

GURPS

Fourth Edition

POWER-UPS™

IMBUEMENTS™

1



By Sean Punch

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

YOU'VE GOT THE POWER!

Want to shoot fire from your hands? Buy an Innate Attack from the *GURPS Basic Set* – and maybe trick it out with options in *GURPS Powers*. Want a flaming sword? Slap gadget limitations on that attack, or buy a magic item out of *GURPS Magic*.

But what if you want to be able to pick up *any* sword and make it flaming? Or grab *any* pistol and defeat armor without loading armor-piercing ammo? *That's* tricky.

Enter *GURPS Power-Ups 1: Imbuements*. Each of these simple – but truly powerful – skills channels the new Imbue advantage, to charge up bare hands or weapons with supernatural energy: chi, magic, or almost anything else. Now they can blast through armor, erupt into flame, deliver poison, cause festering wounds, and much more.

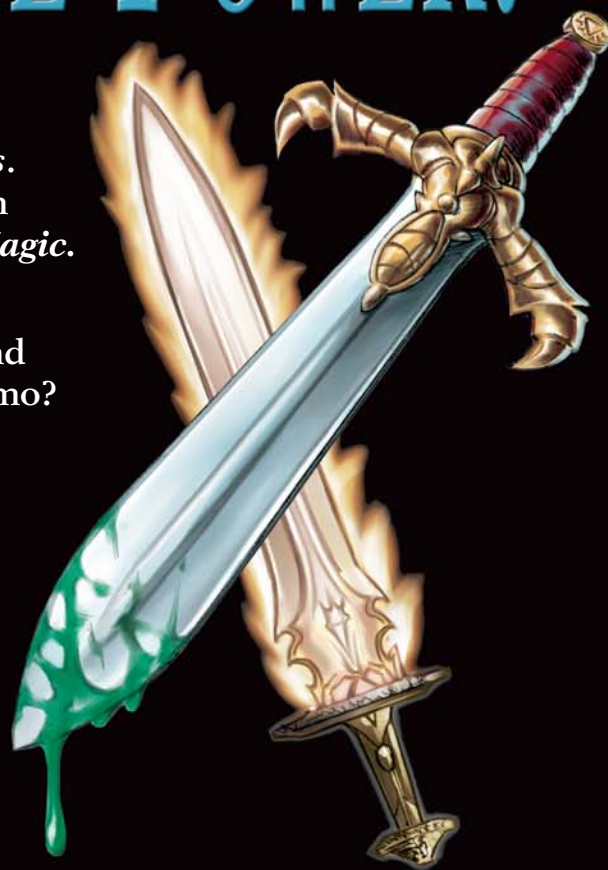
These rules don't drop a bomb on your campaign by making other abilities obsolete. They come with clear guidelines on what is and isn't possible, as well as notes on tying imbuements into existing powers and spells . . . including detailed advice on using them in your *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*, *GURPS Martial Arts*, or *GURPS Supers* campaign.

The power is in your hands!

By Sean Punch

Cover Art by Denis Loubet, Bob Stevlic, Rogério Vilela, and John Zeleznik

Illustrations by Ed Northcott, Jean Elizabeth Martin, and Dan Smith



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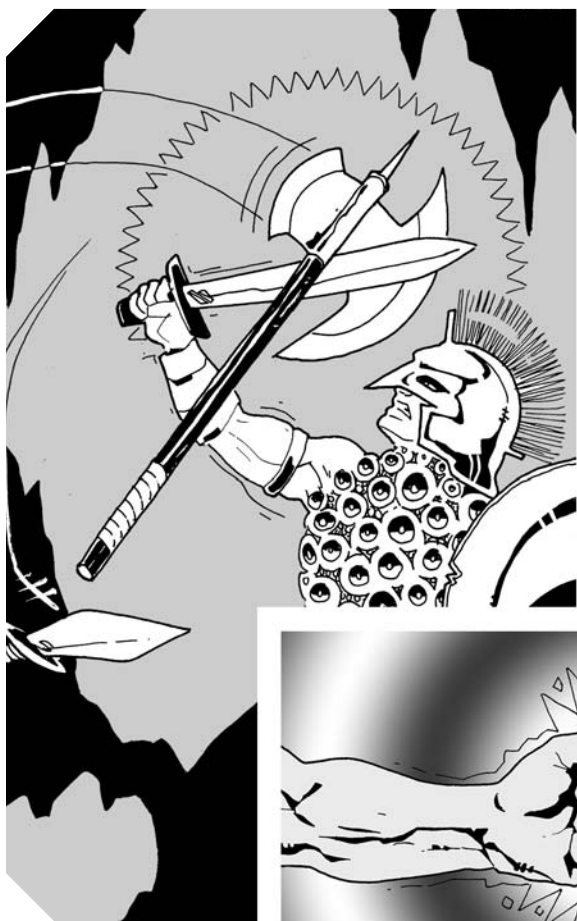
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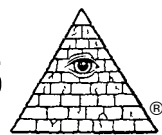
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INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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



THE IMBUE ADVANTAGE

It isn't balanced simply to let PCs buy whatever Imbuement Skills they like. Just as wizards need Magery to cast their spells and martial artists must be Trained by a Master to learn Breaking Blow, individuals who can imbue require a special advantage, which we'll define here before discussing the skills.

Imbue

10, 20, or 40 points

You can learn Imbuement Skills that grant additional capabilities to weapons ready in your hands – including your hands themselves, claws, and so on. Each level of Imbue (maximum three) gives access to more and increasingly powerful Imbuement Skills. The prerequisite level of Imbue for each skill is noted with that skill.

Special Limitations

Unmodified Imbue is a “wild” ability that works anywhere and isn't subject to special countermeasures, although protection effective against the type of attack that the empowered weapon delivers works normally. However, Imbue is often associated with a particular power source and subject to that source's drawbacks; this may even be a *requirement* in certain game worlds. Simulate this by giving Imbue a suitable power modifier; e.g., Chi (-10%), Divine (-10%), Magical (-10%), or Psionic (-10%), all from **GURPS Powers**. If the power modifier is Cosmic, you only need the +50% version to bend a few limits (see individual skills) and avoid being dispelled, but you must take the +300% version if all of your Imbuement Skills can ignore DR. An upside of adding *any* power modifier is that the power's Talent adds to Imbuement Skill rolls!

One special limitation is common on both wild and power-linked Imbue:

Limited Skill Access: Your Imbue only enables you to acquire *some* Imbuement Skills (each of which you can still buy for multiple *weapon* skills). The limitation is -80% for a single skill, -60% for two, -40% for three, or -20% for four skills. Access to five or more Imbuement Skills isn't a meaningful limitation. The GM may require PCs who want two to four skills to select thematically related choices – e.g., Burning Strike and

Incendiary Weapon – rather than cherry-pick favorites. This limitation doesn't waive Imbue level prerequisites and always applies to the whole advantage; to get Limited Skill Access for skills that require Imbue 2 or 3, buy Imbue 2 or 3, respectively, and apply this limitation to the *entire* advantage (even if only one of your chosen skills is at the highest level!).

MULTIPLE IMBUE ADVANTAGES

You can buy more than one copy of Imbue provided that *all* versions have power modifiers *and* the modifiers differ. You can give any or all of them Limited Skill Access, if you wish; this is occasionally a little cheaper than Imbue for one source with the same total number of skills, but not very often – and not by much. When you have multiple instances of Imbue like this, you must learn each Imbuement Skill for a specific source; e.g., Envenomed Weapon (Bow; Magical) isn't the same as Envenomed Weapon (Bow; Chi).

This has one significant drawback, of course: You have to pay extra points for two or more versions of Imbue – and possibly for several versions of your favorite Imbuement Skills to go with them. This is more than offset by two major benefits, however:

The most obvious benefit is that you'll rarely be without your imbuement abilities. If countermeasures or other problems faced by one power source cause it to fail, you can switch sources without missing a beat. If one Imbue advantage is somehow crippled or drained, you still have the other.

The most potent benefit is that you can use differently sourced versions of the *same* Imbuement Skill simultaneously, like any two other compatible skills, provided that you can make the skill rolls and afford the FP cost; see *Multiple Skills* (p. 5). This produces cumulative effects, where applicable. For instance, Envenomed Weapon gives 1d worth of poison at -3 to skill, 2d at -7, or 3d at -10, so if you knew both the Chi and Magical versions, you could avoid a tricky skill-7 roll for 2d damage by making a pair of easier skill-3 rolls for the same 2d – or, if you're skilled, you could get 6d of poison damage, circumventing the skill's normal 3d limit, by making two skill-10 rolls!

IMBUEMENT SKILLS

Imbuement Skills have no default, except across specialties (see *Specialties*, below). All are DX/VH, although the GM is welcome to make them IQ/VH if that would better suit the power source of Imbue (e.g., for psionics). Every Imbuement Skill has *some* level of Imbue as a prerequisite.

Specialties

All Imbuement Skills require specialization by particular combat skill. For instance, Multi-Shot (Pistol) – associated with Guns (Pistol) – is different from Multi-Shot (Bow), Multi-Shot (Rifle), and Multi-Shot (Thrown Knife), for use with Bow, Guns

(Rifle), and Thrown Weapon (Knife), respectively. You can specialize in any weapon skill that suits the skill type (see *Types of Imbuement Skills*, p. 5), and there are two further specialties that work slightly differently:

Throwing: This specialty lets you imbue hurled objects not covered by any specific Thrown Weapon skill, regardless of what they look like. It works with both Throwing and Throwing Art (if you have it!).

Unarmed: This specialty enables you to charge up bare-handed attacks *regardless* of what unarmed combat skill you use – although you'll find striking skills more useful. It covers kicks,

Noncombat Imbuement

Optionally, imbuement can have noncombat applications. The GM may permit Imbuement Skills specialized to almost any mundane equipment-operation skill – *if* there’s a logical interpretation! Some examples:

- Cutting Strike (Forced Entry) to make a crowbar work as a fire axe.
- Dancing Weapon (Photography) to enable your camera to fly around taking pictures while you stay hidden – an interesting alternative to Telekinesis!
- Far Shot (Sensors), for Electronics Operation (Sensors), to extend the range of a radar.
- Project Blow (Explosive Ordnance Disposal), for Explosives (EOD), to deal with bombs from a safe distance.

If the GM allows this, base the Imbuement Skill on the same attribute as the mundane skill for which it’s learned; e.g., IQ for Photography.

In a campaign where noncombat specialties exist, wildcard Imbuement Skills (p. 5) encompass these, too. When using wildcard Imbuement Skills this way, base the roll on the attribute that controls the mundane skill being enhanced.

The industrious GM could even dream up new Imbuement Skills with few or no combat applications. These might have narrow applicability – but that need not mean “useless.” For instance, a Video Transmission skill that bestows the Video enhancement for Telecommunication (p. B91) would let the user transmit a video signal over any phone, radio, or similar device, using his eyes as cameras. This could be a real boon to a super-powered spy or journalist! Skills like this should normally require only Imbue 1 – or Imbue 2 if they’re *remarkably* handy.

Blunts the weapon or engulfs it in a broad force field, converting the damage of a non-crushing attack from its usual damage type to crushing. This lets it work with other Imbuement Skills that function best with crushing attacks, improves knockback (p. B378) and blunt trauma (p. B379), and lets a deadlier weapon “merely” beat a victim senseless.

Cutting Strike

General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 2.

Narrows or sharpens the weapon in one dimension, converting the damage of a non-cutting attack from its usual damage type to cutting. Good for severing limbs.

Dazzling Display

General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 2.

Lets you convert a damaging attack to Obscure (p. B40) directed at vision. A melee weapon becomes a shaft of darkness or brilliance, or generates a visible shockwave that warps light, affecting a two-yard radius or a radius equal to its Reach,

whichever is *larger*, on any turn when you use this skill; this effect is centered on you. A projectile fills a two-yard radius with darkness, glare, smoke, or something similar where it hits, which lasts 10 seconds.

Roll your usual damage dice and halve the result (round down). Read this as the Vision penalty, to a maximum of -10. No actual damage occurs.

Modifiers: You can add the Defensive modifier (the Vision penalty doesn’t affect *you*) by rolling at -5.

Deafening Display

General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 1.

Lets you convert a damaging attack to Obscure (p. B40) directed at hearing. A melee weapon cracks, hums, rattles, etc., making a din that affects two-yard radius or a radius equal to its Reach, whichever is *larger*, on any turn when you use this skill; this effect is centered on you. A projectile goes off like a string of firecrackers or otherwise makes a racket, making hearing difficult in a two-yard radius for the next 10 seconds.

Roll your usual damage dice and halve the result (round down). Read this as the Hearing penalty, to a maximum of -10. No

actual damage occurs.

Modifiers: You can add the Defensive modifier (the Hearing penalty doesn’t affect *you*) by rolling at -5.

Fatiguing Strike

General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 2.

Winds the target by hitting nonlethal pressure points, charges the weapon with a kind of stunner field, or otherwise converts the damage of a non-fatigue attack from its usual damage type to fatigue.

Impaling Strike

General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

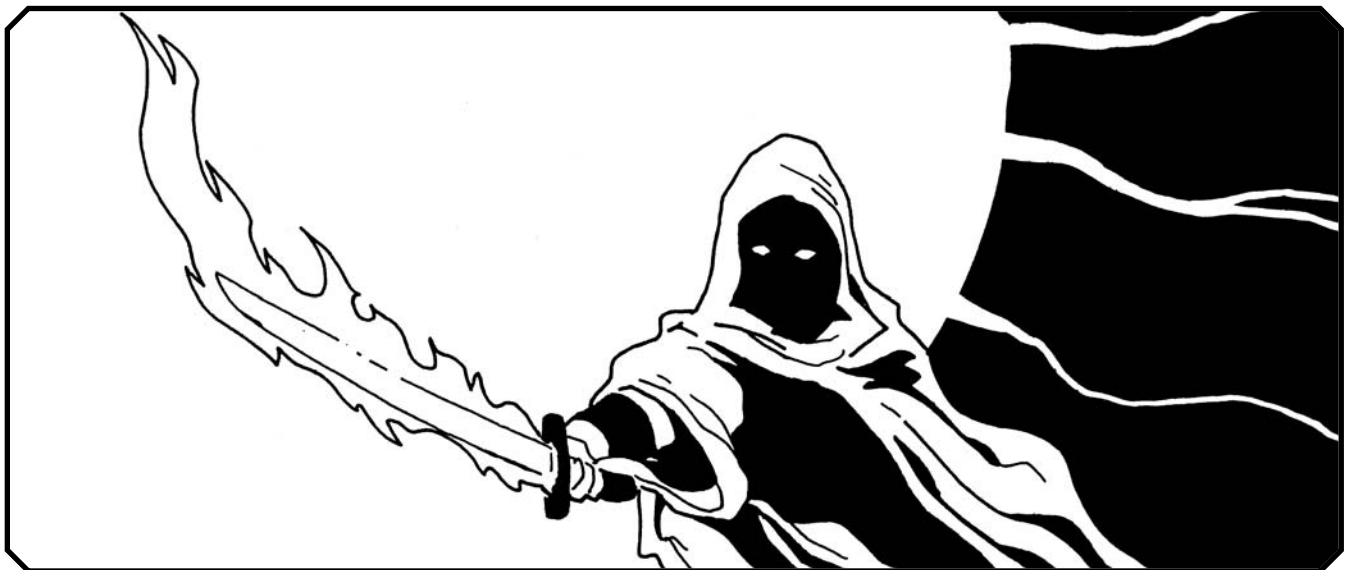
Prerequisite: Imbue 3.

Greatly narrows or sharpens the weapon in two dimensions, converting the damage of a non-impaling attack from its usual damage type to impaling. This gives -1 per die on the basic damage roll, however.

Modifiers: -5 for *full* damage.

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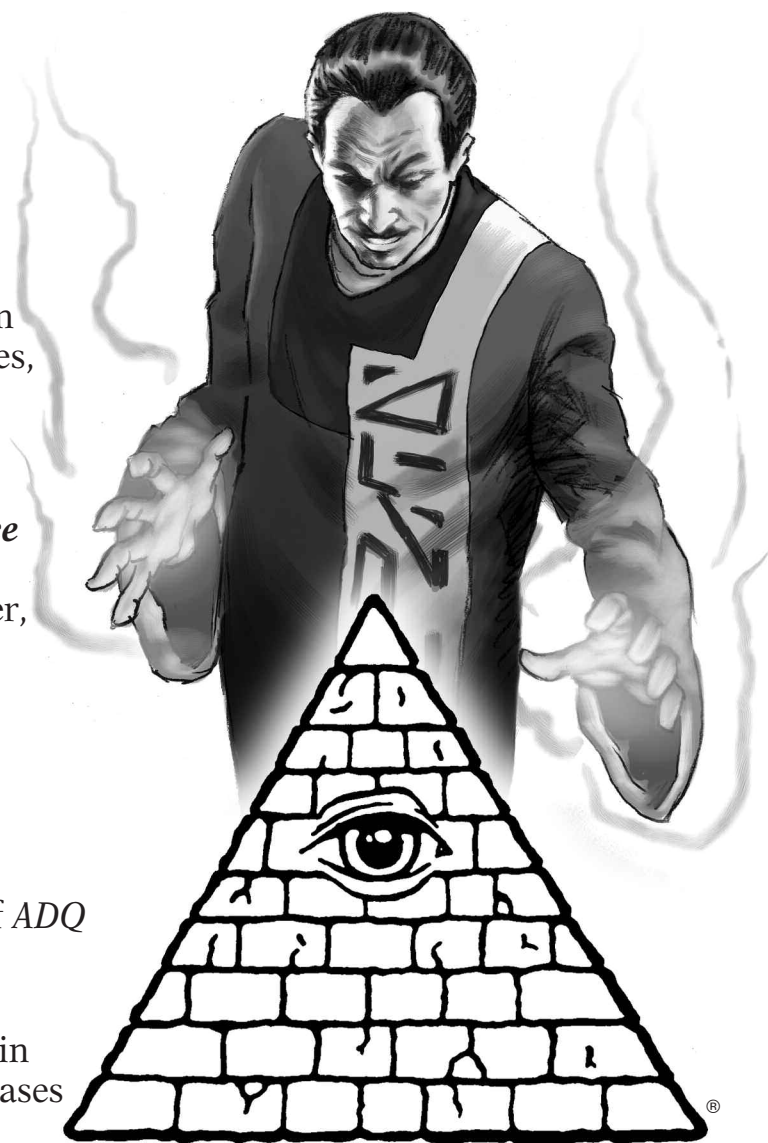
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