GURPS® Fourth Edition

Tactical Shooting™

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Introduction

We observe a growing tendency to glorify the seamier aspects of man-killing . . . [It is] at best and worst, a waste . . . Never shed innocent blood. All your life people will come up with good excuses why so-and-so ought to be shot . . . We suggest that if you ever kill a man to keep him from killing you, be certain you are indeed innocent . . .

– William Cassidy, ***Quick or Dead*** *(1978)*

GURPS Tactical Shooting is about *realistic* shooting . . . at least, as realistic as it can be in a *game*. It adds considerable technical detail and color to many aspects already dealt with in the ***GURPS Basic Set,*** explaining how things are done – and why – in real life and in the game. This book provides new shooting styles and adds new perks and techniques, just as ***GURPS Martial Arts*** did for realistic hand-to-hand combat. In addition, ***Tactical Shooting*** covers the sound selection and wise application of tactical tools, including information on how to choose your firearm, ammunition, and accessories, and provides new or better uses for guns and gear found in other books, especially ***GURPS High-Tech.*** It even addresses many urban legends and myths surrounding firearms use. ***Tactical Shooting*** is *not* about cinematic gunplay – for that, turn to ***GURPS Gun Fu.***

Tactical Shooting supports believable TL5-8 campaigns involving the use of handheld firearms, such as those enabled by ***GURPS Cops, Covert Ops, Mysteries, Old West, SEALs in Vietnam, Special Ops, SWAT,*** and ***WWII.*** It can also be applied to fictional or downright unrealistic settings, including ***GURPS Action, Autoduel, Cyberpunk, Horror, Infinite Worlds, Reign of Steel, Steampunk, Technomancer, Traveller,*** and ***WWII: Weird War II.***

Bushido *is all very well in its way, but it is no match for a .30-06.*

– Jeff Cooper, ***Commentaries*** *(1999)*

About *GURPS*

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Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata pages for all ***GURPS*** releases, including this book, are available on our website – see above.

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the ***GURPS Basic Set,*** *Fourth Edition.* Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

Publication History

Some material concerning weapon handling, perks, and techniques, was expanded from ***GURPS High-Tech*** (2007), as written by S.A. Fisher and Hans-Christian Vortisch. The generic Point-Shooting style was based on the more specific Fairbairn-Sykes Handgun Shooting style in Hans-Christian Vortisch's ***GURPS Martial Arts: Fairbairn Close Combat Systems*** (2008), as were some rules. A few perks were first introduced in Sean Punch's ***GURPS Power-Ups 2: Perks*** (2008). Still more rules were adapted from ***GURPS Gun Fu*** (2009), authored by S.A. Fisher, Sean Punch, and Hans-Christian Vortisch.

About the Author

Hans-Christian "Grey Tiger" Vortisch, M.A., began writing for ***GURPS*** as a freelancer in 2001. He was author or co-author of ***GURPS Covert Ops; High-Tech,*** *Fourth Edition;* ***Modern Firepower; Special Ops,*** *Third Edition;* and ***WWII: Motor Pool;*** as well as many e23 publications on martial topics. He has written additional material for numerous other ***GURPS*** books; authored, translated, edited, or contributed to several German ***Call of Cthulhu*** products; and published many articles in American, British, and German gaming magazines. Hans has been an avid gamer since 1983. His non-gaming interests include science fiction, history, cinema, and punk rock. He shoots in Berlin.

Conditions of Readiness

The following terminology has been used since its introduction by Jeff Cooper in the 1970s. The conditions are based on single-action semiautomatic pistols, like the Colt .45 Government (see *Cult of the .45,* pp. 5-6), but can describe other actions (***High-Tech,*** p. 82) and weapons as well – see below.

Condition Zero (Cocked and Unlocked): A round is chambered, the hammer is cocked, and the safety is off. The pistol is ready to fire.

Condition One (Cocked and Locked): As above, but the safety is on – the pistol isn't ready. The safety can be thumbed off with a Ready maneuver; a familiar user (***High-Tech,*** p. 80) or one with Lightning Fingers (p. 39) can do this as a free action. Safeties *rarely* fail mechanically, making this a safe way to carry – nevertheless, most military and police organizations don't allow it.

Condition Two (Hammer Down): A round is chambered and the hammer is lowered, with the safety off. A single-action weapon cannot fire until the shooter thumb-cocks the hammer (treat as thumbing a safety, above). Going from Condition Zero into Two requires carefully squeezing the trigger while lowering the hammer over a loaded chamber; this requires a Guns (Pistol) roll, at +4 if done two-handed. Failure results in a shot fired; an 18 means you shot yourself (typically in the leg or abdomen)! As it isn't entirely error-proof, Condition Two is considered unsafe by many, and only suitable for advanced users.

Condition Three (Unready): The chamber is empty, the hammer is down, and the safety is off. Rack the slide to simultaneously chamber a round and cock the hammer. This takes a Ready maneuver; a successful Fast-Draw (Pistol) roll lets you ready it instantly (p. B194) by racking the slide *while* drawing. Condition Three is the safest way to carry the gun, and is popular with the police and military. Readying can't be done silently and normally requires both hands; One-Hand Drills (p. 39) is useful.

Condition Four (Unloaded): There's no ammunition in the weapon and the hammer is down. This condition is useless to combat shooters except on a range or in similar, safe environments.

Other Actions

Non-single-action handguns feature internal mechanisms that prevent them from going off accidentally (unless the trigger is squeezed through negligence!), while allowing instantaneous fire simply by overcoming the high trigger pull. Because of this, many lack safeties, making Condition One impossible.

Double-action firearms use the conditions above, but can fire from Condition Zero *or* Two – even those *with* safeties are thus rarely carried in Condition One. Most TL8 pistols, like the Beretta Mod 92F (***High-Tech,*** p. 100), H&K USP (***High-Tech,*** p. 102), SIG-Sauer P226 (***High-Tech,*** p. 102), and Walther P99 (***High-Tech,*** p. 103), have a decocking lever to avoid the trigger manipulation described for Condition Two.

Double-action-only guns fire from Condition Two. They cannot be cocked, making Conditions Zero and One impossible.

Safe-action weapons are cocked once the slide is racked and usually lack safeties, preventing them from being in Conditions One or Two.

Other Weapons

Revolvers rarely have safeties; those that do can be carried in Condition One. Because many TL5-6 single-action revolvers are "unsafe" (***High-Tech,*** p. 93), the hammer should be lowered on an empty chamber – the equivalent of Condition Three. A successful Fast-Draw (Pistol) roll may include thumb-cocking a revolver's hammer as a free action.

Shotguns, rifles, and *other long arms* are usually single-action and can be carried in all the conditions above. Most police agencies require shotguns to be transported in Condition Three ("cruiser-ready"); it's also typical of TL5-6 rifles carried in a saddle scabbard.

- Tactical shooters should never stand around in the open, instead assuming a prone or kneeling posture for lowered silhouette (p. B548). They should always move under cover (pp. 28-29). Barricade Tactics (p. 37) and Standard Operating Procedure (Move Under Cover) (p. 40) will be useful.
- While "dodging bullets" sounds unrealistic, dodging *can* represent realistic behavior – see *Tactical Dodging* (p. 17). In particular, *Dodge and Drop* (p. B377) represents the time-honored "hitting the deck." Experienced shooters should have Combat Reflexes (p. 36).

Avoid Dying

. . . if the wound hasn't killed you, ignore the pain and keep going.

– Massad Ayoob, "The Gunfights of Jesse James" (2003)

- Tactical shooters should wear body armor and helmets, if available. At combat ranges, most TL5-8 armor (***High-Tech,*** pp. 65-71) can't stop bullets from contemporary high-powered rifles, or even handguns designed to penetrate armor, but it *will* reduce the severity of the wound, and may protect fully against low-powered weapons and fragments.
- Anyone expecting to be shot should invest in HT (p. B15), and should consider taking Fit or Very Fit (p. B55), Hard to Kill (p. B58), Hard to Subdue (p. B59), or High Pain Threshold (p. B59). Each of these add to consciousness and/or survival checks, which can keep the PC on his feet long enough to get medical attention.
- The party should have someone with First Aid (p. B195) and the relevant medical equipment (***High-Tech,*** pp. 219-225) at hand – there is a reason why every cop receives first aid lessons and every soldier carries a bandage. First aid often means the difference between life and death (p. B424).

Harsh Realism for Tactical Shooters

The ***Basic Set*** strikes a balance between gritty realism and cinematic action. ***Tactical Shooting*** refines those rules for realistic play. The following options will make them even *grittier:*

Bullet Travel: Bullets don't reach their target instantly; as a rough guide, a handgun projectile takes (Range in yards)/250 seconds and a rifle projectile takes (Range in yards)/600 seconds to arrive, rounding up. Every second after the first offers the chance of target movement – or of wind, an updraft, or even something crossing the path of the bullet! Simulate this by rolling 1d-5 per *extra* second, retaining negative numbers, and applying the result as a skill modifier after the shooter squeezes the trigger but before you roll the dice. For instance, for a rifle shot at 2,000 yards, roll 3d-15, for from +3 to -12 to the shot. A bonus reflects something like the target suddenly standing tall and turning face-on into the shot!

Concealed Carry: Some handguns are more appropriate for concealed carry than others: Semiautomatics are usually easier to conceal than revolvers, pistols with single-stack magazines are slimmer than those with high-capacity magazines, etc. The GM may give certain models +1 to Holdout in Quick Contests against Vision or Observation.

Eyestrain: Peering through telescopes and night vision sights exerts considerable eyestrain: Apply -1 to Vision after an hour, and another -1 per further half-hour, up to -4. Once you stop, you shed -1 per 10 minutes.

Hammerless Handguns: Sidearms with exposed hammers give -1 to Fast-Draw (Pistol) rolls, in addition to the -3 for drawing from a pocket (p. 42). On a failure, the gun remains caught in the pocket, but can be removed with a Ready maneuver next turn. On a critical failure, it tears the pocket liner and takes 1d+1 seconds to extract. See *Hammerless Handguns* (***High-Tech: Pulp Guns 1,*** p. 8).

Hip Shooting: Hip shots (pp. 11-13) often go low to the abdomen (groin or torso hit location). If rolling randomly, treat face or skull hits as torso hits and arm hits as leg hits.

Minute of Angle: Every firearm has a dispersion, no matter how well fixed or braced. At high skill, the *weapon* may be the limiting factor in a shot. Effective skill *before* penalties for speed, range, and size can't exceed 22 + (2 × Acc), *including* the Acc bonus from match ammo.

Example: A CheyTac M200 (p. 63) with Acc 6+4 and +1 match ammo limits skill to 22 + [2 × (6 + 1)] = 36. A master sniper with Guns (Rifle)-18 gets his skill of 18 + 6 (Acc) + 4 (scope) +1 (match) + 1 (braced) + 1 (All-Out Attack (Determined)) + 2 (Aim) + 4 (Precision Aiming) = 37 capped at 36. Firing at a man at 1,000 yards, his final effective skill is 36 - 0 (size) - 16 (range) = 20.

Peripheral Vision: Treat anyone making a sighted or aimed shot as having No Peripheral Vision (p. B151) until his next turn – or Tunnel Vision if he used a scope or similar optic (but not a collimating or reflex sight). This will significantly impact *Situational Awareness* (p. 11)!

Reaction Speeds: PCs often operate with inhuman focus, doing something productive during every second of even the most chaotic combat. If a player doesn't have his character's action ready when his turn comes up, he must take a "default" action, agreed upon in advance: All-Out Defense, Do Nothing, repeat his previous action, etc.

Shot Effect: Don't announce the game-mechanical results of the PCs' shots to the players! Even if opponents visibly drop, shooters might want to put in another round, just to make sure. See *Situational Awareness* (p. 11) for additional considerations.

Skill Degradation: Shooters often have one or two skills at extremely high levels (DX+8 or more). The GM should enforce *Maintaining Skills* (p. B294).

Things Not to Do

. . . grabbing the magazine as a vertical foregrip is a bad practice and causes more deformed magazines, magazine-housing/wells and magazine latches than any other handling technique.

– Frank Moyer and Robert Scroggie,
Special Forces Combat Firing Techniques *(1971)*

Tactical Shooting is all about professionals. The methods below are what trained shooters should *not* do. Some of these *were* done at one time or another by professionals (such as the taping of magazines), but experience has shown them to be a bad idea. Others, such as "gangsta shooting," have *always* been stupid.

Akimbo Shooting

Firing a gun from either hand is popular in the movies, but next to worthless in realistic situations. You can't properly sight two weapons at once, allowing only unsighted shooting (p. 13). Unless you know Dual-Weapon Attack (p. 44) *and* have either Ambidexterity (p. 36) or Off-Hand Weapon Training (p. 39), you will suffer huge penalties. While firing two guns simultaneously doubles RoF, this doesn't help much if you can't hit anything – at best, it allows suppression fire (see *Shooting at Several Opponents,* pp. 17-18). No military, police agency, or other professional armed body has *ever* advocated this.

Carrying two handguns was popular in the 19th century because contemporary weapons were unreliable and slow to reload. Even if both were drawn simultaneously, only the one in the dominant hand was normally fired; the other one was kept in reserve. When needed, they could be exchanged by "crossing the border" (see *Quick-Swap,* p. 40).

Gangsta Shooting

This means tilting a firearm (usually a handgun) to the side and firing it this way. Influenced by films and rap videos, "gangsta shooting" has become popular with people who don't know what they're doing but worry about how they look while doing it. You're unable to do anything but unsighted shooting (p. 13) this way and can't take advantage of a two-handed shooting stance (pp. 11-12). The GM should make liberal use of *Hitting the Wrong Target* (pp. B389-390).

Perks: Early Adopter (Pistols); Fastest Gun in the West; Green Eyes; Motorized Training (Pistol); Standard Operating Procedure (any); Supplier (any).

Point-Shooting

4 points

We were not taught to hold the gun out at arm's length or with two hands but to draw the gun and hold it tucked into your navel with the gun pointing straight ahead so that wherever you looked your gun moved round toward the target you were looking at. So you . . . drew your gun straight into your navel, pom, pom, the chap was dead . . .

– Ronald "Henry" Hall, "Memories on His and Her Majesty's Service" (2004)

Point-Shooting teaches a shooter to fire his weapon (usually a handgun) by pointing it instinctively at the target, rather than by "properly" aiming. Outside of conventional military operations, most gunfights occur at less than 10 yards, and often below three yards (*Handgun Ranges*, pp. 9-10). Taking the time to properly sight isn't feasible at such distances, especially if the weapon must first be drawn from a holster and the opponent is closing in. Unfavorable (but typical) conditions, such as bad lighting, a moving and shooting opponent, and other distractions, make sighted shooting even more difficult in actual combat.

Many successful 19th-century gunfighters and duelists used this style, despite conventional wisdom at the time being to only fire deliberate shots with an outstretched arm. Some cavalry units also trained in Point-Shooting, since riding a horse made aiming difficult. By the early 20th century, progressive-minded firearms instructors, such as William Fairbairn of the Shanghai Municipal Police, developed courses that taught students how to shoot under adverse conditions. See ***Martial Arts: Fairbairn Close Combat Systems*** for much more on Fairbairn, the SMP, and the Allied agents and commandos he and Eric Sykes trained in WWII. After the war, Point-Shooting was quickly forgotten, except by specialists like the British SAS (***Special Ops,*** pp. 42-43), who favored it until the 1980s.

Point-Shooting prepares a gunman for combat at short distances – about 10 yards or less. For longer shots, a two-handed stance (p. 11-12) and aimed shooting (p. 13) are more effective, though seldom trained much.

A stylist is adept at quickly drawing and readying his weapon from a holster, and is trained to use one-handed and hip-shooting stances (p. 11). He will primarily use unsighted shooting (p. 13), which gives him an edge in *Who Draws First?* (p. 10) contests and in close combat (pp. 25-26). Instructors teach an exaggerated "combat crouch" – a hunched posture which reduces the shooter's silhouette. This is modeled by the ability to dodge (p. 17), possible only with unsighted shooting.

Practical Sports Shooting

4 points

Diligentia, Vis, Celeritas *(Accuracy, Power, Speed).*

– ***IPSC Handgun Competition Rules*** *(2009)*

Based on the Modern Pistol style (p. 48), Practical Sports Shooting represents the training that civilian sports shooters acquire by competing in matches offered by the International Practical Shooting Confederation (IPSC), U.S. Practical Shooting Association (USPSA), or similar organizations. Shooters tackle a series of "stages," in which they shoot at a number of (usually differing) targets at varying ranges – often with obstacles, moving targets, required fast-draws or magazine changes, etc. The stages are shot on a "hot range" (p. 46) against the clock, so competitors need to be both good shots *and* fast. While most Practical Sports Shooting involves handguns, there are also matches for shotguns and rifles.

When this style was created in 1976, by shooters including Ray Chapman and Jeff Cooper, it was modeled on combat shooting. Like the biathlon or other combat sports (p. B184), it has lost many of its original, deadly applications. Strict safety, procedural, technical, and various other rules and restrictions mean that even world-class competitors are *sport* shooters, not combat shooters – although they may have acquired valuable traits. Some instructors consider Practical Sports Shooting useless; they believe it ingrains behavior that will get you killed in a real firefight, such as disregard for cover.

Stylists usually fire double-taps (paper targets must be hit twice for full marks) and do *everything* quickly – drawing, firing, reloading, etc. A student can take Grip Mastery (Pistol) as soon as he buys the Style Familiarity and Guns Sport (Pistol), as for Modern Pistol stylists. Style Familiarity covers only the models of firearms that he has trained with.

Skills: Fast-Draw (Ammo); Fast-Draw (Pistol); Guns Sport (Pistol).

Techniques: Fast-Firing (Pistol); Immediate Action (Pistol); Quick-Shot (Pistol).

Perks: Fastest Gun in the West (Pistol); Grip Mastery (Pistol); Off-Hand Weapon Training (Pistol); Quick Reload (any); Standard Operating Procedure (Cleaning Bug); Supplier (any); Sure-Footed (Sand *or* Uneven); Tap-Rack-Bang (Pistol); Trademark Move; Weapon Bond.

Optional Traits

Secondary Characteristics: Improved Basic Speed and Per.

Advantages: Acute Vision; Signature Gear.

Disadvantages: Hard of Hearing; Overconfidence.

Skills: Armoury (Small Arms); Connoisseur (Guns); Games (Practical Sports Shooting); Guns Sport (Rifle *or* Shotgun).

Techniques: Double-Loading; Fast-Firing (Rifle *or* Shotgun); Immediate Action (Rifle *or* Shotgun); Quick-Shot (Rifle *or* Shotgun).

Perks: Armorer's Gift (Pistol, Rifle *or* Shotgun); Early Adopter (any); Grip Mastery (Rifle *or* Shotgun); Off-Hand Weapon Training (Rifle *or* Shotgun); Tap-Rack-Bang (Rifle *or* Shotgun).

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