advantage significantly expands the application of the Usable at Range Advantage.

- ▶ Protective (the listed Powers): $\frac{1}{2}$
- ▶ Confer: 1

MODIFIERS: LIMITATIONS

The Active Points of a limited Power or Characteristic is reduced to arrive at its Character Points, as follows:

$$\text{Points} = \text{Active Points} \div (1 + \text{sum of Limitation ratings})$$

Regardless of all textual wording, a Limitation is intended to result in observed inconvenience, risk, or difficulty for the hero during play. If it consistently does not, then the hero's construction must be redesigned without the Limitation.

Activation

The Power might not work when the hero tries to use it, as determined by a roll immediately before the effect would occur. Failure to activate costs the full Endurance. The Power's timing is not affected.

- ▶ 3d6: 14-/(½)
- ▶ 3d6: 11-/(1)

Always On (¼)

The Power cannot be turned off with results that pose ongoing problems for the hero. It is always at maximum effect for its Active Points and cannot be Pushed. If the power costs Endurance, it must have the No Endurance advantage.

Burnout

The Power might stop working after the hero uses it, as determined by a roll immediately afterward. A roll of 11 or less on 3d6 indicates failure of the power. Restoration requires some specific activity appropriate to the special effects.

- ▶ Mild: restored by a recovery action (¼)
- ▶ Serious: restored out of combat (½)

Conditional

The Power or Characteristic works poorly or not at all under some condition or qualities of its target, or conversely, it will not work fully or at all unless some condition is met. The condition must be possible but not universally present in the context of play, cannot be defined by opinions, and cannot be controlled by the hero or his or her usual associates.

- ▶ Reduced effect (½)
- ▶ All or nothing (1)

Constrained (½)

The Power's effect may be used only within a subset of the mechanics listed in the Power's description or only in a single circumstance of the hero's other Powers' use. The Power does not work outside the constraint.

Examples include but are not limited to:

- ▶ Constrained to high effect, at half or more of the Power's capability
- ▶ Constrained to follow the use of a specific attacking Power by the hero
- ▶ Constrained to operate in a graded fashion, adding one unit at a time

The effect is to narrow the Power's options for use that a hero would otherwise be able to vary. It does not apply to Powers with no varying options, and it does not include either environmental, external conditions.

Costs Endurance (½)

Straightforwardly, the Power costs 1 Endurance per 5 Power Points. Maintaining it, or turning it on or off, is still a 0-Phase action. It may not have the Always On Advantage.

Focus

The Power or Characteristic is remarkably vulnerable to being grabbed, broken, interfered with, or otherwise made unavailable by another person. Typically, but not necessarily, it includes the special effect of relying on an object or device. A Focus has Defense equal to 1 per 5 Power Points and Body either equal to that value or designated to be unbreakable (although that does not stop it being made useless or unavailable). A broken Focus can always be repaired or replaced eventually. An Obvious Focus is easily be identified as the source of the power when it's used; an Inobvious Focus may be identified with a perception or relevant Skill roll, subject to range modifiers. If Focus modifies a Characteristic, then the entire Characteristic is made unavailable or dysfunctional by interfering with the Focus. Other nuances are presented in Chapter 7: Villain Making.

- ▶ Inobvious (½)
- ▶ Obvious (1)

Increased Endurance (1)

The Power or Strength costs double Endurance, with a minimum cost of 5.

Involuntary

The power is potentially activated by a specific event or environment which is not under the character's control or that of his or her associates on a roll of 11 or less on 3d6. The triggering effect must be likely in the context of play and uncontrolled by the hero or his or her usual associates. It may not have the Always On Advantage.

- ▶ In addition to voluntary use ($\frac{1}{4}$)
- ▶ No voluntary use (1)
- ▶ Triggering is not affected by Activation; the power will go off

Linked ($\frac{1}{2}$)

The non-attack power is usable only when another non-attack power is active. The other power must cost Endurance, and the Linked Power's Active Points cannot exceed that of the other Power.

No Knockback ($\frac{1}{4}$)

Straightforwardly, Blast delivers no Knockback effect.

No Range ($\frac{1}{2}$)

Straightforwardly, the Power may not be targeted away from the hero. If its effect covers more than one hex, the hero must be centered in it. It does not apply to attacks (see the Aura and Strike Advantages). It applies to Concealment, Force Wall, Illusions, and Telepathy.

Shutdown

The hero becomes inactive while using or maintaining the Power. Aside from competently using the Power itself, he or she cannot move and combat values drop to 6.

- ▶ Use can passively perceive things, interact, and slowly perform minor actions ($\frac{1}{2}$)
- ▶ User is almost comatose, minimally aware, and helpless (1)

Skill-based ($\frac{1}{4}$)

The Power functions only in the context of a successful roll for a Utility Skill. It is useful to think of the special effects as artistic devices that dramatize the mastery over that Skill. The requirement does not replace or alter any rules of timing, energy, or range of either the Power or the Skill.

Tricky

The Power requires a Characteristic roll to focus on the hero's desired target or outcome. A failed roll means the effect is directed toward another target or goal of the game master's choice.

- ▶ At first use in a situation ($\frac{1}{4}$)
- ▶ With each use in a situation ($\frac{3}{4}$)

MODIFIERS, MEET FRAMEWORKS

Modifiers affect the contents of Frameworks at two very different locations in the mathematical structure. Advantages are intrinsic to the Active Points of a given Power, and Limitations modify the designated part of a Framework that holds the Power.

For the Variable Power Pool, the Pool itself cannot be modified, so its Character Points are always the same as its Power Points. The Control can be Modified with these specialized options only. They do not affect the internal Point totals for Powers, and each may be taken only once.

- ▶ Advantage: The array may be altered as a 0-Phase action. This Modifier is incompatible with the option to use a Control Skill. (1)
- ▶ Limitation: The current array of powers can only be changed with special circumstances: e.g., touching a target, environmental circumstance, a substance or location, extra time and effort. This Modifier is incompatible with the option to use a Control Skill. ($\frac{1}{2}$)
- ▶ Limitation: Every Power constructed from the Pool must include the same specified Limitation(s) and the resulting mathematical effect on its Points. Regardless of the number of Limitations or their ratings, this is always applied to the Control at $\frac{1}{4}$.

A power created from the Variable Power Pool may include any Advantages, retaining the constraint that its Active Points cannot exceed the pool's value. It may also include any Limitations. Since Limitations reduce the Points, doing so permits more powers to be available at once, including more than one at maximum Active Points. The governing constraints to these Modifiers are the special effects of the Framework itself.

Consider The Which's construction in the Appendix. Her Variable Power Pool is variously phrased as This or That, Either/Or, or Equal and Opposite. The Pool is 40 Points, so the Control Value has 20 Active Points. This is Limited at $\frac{1}{4}$ because every Power made with the Pool must have the Tricky Limitation. She also has the Control Skill option, named Free Will, which is 5 Points.

The Point breakdown is therefore:

- ▶ Pool: 40 Active Points = 40 Points
- ▶ Control Value: 20 Active Points with a $\frac{1}{4}$ Limitation = 16 Points
- ▶ Free Will Skill: 5 Points
- ▶ = 61 Points

In using the Variable Power Pool to make powers, their sum in Power Points cannot exceed 40, nor their sum in Points. However, they must have the Tricky Limitation, and they may be given any other Limitation as desired, so their Points may well be far below their Active Points. For example, an array of Powers using her Variable Power Pool might include:

- ▶ Force Field with 14 Defense, which is 35 Active points; with Tricky at first use and Burnout (serious form), it's at 20 Points, leaving 20 free.
- ▶ 6d6 Severe Blast (stopped entirely by Special Defense: Ego), which is 40 Active Points; with Tricky at first use and Increased Endurance, it's at 17.

That array at 37 Points fits within her Variable Power Pool, providing her with two fearsome if energy-extensive effects.

The Which also has relevant Situations relevant to her Powers: Side Effects, occurring at each use of the Variable Power Pool, and her Psychological Situations, providing context to the whole construction.

Elemental Control is the most complex Framework. You may conceive of each Slot constructed with its Powers and Advantages first at whatever level is desired, and then the Control Value is retroactively set at half the smallest one. Then each Slot is relieved of the "covered" amount of the Control Value. Each Slot is then subject to both the overall Framework's Limitation, if any, and to its own local Limitation, if any. The Control Value is only subject to the former.

Consider Ruby Ray's construction as outlined in Chapter 5. Her Elemental Control is defined as Red Laser Transformation, with a Control Value of 20 Power Points. Therefore each Slot must include at least 40 Active Points. It so happens that each is exactly that: the Laser Zap with 20 hexes of Flight, the Hard Glow with Force Field 16, and the Light Up with Flash 4d6.

Therefore the Point construction before Limitations looks like this:

- ▶ Control Value: 20 Power Points
- ▶ Laser Zap: $40 - 20 = 20$
- ▶ Hard Glow: $40 - 20 = 20$
- ▶ Light Up: $40 - 20 = 20$

Two of the Powers are Limited as well, but not the overall Framework. Their final Points are as follows:

- ▶ Laser Zap: 20 with two Limitations rated at $\frac{1}{2}$ each = $20 \div (1 + \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2}) = 10$
- ▶ Light Up: 20 with two Limitations rated at $\frac{1}{2}$ each = $20 \div (1 + \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2}) = 10$

The full Framework's total Points are therefore:

- ▶ Control Value: 20
- ▶ Laser Zap: 10
- ▶ Hard Glow: 20
- ▶ Light Up: 10
- ▶ = 60 Points

Her Powers are significantly constrained in terms of which can be used relative to the others, but that effect is a function of their individual Limitations, not the Elemental Control.



Consider also Grimfire's Elemental Control, provided in the Appendix, defined as Hellish Fury. His Control Value is 15 Points, thus each Slot must include at least 30 Active Points. This is exactly the case for the Nimbus and Embrace, but the Fires of Wrath is 20 Power Points with a $\frac{3}{4}$ Advantage, therefore $20 \times (1 + \frac{3}{4}) = 35$.

Therefore the Point construction before Limitations looks like this:

- ▶ Control Value: 15 Power Points
- ▶ Nimbus: $30 - 15 = 15$
- ▶ Fires of Wrath: $35 - 15 = 20$
- ▶ Embrace: $30 - 15 = 15$

The Embrace is Limited with a rating of 1, with final Points:

- ▶ Embrace: 15 with one Limitation rated at 1 = $15 \div (1 + 1) = 7.5$ which rounds to 7

The full Framework's total Points are therefore:

- ▶ Control Value: 15
- ▶ Nimbus: 15
- ▶ Fires of Wrath: 20
- ▶ Embrace: 7
- ▶ = 57 Points

His Elemental Control is structurally similar to Ruby Ray's, but his Powers are not so tightly inter-connected in use. They are instead tied distinctly to his Skills and Situations.

Multiform is much simpler. The entire Framework may be given any Limitation, affecting the Points of the pool as well as each of the slots. A slot's Points cannot be reduced with Limitations by itself; if that slot's power or powers conceivably require its own special limited effect, it is treated as a special effect.

Consider Anybug's Multiform as presented in the Appendix, defined as his Bug Simulator. The Pool is 40 Power Points, and each Slot has the maximum value of 40 Power Points, and therefore each is rated at 8 Points. This means that in his case only one Slot is usable at a time. The whole Framework is subject to the Conditional Limitation rated at $\frac{1}{2}$, so the Points break down as follows:

- ▶ Pool: 40 Points at a $\frac{1}{2}$ Limitation, thus $40 \div (1 + \frac{1}{2}) = 26.667$, rounded to 27
- ▶ Each Slot: 8 Points at a $\frac{1}{2}$ Limitation, thus $8 \div (1 + \frac{1}{2}) = 5.333$, rounded to 5 (thus 15 Points for 3 Slots)
- ▶ = 42

