

# READY...FIGHT!



AN UNARMED COMBAT SUPPLEMENT  
BY KEITH RYAN KAPPEL











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# CREDITS

## WRITING AND DEVELOPMENT

Keith Ryan Kappel

## LAYOUT AND DESIGN

Ryan K. Brooks

Fantasy Flight Games GeneSys Foundry

## ORIGINAL ARTWORK

Sean Vrabel

(cover, pages 5, 7, 8, 9, 10,  
11, 13, 32, 34, 41, 42, 47, 49,  
57, 58, 75, 81, 91, 92, 97)

*See more of Sean's work*

*Commission Sean*

Peter Thompson (page 72)

*Commission Peter*

## ADDITIONAL ARTWORK

*The Met Collection* (pages 36, 38, 45)

Wiki Commons (pages 27, 55, 63, 67)

Yi Yuán Xīnjū (Unmodified), page 40

Snater.com (Unmodified), page 83

## NARRATIVE DICE SYSTEM ORIGINAL DESIGN

Jay Little

## PUBLISHER

High Metric Games via Genesys Foundry

*For my Dad, who was the biggest Mixed-Martial Arts  
fan I've ever met, and would have loved to live to see this.*

## MARKETING

Dawn Rusnak

## PLAYTEST COORDINATOR

Alyx Ross

## PLAYTESTERS

William Balvanz's "Gamers of the Pyrite Dawn" with

Kipp Ankrom, Brenden

Balvanz, Sean Balvanz, and Jeff Kerr

Yancy Evans' "Evans' Eleven" with

Doug "Ken Sterling",

Ed "Mack Brennan," and Michelle "Rayne"

Corby Kennard's "Army of Tyr"

with Carlo, Juan, and Raiya

Andrew Marlowe's "Marlowe House" with

Monica Marlowe, Lesley McKendry,

Scott McKendry, Lynette Von Wahlde,

and Chris Von Wahlde

Additional Testing and Peer Review by Theo Fattel, Jim  
Gilraine, David Male, Joshua Taylor, and Darren West.

*Special thanks to Jay Little, Sam Gregor-Stewart,*

*Tim Huckleberry, and Phil Maiewski, with-*

*out whom this book could never exist. And*

*Monte Lin for some helpful guidance.*



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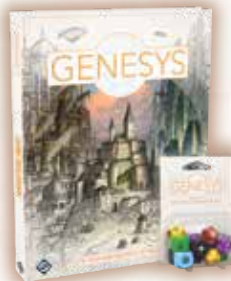
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GENESYS Core Rulebook and either the GENESYS Dice or Dice App are required to use this supplement.

# INTRODUCTION

The standard combat rules in the **GENESYS** Core Rulebook cover unarmed combat in general, but some campaigns, settings, or character concepts might have an intense focus on barehanded fighting. Game Masters running games or campaigns with such characters might benefit from additional guidance, talents, and rules to provide more strategic options for fighting without weapons. The following text helps GMs run unarmed combat campaigns with the **GENESYS Core Rulebook**. The tropes and mechanics of this setting make it best suited to small parties of three or fewer PCs.

Settings that might benefit from this supplement include those evoking “street-level” superheroes, or side-scrolling “beat ‘em up” or tournament “fighter” video games made famous in 1980s and 1990s arcade games. This supplement can also handle combat sports settings, such as a campaign built around boxing, mixed martial arts, or grappling tournaments. The colorful characters and over-the-top storylines of entertainment wrestling can also benefit from this supplement. Likewise, these rules can also help with settings that draw inspiration from martial arts films, birthed in the 1970s Hong Kong action movie scene, including historical and modern settings.

This supplement is divided into three parts as follows:

**Part One–The Rules:** New archetypes, careers, skills, talents, and optional rules

**Part Two–Settings:** Unarmed combat in existing settings, and new settings

**Part Three–GM Advice:** GM advice for structuring unarmed encounters and campaigns

## How Do I Use This Book?

We designed **READY...FIGHT!** to work with the **GENESYS** Core Rulebook to supplement official or home-brewed **GENESYS** settings. This supplement can help players create a monk in **REALMS OF TERRINOTH**, or an underground cage fighter for **SHADOW OF THE BEANSTALK**, or virtually any other unarmed character concept for any official or home-brewed setting. Beyond character and combat options, there are also tools and guidance for GMs to craft unarmed combat-focused campaigns and encounters.





In **Part I** of this book, we cover new rules for use with the **GENESYS** Core Rulebook. As the GM, you decide which rules are active for which campaigns or encounters. We recommend reading the rules fully, and then having a discussion with players about their expectations and talent availability before starting play. Note that some of the new talents make use of new optional rules, so it's vital to make sure players are on the same page regarding which optional rules are active. These include new character archetypes, careers, skills, talents, and even new unarmed weapons to complement the generic unarmed attack all characters begin play with.

In **Part II** of this book, we present four example settings in which you can run a one-shot adventure or an entire campaign that lends itself to telling the stories of bare-knuckled warriors. The Kung-Fu setting is perfect for telling stories set in ancient China, other historical settings, or fantasy-infused versions of historical settings. The Pro Wrestling setting offers colorful characters and a unique style of play in which social encounter interviews influence combat. The Tournament setting is best for very small groups that want to explore professional combat sports like boxing, mixed-martial arts, Olympic wrestling, or even underground cage fighting. Finally, the Street Brawler setting is perfect for telling stories similar to modern martial arts fare, including stories about street-level superheroes.

In **Part III**, we offer advice to Game Masters to help them craft memorable unarmed combat encounters and stitch them together into broader unarmed campaigns. There are also some optional rules that GMs might find useful in some specific settings and encounters. Here you'll find rules for designing training encounters, guidelines to account for size differences between fighters, guidance for incorporating mystic Qi powers, and general advice for structuring adventures and campaigns.

## WHAT DO YOU NEED TO PLAY?

As in any session of the **GENESYS** Roleplaying Game, it is vital to own a copy of the **GENESYS** Core Rulebook, as well as all the materials it lists on page 5. This includes the proprietary dice (or the dice app), as well as some friends, something to write with and on, and, of course, your imagination.

Combat between two unarmed characters tends to take longer than combat with ranged weaponry common to other settings (largely due to the low damage vs soak ratings). As a result, campaigns with PCs dedicated to mastering unarmed combat work smoothest with fewer players. This has the advantage of making it a great setting if you only have one or two players and are struggling to coordinate the four or five most other settings are balanced for.

# THE RULES

**W**e begin this book with the new rules. This supplement makes three major changes and additions to the **GENESYS** Core Rulebook. First, it divides the Brawl skill into two separate skills to govern striking (punches, kicks, elbows, and knees), and grappling (trips, throws, holds, and chokes). This is similar to how the Ranged and Melee skills are split into Light and Heavy categories for settings where those skills play a large role in combat. This change alone creates a variety of new strategic choices for players and creates ways for an entire party of unarmed combat specialists to stand out from one another.

Because we separated the Brawl skill into Brawl (Grappling) and Brawl (Striking), this supplement also offers more guidance on how to handle grappling encounters. **GENESYS** games focus on letting the dice tell the story, and the grappling rules are no different. Grappling is abstracted into three basic positions (neutral, advantageous, and superior). Each position allows successively greater opportunity for a fight-ending submission hold or choke.

The final major change is the addition of new unarmed combat weapons, like kicks, takedowns, chokes, and more. While they function the same as a brawl weapon, these new unarmed weapons are purchased with XP, and can often be combined with talents to simulate many different kinds of punches, kicks, takedowns, or submissions.

## WHAT'S IN THIS PART OF THE BOOK

This section is divided into three chapters as follows:

**Chapter One—New Character Options:** This chapter details four new archetypes and four new careers for **GENESYS** player characters.

**Chapter Two—Skills and Talents:** This chapter details new skills and talents for use with unarmed combat character concepts and campaigns.

**Chapter Three—New Rules:** This chapter provides new rules designed to bring new depth and options to unarmed combat, recommended for all campaigns where unarmed combat is a featured element of play.



# CHAPTER 1: NEW CHARACTER OPTIONS

**B**elow are new archetypes and careers to give new flavors to unarmed fighters, each capable in their own right, but with different styles, combat backgrounds, and motivations. As always, the GM is the final arbiter on

which options presented here are available at their table, though GMs and players should discuss what is and isn't included beforehand, so players can design character concepts accordingly.

## ARCHETYPES

**A**ll standard archetypes found in the **GENESYS** Core Rulebook are acceptable choices for unarmed campaigns. Additional archetypes and even species may be included if they fit the setting at the GM's discretion.

These might include cyborgs, monsters, mutants, and even supernatural or other-dimensional beings in some cases! In addition, the following unarmed combat-focused archetypes are available.



## THE AMATEUR BOXER

The amateur boxer archetype represents a character who has been fighting much of their life. These fights might have been in amateur tournaments, bar brawls, or schoolyard scuffles. You should choose this archetype if your character focuses on using unarmed attacks, specifically attacks with the Brawl (Striking) skill. You should also choose this archetype if your character grew up training, sparring, and fighting in boxing or kickboxing tournaments.

This archetype starts with the Brawn characteristic at 3 and the Presence characteristic at 1. You're starting with a character who has better than average Brawn, representing their ability to both give and take damage. As a trade-off, your character has a worse than average Presence, reflecting their historical inability to talk their way out of trouble. Thankfully, this character's wound threshold is higher than average.

Further, this archetype gets a special ability that lets your character absorb more damage than most opponents. Your character is used to only having a small window to recover between rounds and can bounce back from severe beatings with a preternatural quickness that demoralizes enemies.

### ARCHETYPE ABILITIES



- **Starting Wound Threshold:** 12 + Brawn
- **Starting Strain Threshold:** 10 + Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 90
- **Starting Skills:** A boxer starts with one rank in Resilience during character creation. They obtain this rank before spending experience points, and may not increase Resilience above rank 2 during character creation.
- **Shake it Off:** Once per session, when making a check to heal strain, may spend a Story Point to also heal half as many wounds (round up).





## THE COLLEGE ATHLETE

The college athlete archetype represents a character who has participated in a sport at the highest levels. You should choose this archetype if your character balances their fighting style between the Brawl (Grappling) and Brawl (Striking) skills for unarmed attacks. You should also choose this archetype if your character grew up playing football, basketball, hockey, or some other physical sport that requires great body control, grit, and physical contact.

This archetype starts with the Agility characteristic at 3 and the Cunning characteristic at 1. You're starting with a character who has better than average Agility, a natural gift that represents their ability to control their bodies with precision and almost see things in slow motion. As a trade-off, your character has a worse than average Cunning, thanks to their reliance on coaches and referees to ensure fair play. This character also has higher than average wound and strain thresholds, representing their ability to persevere through long seasons without losing focus or suffering injuries.

Further, this archetype gets a special ability to perform their very best when pressure is the highest. Your character is used to coming up with the big play under the bright lights while the fans scream and cheer. Your character is always able to find another gear when pushed, leaving the competition in the dust.

### ARCHETYPE ABILITIES



- **Starting Wound Threshold:** 12 + Brawn
- **Starting Strain Threshold:** 12 + Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 80
- **Starting Skills:** A college athlete starts with one rank in Athletics during character creation. They obtain this rank before spending experience points, and may not increase Athletics above rank 2 during character creation.
- **Clutch Performer:** Once per session, when spending a Story Point to upgrade the ability of a check, instead upgrade the ability of the check twice.

## THE MARTIAL ARTIST

The martial artist archetype represents a character who has trained for much of their life in a traditional martial art, be it karate, kung-fu, judo, or something else. You should choose this archetype if your character uses the Brawl (Grappling) skill, Brawl (Striking) skill, or a mix of both for unarmed attacks. You should also choose this archetype if your character grew up training in a traditional martial art, which might have involved performing katas and some measure of spiritual or self-discipline training about when to employ their skills.

This archetype starts with balanced characteristics. Specific styles might favor various characteristics, and this build is not meant to focus on any one of them in particular. Often, martial arts favor finding balance, which is reflected in this archetype's starting thresholds, experience, and characteristics. The best martial artists have achieved a kind of harmony, avoiding overreliance on their strengths and improving their weaknesses toward a balanced ideal.

This archetype also has a special ability that helps them achieve a Zen-like state that provides clarity and an almost superhuman focus. Achieving this state requires little more than a moment to breathe and clear the mind.

### ARCHETYPE ABILITIES



- **Starting Wound Threshold:** 10 + Brawn
- **Starting Strain Threshold:** 10 + Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 100
- **Starting Skills:** A martial artist starts with one rank in Discipline during character creation. They obtain this rank before spending experience points, and may not increase Discipline above rank 2 during character creation.
- **Renewed Focus:** Once per session, may spend an action to make an **Average (◆ ◆) Discipline check** to focus. If successful, add automatic **▲** to all Brawl and Melee combat checks for the rest of the encounter.



## THE HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLER

The high school wrestler archetype represents a character who has trained in a respected high school wrestling program, likely something they've worked toward since they could walk. You should choose this archetype if your character focuses on the Brawl (Grappling) skill for unarmed attacks. You should also choose this archetype if your character grew up wrestling, which includes training, bouts, and managing weight.

This archetype starts with the Willpower characteristic at 3 and the Intellect characteristic at 1. You're starting with a character who has better than average Willpower, a hard-earned talent built from years enduring grueling training and brutal weeks of weight cutting before a match. Wrestlers are known for a serious work ethic at the gym and a "never say die" attitude. This comes with the trade-off that your character has a worse than average Intellect, representing the long hours spent in the gym and not the library. This character also has higher than average strain threshold, representing their ability to accept and work through discomfort.

Further, this archetype has an ability that showcases their inability to quit. Wrestlers are known to keep working at a failed takedown attempt until they find success in a second or third effort. Wrestling matches are just as often decided by who quits first as anything else. This natural grit is something most wrestlers can apply to all aspects of their life, not just takedowns on the wrestling mat.

### ARCHETYPE ABILITIES



- **Starting Wound Threshold:** 10 + Brawn
- **Starting Strain Threshold:** 12 + Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 90
- **Starting Skills:** A wrestler starts with one rank in Resilience during character creation. They obtain this rank before spending experience points, and they may not increase Resilience above rank 2 during character creation.
- **Second Effort:** Once per session, your character may spend a Story Point to re-roll any two dice from a single check.



# SETTING-BASED CAREERS

All the role-based careers presented in the **GENESYS** Core Rulebook (pages 40–42) are fine to use alongside this supplement. The setting-based careers presented on pages 42–43 might also merit inclusion depending on the specifics of the setting in play. However, if you are using these other careers in an unarmed combat-focused campaign, consider swapping out the Brawl, Melee, and Ranged skills where appropriate for either the Brawl (Grappling) or Brawl (Striking) skills.

This supplement presents four new setting-based careers. Each of the following might favor any fighting style, whether it focuses on grappling, striking, or some combination of both. Some careers even suit supporting characters not directly involved in fighting, though all are viable fighters. The Professional can make a good ring doctor, Competitors and Mystics can function as coaches or mentors, and the Promoter can serve as an agent or manager.

## THE PROFESSIONAL

Professionals are willing to fight anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances, as long as the risk equals the reward. Professionals often see fighting as a trade and expect financial guarantees for their efforts. Some are willing to go far outside the law in their work, and some might even moonlight as contract killers. Regardless of the fight they agree to, they act professionally and expect professionalism from others involved.

The Professional counts the following skills as career skills: **Athletics**, **Brawl (Grappling)**, **Brawl (Striking)**, **Cool**, **Medicine**, **Negotiation**, **Perception**, and **Stealth**. Before spending experience during character creation, a Professional may choose four of their career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Assassin-type professionals might swap out the Medicine skill for Alchemy to create poisons, while more modern-day assassins might utilize a Ranged skill. Professional ring doctors or coaches might trade a Brawl skill for an appropriate Knowledge skill.

## THE COMPETITOR

Competitors don't care about the money or fame: they just want to be the best. Competitors care little for the letter of the law, but they have their own brand of honor. Victory would feel hollow if they ambushed an opponent or cheated, for example. Competitors can

sometimes get aggressive or goad reluctant opponents into a fight. Many live a modest life, traveling light in search of a worthy challenge to their skills.

The Competitor counts the following skills as career skills: **Athletics**, **Brawl (Grappling)**, **Brawl (Striking)**, **Coercion**, **Discipline**, **Resilience**, **Survival**, and **Vigilance**. Before spending experience during character creation, a Competitor may choose four of their career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Competitors can make great coaching and support characters, especially if they have an injury or condition that prevents them from fighting themselves. A coach type of competitor might trade Vigilance for Perception to better size up students and help them to improve, or find weaknesses in their opponent. Depending on their coaching style, they might also swap out Coercion for Charm or Leadership. Coaching types might also swap out Resilience for Medicine (or even Primal or Divine!) to treat the injuries of fighters under their tutelage.

## THE PROMOTER

Promoters are interested in putting on a show and entertaining the crowd almost more than winning the fight. Many won't fight unless there is a large crowd they can play off of, and most Promoters spend just as much time at the spa, tailor, and barber as they do training at the gym. Many are infamous trash talkers, which they use during fights to goad opponents into being overly aggressive and between fights to build interest for their next event.

The Promoter counts the following skills as career skills: **Brawl (Grappling)**, **Brawl (Striking)**, **Charm**, **Coercion**, **Cool**, **Coordination**, **Deception**, and **Vigilance**. Before spending experience during character creation, a Promoter may choose four of their career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Promoters can also act as fighter agents and managers. Their taunts and business savvy can benefit any fighter they support or train with. Promoters also have no problem turning heel and cheating, and they enjoy the “boos” just as much as the cheers. More villainous examples might swap out Coordination for Skulduggery or Stealth, which they might use to fight dirty.



## THE MYSTIC

The Mystic doesn't fight for fame, fortune, or to prove anything: they fight to achieve enlightenment. The Mystic sees fighting as a spiritual experience and seeks an opponent who can deliver an epiphany or push them to transcend the boundaries of mere mortals. Mystics are serene and feel a deep connection to the natural world, sometimes giving them a quirky, but strong, presence.

The Mystic counts the following skills as career skills: **Brawl (Grappling)**, **Brawl (Striking)**, **Coordination**,

**Discipline**, **Perception**, **Resilience**, **Survival**, and **Vigilance**. Before spending experience during character creation, a Mystic may choose four of their career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Mystics might be in settings that use actual magic! In such cases, consider swapping Vigilance for Divine. They can also be powerful sorcerers, drawing on less than pure energies. Such Mystics might swap their Vigilance skill for Primal or Arcana. False Mystics might mislead potential followers for profit, and swap their Vigilance skill for Deception.

## BACKGROUNDS

The GENESYS Core Rulebook already provides extensive support for developing character backgrounds, Motivations, Strengths, and Flaws in steps 1 and 6 of character creation (GENESYS Core Rulebook, **Part I: Chapter 2**). However, characters with a focus on unarmed combat might want to explore additional aspects to flesh out their characters. The most important of these is their fighting style, but some characters might want to explore their home gym, home town, fighting background, amateur fight record, previous professional fight record, and more.

### FIGHTING STYLE

The most important character choice a player might make for an unarmed combat specialist is their fighting style. Does this character subscribe to a specific traditional martial art like an animal style of kung-fu, tae kwon do, or jujitsu? Or perhaps a more loosely organized style like freestyle wrestling or kickboxing? Maybe your character has their very own unique style, complete with its own name, like Bruce Lee's Jeet Kun Do, or Yves Edwards' "Thugjitsu."

Picking a specific fighting style can help a player when spending XP on talents, skills, and unarmed weapons by giving them direction and a strategy. While most styles feature elements of both striking and grappling, the overwhelming majority favor one over the other. Learn what your style does best, and focus your XP on that aspect of unarmed combat. A fighting style can also provide direction for developing **Signature Weapons** (see page 64) and otherwise narrating your character beating the snot out of their enemies.

Selecting a fighting style might also answer a lot of questions about how your character learned to fight. If you select traditional Muay Thai kickboxing, then you might have a traditional Kru, or teacher, who trains you in Thailand. This kind of information can help in creating an instructor NPC, and shaping training encounters (see page 93).



# CHAPTER 2: SKILLS AND TALENTS

This chapter provides a general unarmed combat setting skills list, as well as details on the separation of the Brawl skill into Brawl (Grappling) and Brawl (Striking). It also offers some new uses for existing skills, encouraging players to purchase ranks in skills that might

otherwise go overlooked. Finally, it presents over thirty new talents that can combine with new Brawl weapons to add tactical options and new strategies during unarmed combat.

## SKILLS

We suggest you use the following skills for unarmed combat settings. However, a number of sub-settings might have different requirements, and GMs are encouraged to add skills as they see fit. Medieval settings might benefit from the Riding and both Melee skills, while more modern and futuristic settings that explore a wider world might add the Computers, Driving, Mechanics, and both Ranged skills. Settings with supernatural or mystical elements might add the Arcana, Divine, and Primal skills. GMs should discuss which tropes and themes they want the campaign to explore with their players and make the decision that works best for the table.

### A NOTE ON KNOWLEDGE SKILLS

While any knowledge skills might fit with an unarmed combat-focused campaign, the following are of specific interest:

**Knowledge (Biology):** This knowledge skill might be useful for PCs focused on healing, be they a medic, doctor, or surgeon.

**Knowledge (Lore):** Characters with this skill might know the history of a sport, especially apocryphal tales of behind the scenes drama. It can also represent a knowledge of forbidden techniques, the location of ancient dojos, and other legends in an unarmed combat setting.

**Knowledge (Tactics):** Some GMs might prefer this skill over Perception to size-up opponents (see **New Skill Uses: Size Up Opponent**, page 16). GMs might also use it to reveal stat block information about an enemy, or to let PCs learn the overall strategy in use by an opponent.

TABLE 2–1: UNARMED COMBAT SETTING SKILL LIST

SKILL	ATTRIBUTE	PAGE (BOOK)
Alchemy	Intellect	57 (G-CRB)
Athletics	Brawn	58 (G-CRB)
Brawl (Grappling)	Brawn	Page 15
Brawl (Striking)	Agility	Page 15
Charm	Presence	54 (G-CRB)
Coercion	Willpower	55 (G-CRB)
Cool	Presence	59 (G-CRB)
Coordination	Agility	59 (G-CRB)
Deception	Presence	56 (G-CRB)
Discipline	Willpower	60 (G-CRB)
Knowledge (Any)	Intellect	66 (G-CRB)
Medicine	Intellect	61 (G-CRB)
Melee	Brawn	67 (G-CRB)
Negotiation	Presence	56 (G-CRB)
Perception	Cunning	62 (G-CRB)
Ranged	Agility	68 (G-CRB)
Resilience	Brawn	63 (G-CRB)
Skulduggery	Agility	64 (G-CRB)
Stealth	Agility	64 (G-CRB)
Streetwise	Cunning	65 (G-CRB)
Survival	Cunning	65 (G-CRB)
Vigilance	Willpower	65 (G-CRB)

# NEW SKILLS

In unarmed combat-heavy settings, there is a risk of players investing too heavily in the Brawn attribute and Brawl skill, with the relative absence of ranged combat in the setting. To address this, the Brawl skill is split into the Brawl (Grappling) and Brawl (Striking) skills. Take care to notice that Brawl (Striking) uses Agility as its associated characteristic instead of Brawn, though damage is still calculated with Brawn as usual. Other existing skills gain new purpose through new talents, combat actions, and optional rules in this supplement, further encouraging diversification of characteristics, skills, and talents.

## A NOTE ON BRAWL

While this supplement divides the Brawl skill into the Brawl (Grappling) and Brawl (Striking) skills, some GMs using this supplement to bring an unarmed combat specialist PC into a more broadly focused campaign might not want to penalize a PC by dividing their abilities between two skills.

Instead, you might keep the two skills combined, or keep Brawl as it is (or switch its base characteristic to Agility), but move Grappling elements to the Athletics skill. While this is fine, particularly if this supplement is used to build an unarmed focused character to a campaign that features ranged combat, recognize that the skill was split for balance purposes and to encourage a greater variety of builds among player characters in an all-unarmed combat campaign.

## BRAWL (GRAPPLING) (BRAWN)

Grappling encompasses most unarmed combat outside of strikes. This includes use of their arms and legs to tie up, trip, throw, restrain, submit, or choke opponents, as well as techniques to resist, defend, or reverse such actions. Grappling requires great strength to both sink in submissions and chokes and resist them. Jujitsu, judo, and wrestling are among the most popular schools of grappling, though many others exist.

### YOUR CHARACTER SHOULD USE THIS SKILL IF...

- Your character wants to trip, throw, or tackle a standing enemy to the ground.
- Your character wants to restrain another character.
- Your character wants to escape the grip of another character.

### YOUR CHARACTER SHOULD NOT USE THIS SKILL IF...

- Your character wants to hit an opponent while on top of them; in this case they should use the Brawl (Striking) skill.
- Your character wants to toss a willing character; they should instead use the Athletics skill.

## BRAWL (STRIKING) (AGILITY)

Striking encompasses all unarmed combat involving hitting an opponent. This includes punches, elbows, knees, kicks, and head-butts. The speed and accurate placement of strikes has a far greater effect on damage than overall pushing and pulling strength, and various spinning and leaping techniques can increase power dramatically. Boxing, karate, kung-fu, kickboxing, and tae kwon do are among the most popular forms of striking, though there are many schools within each, and many other forms.

### YOUR CHARACTER SHOULD USE THIS SKILL IF...

- Your character wants to elbow, kick, knee, or punch another character.
- Your character wants to elbow, kick, knee, or punch a character they are grappling with.
- Your character wants to kick down a door, or break a board or other inanimate object.

### YOUR CHARACTER SHOULD NOT USE THIS SKILL IF...

- Your character wants to hit another character with a chair; they should use the Melee skill.
- Your character wants to trip, throw, sweep, or tackle another character; they should instead use the Brawl (Grappling) skill.



# NEW SKILL USES

In the interest of adding combat utility to skills that might otherwise get overlooked by players in an unarmed combat encounter, some additional uses for new and existing skills have been detailed here.

## USING BRAWL: DISARM ENEMY

The Brawl (Grappling) and Brawl (Striking) skills can also be used to rip or knock a weapon from an enemy's hand. Make a **Daunting (◆◆◆◆) Brawl (Grappling) or Brawl (Striking) check** to disarm an enemy. Instead of dealing damage or gaining a position, employ the following results:

✱: **Dropped Weapon:** The target no longer holds their weapon; it is on the ground, within engaged range. If a Brawl (Grappling) check was used, the fighters are considered to be in a neutral position.

▲: **Improved Position:** If a Brawl (Grappling) check was used, the attacker has an improved position.

▲ ▲: **Knocked Away:** On a successful check, the weapon is knocked away one additional range band.

▲ ▲ ▲: **Destroyed:** The weapon is damaged one step (See **Sunder**, GENESYS Core Rulebook, page 88), destroyed, or knocked somewhere out of reach (such as down a sewer grate or over a fence) at the GM's discretion.

⊗: **Taken:** On a success, the attacking character now wields the weapon.

⊗: **Free Attack:** Before being disarmed, the enemy swings or discharges the weapon, dealing base damage (plus Brawn where appropriate) to the attacker (soak still applies). May spend ♣ ♣ to activate any weapon qualities.

## USING DECEPTION: FEINTS

In a fight, a combatant can make an **opposed Deception versus Vigilance check** as an action to feint or fake out an opponent. On a success, the target is fooled and vulnerable to an attack, or has their own attack disrupted. Feints work just as well in grappling as they do striking. Use the following list to spend dice results from an attempted feint.

✱: **Setup:** Add ✱ ▲ ▲ to this character's next attack against this target, and add ■ to the target's next action.

▲: **Lowered Guard:** Decrease the target's melee defense by one until the end of your next turn.

▲ ▲: **Exposed:** Decrease the target's soak by one until the end of your next turn

⊗: **Faked Out:** The target slips and falls prone.

⊗: **Bad Timing:** This character suffers wounds equal to the target's Brawn (ignoring soak).

## USING PERCEPTION: SIZE UP OPPONENT

Once per encounter, unarmed combatants can size up an opponent by making an **opposed Perception versus Deception or Cool check** as an action to identify weaknesses. This might reveal bad technique or form, or an injury or vulnerability that the character can exploit. At the GM's discretion, if this character is acting as a coach, these benefits can be passed to an allied fighter (though any one character should only be able to be targeted by a Size Up Opponent action once per encounter). Further, some GMs might prefer to use Knowledge (Tactics) instead, or to allow either skill.

✱: **Evaluate Target:** Character becomes aware of a critical injury the target is currently suffering, or learns the target's ranks in either Brawl (Grappling) or Brawl (Striking).

▲: **Spot Weakness:** Add Vicious +1 to the next critical injury this character inflicts against the target.

▲ ▲: **Planned Surprise:** Once this encounter, when spending a Story Point to upgrade an attack, instead add ✱ ✱ ▲ ▲ to the result.

⊗: **Defensive Gap:** Ignore one point of melee defense for the rest of the encounter.

⊗: **Fooled:** The target tricks the character, faking a weakness. If this character generates ♣ ♣ ♣ or ⊗ attacking the target this encounter, the GM can spend it to have the character immediately suffer a number of wounds equal to the target's base unarmed damage (select any appropriate unarmed weapon at the GM's discretion).



# SETTING-SPECIFIC TALENTS

The following talents are for characters in unarmed combat settings or characters in other settings with GM approval. Talents in an unarmed combat setting should be limited to those presented here, talents in the **GENESYS** Core Rulebook approved for all settings, and talents added at the GM's discretion. An index of unarmed combat talents from the **GENESYS** Core Rulebook, **SHADOW OF THE BEANSTALK**, and **REALMS OF TERRINOTH** is included here for convenience.

## TIER 1 TALENTS

### ACROBATIC EVASION

It is difficult to attack targets constantly in motion.

**Tier:** 1

**Activation:** Active (Out-of-Turn Incidental)

**Ranked:** Yes

If this character makes a Coordination check for any reason during combat, they add +1 Melee Defense per rank of Acrobatic Evasion until their next turn.

### FIGHTING TALL

This fighter is exceptionally long-limbed for their size, or has learned to maximize their use of natural reach to overcome height differences in striking.

**Tier:** 1

**Activation:** Passive

**Ranked:** Yes

For the purposes of incoming and outgoing Brawl (Striking) combat checks, this character acts as four inches taller than normal (See **New Rules: Fighter Size**, page 27). This talent can be purchased twice at the GM's discretion.




### KICK 'EM WHILE THEY'RE DOWN

Strikes from the standing position against downed opponents are so dangerous, they're often banned in combat sports.

**Tier:** 1

**Activation:** Passive

**Ranked:** No

When making a Brawl or Melee combat check against a prone opponent while you are standing, gain   to the attack instead of .

### STRAPPING

This fighter is exceptionally strong or has heavy hips for their size, or has otherwise learned how to grapple effectively against larger opponents.

**Tier:** 1

**Activation:** Passive

**Ranked:** Yes

For the purposes of incoming or outgoing Brawl (Grappling) combat checks, or **opposed Brawl (Grappling) checks**, this character acts as 4 inches larger than normal (see **New Rules: Fighter Size**, page 27). This talent can be purchased twice at the GM's discretion.

### TAKEDOWN DEFENSE

A striking-based fighter's entire game plan depends on staying upright, and many learn how to sprawl, maintain balance, or otherwise avoid takedown attempts from opponents.

**Tier:** 1

**Activation:** Active (Out-of-Turn Incidental)

**Ranked:** No

May suffer 2 strain to upgrade the difficulty of an incoming Brawl (Grappling) check to use a takedown weapon once.

### UNARMED PARRY

Learning to keep your hands up, and block, deflect, and shield otherwise unavoidable strikes is a core tenant of most self-defense systems.

**Tier:** 1

**Activation:** Active (Incidental, Out of Turn)

**Ranked:** No

This character can use the Parry talent (or Parry [Improved]) while unarmed, but only against other unarmed weapons.

## TIER 2 TALENTS

### GIANT SLAYER

A good overhand right or uppercut can usually solve reach and height disadvantages.

**Tier:** 2

**Activation:** Active (Incidental)

**Ranked:** Yes (Maximum of 3)


Suffer up to 1 strain per rank of Giant Slayer (to a maximum of the number of size categories smaller your character is than the target, (see **New Rules: Fighter Size**, page 27). For each strain spent in this way, add  to the next attack.

TABLE 2–2: UNARMED COMBAT TALENTS

NAME	RANKED	SOURCE
<b>TIER 1</b>		
Acrobatic Evasion	Yes	Page 17
Bullrush	No	Terrinoth (Page 84)
Desperate Recovery	No	Core Rulebook (Page 73)
Duelist	No	Core Rulebook (Page 73)
Durable	Yes	Core Rulebook (Page 73)
Fighting Tall	Yes	Page 17
Grit	Yes	Core Rulebook (Page 73)
Jump Up	No	Core Rulebook (Page 73)
Kick 'em While They're Down	No	Page 17
Knack For It	Yes	Core Rulebook (Page 73)
One With Nature	No	Core Rulebook (Page 74)
Parry	Yes	Core Rulebook (Page 74)
Quick Strike	Yes	Core Rulebook (Page 74)
Rapid Reaction	Yes	Core Rulebook (Page 74)
Second Wind	Yes	Core Rulebook (Page 74)
Strapping	Yes	Page 17
Takedown Defense	No	Page 17
Toughened	Yes	Core Rulebook (Page 75)
Tumble	No	Terrinoth (Page 87)
Unarmed Parry	No	Page 17
<b>TIER 2</b>		
Berserk	No	Core Rulebook (Page 75)
Defensive Stance	Yes	Core Rulebook (Page 75)
Dual Wielder	No	Core Rulebook (Page 76)
Giant Slayer	Yes	Page 17
Grapple	No	Terrinoth (Page 88)
Ground and Pound	No	Page 19
Improvised Weapon Master	No	Page 19
Iron Chin	Yes	Page 19
Jab	No	Page 19
Keep Them in Front	Yes	Page 19
Lucky Strike	No	Core Rulebook (Page 76)
Reckless Charge	No	Terrinoth (Page 89)

TABLE 2–2: UNARMED COMBAT TALENTS (CONT.)

NAME	RANKED	SOURCE
Sense the Finish	No	Page 19
Submission Specialist	Yes	Page 19
Unarmed Parry (Improved)	No	Page 19
<b>TIER 3</b>		
Acrobatic Evasion (Improved)	No	Page 20
Control the Distance	No	Page 20
Counterattack	No	Terrinoth (Page 90)
Counterstrike	No	Page 20
Crafty Veteran	Yes	Page 20
Dodge	Yes	Core Rulebook (Page 78)
Dual Strike	No	Terrinoth (Page 90)
Easy Prey	No	Terrinoth (Page 90)
Fancy Footwork	No	Page 20
Heavy Hands	Yes	Page 20
Heroic Will	No	Core Rulebook (Page 78)
Jab (Improved)	No	Page 20
Leg Kick	No	Page 20
Natural	No	Core Rulebook (Page 78)
Pressure Point	No	Terrinoth (Page 90)
Silenced	No	Page 21
Takedown Defense (Improved)	No	Page 21
Will To Fight	No	Page 21
<b>TIER 4</b>		
Back-to-Back	No	Terrinoth (Page 91)
Combination	Yes	Page 21
Death Rage	No	Terrinoth (Page 91)
Defensive	Yes	Core Rulebook (Page 80)
Enduring	Yes	Core Rulebook (Page 80)
Improvised Weapon Master (Improved)	No	Page 21
Leaping Attack	No	Page 21
Power Attack	No	Page 21
Rebound Attack	No	Page 22
Sense the Finish (Improved)	No	Page 22

**TABLE 2–2: UNARMED COMBAT TALENTS (CONT.)**

NAME	RANKED	SOURCE
Spinning Attack	No	Page 22
Takedown Defense (Supreme)	No	Page 22
Unrelenting	No	Terrinoth (Page 91)
<b>TIER 5</b>		
Dedication	Yes	Core Rulebook (Page 81)
Improvised Weapon Master (Supreme)	No	Page 22
Indomitable	No	Core Rulebook (Page 81)
Master	No	Core Rulebook (Page 81)
Whirlwind	No	Terrinoth (Page 91)

### GROUND AND POUND

When controlling an opponent's posture, or when on top of an opponent, strikes land a lot harder.

**Tier:** 2

**Activation:** Passive

**Ranked:** No

When in an Advantageous Position against an engaged opponent, add +1 point of damage to successful Brawl (Striking) attacks against that opponent. This bonus is changed to +2 damage if in a Superior Position.

### IMPROVISED WEAPON MASTER

Some fighters can use almost anything as a weapon to defend themselves.

**Tier:** 2

**Activation:** Passive

**Ranked:** No

This character adds automatic ✨ to all combat checks when using an improvised weapon, and reduces its Crit Rating by 1.

### IRON CHIN

Some fighters are naturally tough to put on the canvas.

**Tier:** 2

**Activation:** Passive

**Ranked:** Yes

When hit by an unarmed weapon, triggering the Knockdown Weapon Quality costs an extra ⚡ to activate. This talent may be bought multiple times, making the character more difficult to knock down each time.

### JAB

This strike is disruptive to an opponent's timing, and potentially sets up more damaging attacks.

**Tier:** 2

**Activation:** Active (Action)

**Ranked:** No

Make a Brawl (Striking) combat check against an engaged enemy. On success, instead of normal damage, deal half as Stun Damage (round up), and add ■ ■ to the target's next action.

### KEEP THEM IN FRONT

Either through careful use of terrain or natural size or speed, this character is difficult to flank.

**Tier:** 2

**Activation:** Passive

**Ranked:** Yes (Maximum of 3)

To flank this character requires +1 more allies to be engaged before benefiting from the conditions of flanking a target. Taking this talent again increases the number of engaged allies required to flank this character by +1.

### SENSE THE FINISH

Some fighters have a great natural instinct for when an opponent is badly hurt.

**Tier:** 2

**Activation:** Active (Incidental)

**Ranked:** No

During any combat check, this player may spend ⚡ ⚡ or 🌀 to learn how close an enemy is to exceeding either their wound or strain threshold (player's choice).

### SUBMISSION SPECIALIST

Some fighters focus on submission fighting, learning advanced set-ups and traps to sink submissions quickly.

**Tier:** 2

**Activation:** Active (Incidental)

**Ranked:** Yes

Once per round, may spend 2 strain to reduce a Brawl (Grappling) submission weapon's Prepare rating by 1 (minimum 0). Increase the difficulty of the attack once. Each time the talent is purchased, may use it one additional time per round.

### UNARMED PARRY (IMPROVED)

With effort and practice, unarmed fighters can learn how to indirectly parry opponents armed with blades and other weapons.

**Tier:** 2

**Activation:** Active (Incidental, Out of Turn)

**Ranked:** No

When unarmed, this character can add +1 strain to the cost of the Parry (or Parry [Improved]) talent to use it against an incoming melee weapon attack.



## GENESYS CORE RULEBOOK TALENTS

The GENESYS Core Rulebook has several talents that are useful for unarmed combat. When one of the talents from the GENESYS Core Rulebook included on Table 1–2 references the Brawl skill, GMs should use their own judgment to decide if the talent applies to Brawl (Grappling) skill, Brawl (Striking) skill, or both.

Further, the following talents are designed for Melee weapon or Ranged combat, but can be easily tweaked to apply to unarmed combat.

**Deadeye:** (GEN 79) This Tier 4 talent can function as normal, substituting references to the Ranged skill or weapon with the Brawl (Grappling) or Brawl (Striking) skill or weapon.

**Hamstring Shot:** (GEN 73) This Tier 1 talent can function as normal, substituting references to a ranged weapon with the kick, knee, and joint submission unarmed weapons.

### TIER 3 TALENTS

#### ACROBATIC EVASION (IMPROVED)

Skilled fighters can use footwork and head movement, or even backflips, cartwheels, or the splits to avoid attacks.

**Tier:** 3

**Activation:** Active (Incidental)

**Ranked:** No

Once per encounter, this character may spend a Story Point as an incidental to make an incoming combat check (before rolling) an opposed check against their Coordination skill rather than the normal difficulty.

#### CONTROL THE DISTANCE

Fighters with a good sense of reach can control the distance of a fight, making them hard to hit.

**Tier:** 3

**Activation:** Active (Maneuver)

**Ranked:** No

Suffer 2 Strain and spend a maneuver to add ✕ to all incoming Melee and Brawl checks until the start of this character's next turn.

#### COUNTERSTRIKE

Good timing can catch an opponent off-guard.

**Tier:** 3

**Activation:** Active (Action)

**Ranked:** No

This character may take an action to ready a counter. Upgrade the difficulty of all incoming Melee and Brawl combat checks, or incoming Brawl (Grappling) checks to grapple twice until the character's next turn. If the enemy check generates ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ or ☒, this character may deal double their Cunning in damage (apply soak as normal).

#### CRAFTY VETERAN

Some fighters rely on studying their opponents and finding small weaknesses to take advantage of rather than raw power.

**Tier:** 3

**Activation:** Passive

**Ranked:** Yes

Select either the Brawl (Striking) or Brawl (Grappling) skill. Checks with that skill may use Cunning instead of the normal characteristic, though damage is calculated with Brawn as normal. This skill can be selected twice, each time applying to a different skill.

#### FANCY FOOTWORK

Good footwork can create unexpected angles for attacks.

**Tier:** 3

**Activation:** Active (Maneuver)

**Ranked:** No

Suffer 2 Strain and spend a maneuver to add ✨ to this character's next Melee or Brawl combat check, or Brawl (Grappling) check to grapple.

#### HEAVY HANDS

Some fighters have natural knock-out power in their hands that can put people down with ease.

**Tier:** 3

**Activation:** Passive

**Ranked:** Yes

When triggering the Knockdown quality from a Brawl (Striking) combat check, decrease how much ⚡ is necessary to trigger it by one ⚡ (Minimum ⚡). This talent can be taken up to three times, decreasing the ⚡ necessary to trigger Knockdown once each time.

#### JAB (IMPROVED)

Some fighters learn to throw a particularly stiff jab, capable of causing real damage.

**Tier:** 3

**Activation:** Active (Incidental)

**Ranked:** No

On a successful jab attack, may spend ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ or ☒ to have target also suffer wounds equal to your Brawn rating.

### LEG KICK

Some fighters can throw leg kicks that can temporarily cripple opponents by severely bruising the thigh muscles or damaging the knee.

**Tier:** 3

**Activation:** Active (Incidental)

**Ranked:** No

If this character scores a critical hit with a kick weapon, instead of rolling on the Critical Injury table, they may instead spend a Story Point to cause the target to lose one point of Agility (minimum 1) while in the standing position for the rest of the encounter. This counts as a Critical Injury with a severity of Average (◆◆), and can be healed like any other Critical Injury.

### SILENCED

Fighters can employ precision strikes to make a target incapable of speech for a brief period. While this won't stop a character from hitting a physical alarm, it can be crucial for stealth incursions.

**Tier:** 3

**Activation:** Active (Action)

**Ranked:** No

When making any Brawl attack, may upgrade the difficulty of the attack once. If the attack is a success, the target character is unable to make noise until after their next turn. This character may then spend ⚡ ⚡ to extend the effect to another enemy character within engaged range.

### TAKEDOWN DEFENSE (IMPROVED)

Many fighters learn to force their opponents to work extra hard for takedowns, often wearing them out until they abandon shooting for takedowns altogether.

**Tier:** 3

**Activation:** Passive

**Ranked:** No

When your character is the target of a Brawl (Grappling) combat check to use a takedown weapon, the attacking character suffers 1 strain, plus 1 additional strain per net ✕ (should the check fail).

### WILL TO FIGHT

Some fighters have an iron determination and never give up.

**Tier:** 3

**Activation:** Action (Incidental)

**Ranked:** No

When making a Resilience check, may spend a Story Point to add half of Willpower (rounding down) to Brawn for purposes of assembling the dice pool.

## TIER 4 TALENTS

### COMBINATION

Certain combinations of strikes are designed to create openings.

**Tier:** 4

**Activation:** Active (Action)

**Ranked:** Yes

This character may spend one Story Point to give their next Brawl (Striking) combat check the Linked 1 Special Quality. Retaking the talent increases the Linked rating gained when activating this talent by 1.

### IMPROVISED WEAPON MASTER (IMPROVED)

With training and creativity, fighters can use improvised weapons with devastating effect.

**Tier:** 4

**Activation:** Passive

**Ranked:** No

When wielding an improvised weapon, no longer suffer automatic ⚡ during attacks, and reduces their Crit Rating by 1 more. Further, improvised weapons gain the Defensive 1 and Disorient 1 weapon qualities.

### LEAPING ATTACK

A fighter can leap into an attack, changing the angle and increasing the power of the strike. This might include superman punches, flying knees, jump kicks, and even submissions like the flying arm bar.

**Tier:** 4

**Activation:** Active (Incidental)

**Ranked:** No

Once per encounter, suffer 2 strain to target an enemy within short range with any unarmed Brawl (Striking) weapon or a Brawl (Grappling) submission weapon your character possesses as if engaged. If successful, the attack gains Breach +1 and doubles your Brawn value for purposes of calculating damage dealt for that attack.

### POWER ATTACK

A fighter can plant their feet and load up on a single strike, expending a lot of energy for potentially devastating results, or squeeze with all their might when sinking in a submission.

**Tier:** 4

**Activation:** Active (Maneuver)

**Ranked:** No

Suffer 3 Strain to add Concussive 1 and Pierce equal to the character's Brawn to the next attack with a Brawl (Striking) weapon or a Brawl (Grappling) submission weapon.

### SENSE THE FINISH (IMPROVED)

Successful fighters have a “killer instinct,” pressing their attack when they know a fighter is close to finished.

**Tier:** 4

**Activation:** Active (Incidental)

**Ranked:** No

If, when learning how close an opponent is to exceeding their wound or strain threshold with the Sense the Finish talent, the opponent would go over their threshold by suffering 2 more wounds or strain (or fewer), this character may spend a Story Point to immediately make another attack against that target using the same dice pool as the previous attack.

### REBOUND ATTACK

Crafty fighters can learn to use their environment to their advantage. Wall kicks, rebounding off the ropes, or using the springiness of a cage or fence to aid in a takedown might increase the difficulty of landing the attack, but when they land clean, they can end fights.

**Tier:** 4

**Activation:** Active (Incidental)

**Ranked:** No

Add ✕ ✕ to the next Brawl (Grappling) check to use a takedown weapon or Brawl (Striking) combat check. If successful, add Concussive equal to half the character's Agility or Cunning (rounding down) to the attack.

### SPINNING ATTACK

A fighter can spin before performing an attack, altering the timing and increasing the power of an attack. Spinning kicks, backfists, and elbows are all explosive attacks that, if they land, often end fights. Spinning attacks are notoriously difficult to land.

**Tier:** 4

**Activation:** Active (Action)

**Ranked:** No

Make a Brawl (Grappling) combat check using a submission weapon or Brawl (Striking) combat check, and upgrade the difficulty twice. If successful, add Vicious equal to the character's Agility to the attack, and reduce the attacks crit rating by 1 (to a minimum of 1).

### TAKEDOWN DEFENSE (SUPREME)

Opponents shooting in for takedowns are vulnerable to well-timed knees and uppercuts.

**Tier:** 4

**Activation:** Active (Incidental, Out of Turn)

## TALENTS TO AVOID OR MODIFY

The following talents are from other GENESYS Compatible games. These talents are designed to help balance unarmed combat characters with ranged and melee combat in those settings. When playing in a setting focused on unarmed combat, these talents should be avoided, or at the very least, tweaked for balance. However, they are very useful for giving martial arts characters a fighting chance against ranged combat opponents, and as such work better in more mixed settings.

**Knockout Punch:** (SOTB 45) Consider adding a cost of either 3 strain or 1 Story Point to activate the Stun Quality.

**Street Fighter:** (SOTB 45) Consider adding a cost of either 3 strain or 1 Story Point to activate the Stun Quality.

**Takedown:** (SOTB 51) This is largely inferior to the takedown unarmed weapon presented here, but can be allowed.

**Painful Blow:** (ROT 84) This ability is very powerful weighed against the strain spending abilities presented here. Consider requiring a 🎲 or Story Point to activate this ability.

**Ranked:** No

When your character is the target of failed Brawl (Grappling) check to use a takedown weapon, you may spend 🎲 or 🎲 🎲 🎲 from the attacker's check to make them suffer wounds equal to your character's Brawn.

## TIER 5 TALENTS

### IMPROVISED WEAPON MASTER (SUPREME)

Masters of improvised weapons find all sorts of creative uses for mundane objects.

**Tier:** 5

**Activation:** Passive

**Ranked:** No

Once per encounter, may spend a Story Point to add any single weapon quality (or add +1 rank to any existing weapon quality) to an improvised weapon until the start of their next at the GM's discretion.



# CHAPTER 3: NEW RULES

In the GENESYS Core Rulebook unarmed combat is handled entirely with Brawl checks and the existing combat rules. While this is sufficient in settings where a variety of weaponry is available, it might be lacking in variety and strategy when every combat encounter entails barehanded fighting. The following rules add enough

depth, nuance, and strategy to unarmed combat that unarmed combat encounters shouldn't feel overly repetitive. In addition to supplemental dice results tables, this section has new rules for grappling, getting knocked down and knocked out, and accounting for differences in fighter size.

## NEW RULES: SPENDING DICE RESULTS

The following charts supplement existing suggestions for spending dice results in the GENESYS Core Rulebook and, of course, those narrative results created by the GM and players at the table. The results below are






















highly specific to unarmed combat, which is to say, Brawl (Grappling) and Brawl (Striking) checks, but GMs may use them with any check that seems appropriate.

## NEW RULES: UNARMED WEAPONS

While most GENESYS games streamline all unarmed attacks into a single basic unarmed attack (GENESYS Core Rulebook, page 109), campaigns focused on unarmed combat require more diversity in unarmed attacks to increase strategy and depth. Unarmed weapons allow players to have separate weapon stats for strikes like punches and kicks, or grappling weapons like takedowns or chokes.

Unlike Brawl weapons, these new unarmed weapons represent a better punching, kicking, or grappling attack technique, not a pair of brass knuckles. Fittingly, players acquire these unarmed weapons by spending XP instead of standard currency like other weapons. This represents how these new unarmed combat techniques are learned and trained, rather than bought. These weapons can be purchased with XP at character creation if desired,

**TABLE 3—1: SPENDING , , , AND  IN UNARMED COMBAT**

COST	RESULT OPTION
 	<b>Feed Off The Crowd:</b> Recover 3 Strain
  	<b>Walked Right Into It:</b> The target of this character's attack walked right into it, add +2 damage to a successful attack.
	<b>Seizing Initiative:</b> In a one-on-one fight, if this character was acting second, they act first in the next combat round.
 	<b>Smiling Opponent:</b> The target smiles despite the character's best efforts, upgrade the difficulty of the character's next attack against this target once.
  	<b>Saved by the Ref:</b> A third party impedes the action long enough for the target to recover 3 strain or wounds at the GM's discretion.
	<b>Injured Limb:</b> A fighter stepped or landed a strike at an odd angle and injured a hand, elbow, knee, or ankle. Treat as a Hard (    ) Critical Injury that narratively affects one limb.
 	<b>Illegal Blow:</b> During a refereed match, the character makes an illegal attack, be it an eye gouge, groin kick, or something else. The ref calls a time-out, giving the target time to make an immediate <b>Simple (-)</b> Resilience check to recover wounds and strain. They can heal an Easy (  ) Critical Hit if they generate  , or an Average (  ) Critical Hit if they generate  .

or at any time afterward. Of course, GMs may require training montages, quests, or encounters with trainers, coaches, or instructors before allowing PCs to purchase new unarmed weapons.

At the GM's discretion, most unarmed weapons can pair with the Power Strike, Leaping Attack, Rebound Attack, and Spinning Attack talents, among others presented earlier in this chapter. This enables players a great

degree of freedom in creating big moments during a fight, or in simulating a variety of unarmed techniques players might see used in combat sports or in fight choreography. Further, these unarmed weapons can be upgraded into Signature Weapons (see page 64). However, GMs should be wary of applying talents from other products to combine with these new unarmed weapons to prevent overpowered talent combinations.

## NEW RULES: GRAPPLING

**G**rappling involves any type of fighting where one attempts to physically control the posture of another character. Grappling is epitomized by the combat sports of wrestling, judo, and Jujitsu, among many more. It is an intricate sport filled with many positions, and just as many maneuvers to advance and defend those positions, as well as various submission holds, chokes, and pinning maneuvers. While some knowledge of these positions, what they are called, and how they work can add fun and immersive details to Brawl (Grappling checks), it is hardly a pre-requisite to using this supplement (see the sidebar on page 24 for a primer on grappling terminology).

For the purposes of combat encounters, we abstract grappling into three primary positions: **Neutral Position**, **Advantageous Position**, and **Superior Position**. When two characters first get within engaged range, they are in a neutral position (unless positive or negative dice results let one character gain an Advanced or Superior position).

From there, a character may make an **opposed Brawl (Grappling) check** as an action (or perhaps use a grappling weapon such as a takedown or submission) to begin a grapple and improve their position. A successful

### GRAPPLING GLOSSARY

Grappling is a complex sport with its own language. The following are some basic terms used in grappling to help flavor and gain a deeper understanding of Brawl (Grappling) checks.

**Takedown:** A takedown is a trip, throw, or tackle that unbalances a target and moves them from a standing to a prone position. The most popular takedowns are judo-inspired hip tosses and trips, and freestyle wrestling single and double-leg takedowns.

**Choke Submission:** Choke submissions pinch the carotid artery located on the side of the neck to stop blood-flow to the brain. Once applied correctly, targets can lose consciousness in a matter of seconds. The most popular chokes include the rear-naked choke (also known as the sleeper hold in pro wrestling), the arm triangle, leg triangle, and guillotine choke.

**Joint Submission:** The joint submission applies pressure to a joint or the spine in a way that causes pain and threatens to break a bone, snap ligaments, or dislocate a socket joint. Popular joint submissions include the arm bar, heel hook, kimura, and knee bar.

**Tap:** In combat sports, when a competitor is caught in a choke or joint submission, they often surrender

instead of risking long-term injury. This surrender often takes the form of tapping the opponent three times in rapid succession, also known as tapping, or tapping out.






















**Escape:** In grappling, an escape is when a person in a bad position recovers to a more neutral position or exits the grapple completely.

**Reverse:** In grappling, a reverse is when a character in a bad position is able to trade places with their opponent, gaining an advantageous or even superior position.











**Guard:** The guard is a catch-all term for the best defensive position of the legs and arms while a character is on their back during a grapple. This generally includes using the hands to control the opponent's head and/or arms, and keeping the legs around the opponent's waist (full guard). This prevents opponents from sitting up and striking, or easily moving to an even more dominant position.

**Pass:** Passing is what a character on top in a grapple does when they improve their position, often moving from being in an opponent's full guard to the half guard, or even side control or full mount positions.

**TABLE 3–2: SPENDING , , , AND  DURING GRAPPLING CHECKS**

COST	RESULT OPTION
<b>WHILE ESCAPING</b>	
	<b>Tight Guard:</b> Add +1 Melee Defense to resist enemy Brawl checks (and Brawl checks to grapple) until your next turn.
 	<b>Regain Feet:</b> This character and the target move back to their feet, but remain engaged and grappling.
   or 	<b>Reverse:</b> This character now has the Advantageous Position.
<b>WHILE GAINING THE ADVANTAGE</b>	
	<b>Isolated Limb:</b> Remove 1 point of Melee Defense from the target until their next turn.
  or 	<b>Pinned:</b> The target is ensnared for 2 turns.
   or 	<b>Quick Guard Pass:</b> This character gains the Superior Position
<b>SPENDING  AND  DURING GRAPPLE CHECKS</b>	
  or 	<b>Active Guard:</b> The target can downgrade the difficulty of their next Escape, Gain the Advantage, or Grappling combat check once.
	<b>Big Opening:</b> After the attempt resolves, the target can escape to a neutral position, or the acting character suffers wounds equal to the target's Brawn rating.

**TABLE 3–3: SPENDING , , , AND  DURING TAKEDOWN ATTEMPTS**

COST	RESULT OPTION
	<b>Throw:</b> The character initiating the takedown can remain on their feet.
 	<b>Rough Landing:</b> If this attack triggers a critical hit, add Vicious +2 to the result.
  	<b>Advantageous Position:</b> The character making the attack gains the Advantageous Position after resolving the attack.
	<b>Superior Position:</b> The character making the attack gains the Superior Position after resolving the attack.
	<b>Reverse Takedown:</b> The target of this attack ends up in an Advantageous Position at the end of the attack.
 	<b>Inopportune Landing:</b> The target of this takedown attempt may suffer 3 strain to make a Submission attack against this character as an out-of-turn incidental after damage is calculated and all other effects of the takedown are resolved.

**opposed Brawl (Grappling) check** improves a character's position from Neutral to Advantageous, or Advantageous to Superior depending on the results (see **Table 3–3**). Subsequent checks can improve this position.

Conversely, if your character is the victim of a grapple, and an opponent already has an Advantageous or Superior position, you may make an **opposed Brawl (Grappling) check** to escape. Success at an **opposed Brawl (Grappling) check** to escape reduces a Superior Position to an Advantageous one, or an Advantageous Position to a Neutral one. It can also move from a Neutral Position to a total escape, where the character has disengaged from the opponent entirely and have other effects (see **Table 3–3**).

While in an **Advantageous Position**, a character adds   to all Brawl checks against that target.

While in a **Superior Position**, a character upgrades the difficulty of all incoming Brawl checks coming from that target once, and upgrade the ability of all Brawl checks made against that target once.

## ATTACKING GRAPPLERS



While grappling is relatively simple when it's only between two fighters, things can get more complex when additional enemies or allies join the fray. The chief mechanic for handling multiple enemies and allies striking or grappling at engaged range is handled by the Flanking Rules (page 27).

However, there are ranged combatants to consider as well. If two characters are engaged, making an attack with a ranged weapon at an engaged target upgrades the difficulty of the attack once (see **GENESYS Core Rulebook**, page 107). If two characters are grappling, firing a ranged weapon at a grappling target upgrades the difficulty of the



attack twice instead. If ☒ is generated during the attack, the attack hits an ally (this might be in addition or instead of the actual target, depending on the results of the check). This may be further impacted by the rules for attacking a prone target or attacking while prone (GENESYS Core Rulebook, page 108).

## GRAPPLING WEAPONS

Grappling weapons, such as garrotes or chains (as opposed to unarmed grappling weapons, like Takedowns and submissions), can be used during Grapples. If a character is using a Grappling weapon. The character can choose to attack with their grappling weapon as normal, gaining all the benefits of their Advantageous or Superior position (as they would with any other melee weapon at the GM's discretion). Alternatively, characters may simply use the grappling weapon as a tool to help them in their Grappling checks, adding a  or  equipment bonus to Brawl (Grappling) checks as the GMs sees fit.

## IMPROVE POSITION

Once engaged with an opponent in combat, a character can make an **opposed Brawl (Grappling) check** to get into an advantageous position. While standing, this might include grabbing the back of an opponent's head, or grabbing their arms or legs to limit their offense. It might also set up strikes, a throw, or a takedown. While on the ground, this generally means staying in the top position (but not necessarily), and setting up strikes, a choke, or submissions.

If a character already has an Advantageous Position, they might make an Improve Position action again to attempt to gain a Superior Position.

## ESCAPE

The Brawl (Grappling) skill can also be used to escape a bad position, or be used instead of Athletics to resist the effects of Ensnare at the GM's discretion. Make an **opposed Brawl (Grappling) check** to escape a submission, restraining hold, or an enemy's Advantageous or

## GRAPPLING STRATEGY

Grapplers have a variety of strategies available to them, but the most basic grappling strategy during a fight comes in three steps. The goal is to eventually land a submission attack (be it a choke or a joint submission). These submissions are very difficult to land successfully, and so most grapplers pursue a tried and true path to success.

First, the grappler must move the fight to the ground. This is most often done with a Brawl (Grappling) Takedown weapon. Once on the ground, step two is to secure and improve your position to either Advantageous or Superior. The benefits of such a position make landing a submission much more likely. Finally, once a better position is secured, a grappler can use a submission weapon, likely ending the fight.

Grappling is an excellent approach for one-on-one fights, minimizing incoming damage from punches while setting up fight-ending submissions. However, the style can be a liability when facing groups. A grappler is often exposed to an opponent's allies while on the ground. As such, dedicated grapplers usually need allies of their own or a good strategy for isolating opponents. Skilled grapplers find ways to skip a few steps and land submissions without spending as much time setting them up.

Superior position, or escape a grapple altogether. A successful check reduces an opponent's position one step from Superior to Advantageous, Advantageous to Neutral, or Neutral to disengaged.


## NEW RULES: FLANKING

When more than two characters are participating in a fight at engaged range, unarmed combat can get more complicated. In such situations, a flank occurs. Flanked targets are at a major disadvantage in unarmed combat. As you can imagine, such characters must address potential incoming attacks from two or more different directions.




## NEW RULES: FIGHTER SIZE

In unarmed combat, even a small size advantage can be significant, which is why most combat sports separate fighters into weight classes. Generally, most characters are size Silhouette 1, which is to say, there are generally zero size modifiers during unarmed combat. While this isn't crucial in most campaigns, in campaigns where the focus is exclusive to hand-to-hand combat, GMs might desire a way to reflect size advantages.

Being larger in a fight comes with a number of benefits. Reach is a major advantage in striking, and even the minor change in vertical angle between mismatched striking opponents can have a huge impact on punching power. In grappling, having more mass overall provides more leverage and control.

During a fight where a GM determines size plays a role, have the two combatants compare heights. If they are within 4 inches (10 CM), there is no mechanical benefit. Otherwise, the larger fighter gains  for every four inches (10 CM) of height to Brawl (Striking) combat checks against that target. This effect is cumulative, so

When making a Brawl (Grappling), Brawl (Striking), or any melee combat check against an engaged target, upgrade the ability of the check once for every ally also engaged with that target (to a maximum of twice).

an eight-inch height difference would add   instead, and so on. The shorter of the two characters adds  to Brawl (Grappling) checks for every four inches of height difference.

During character creation, players should decide what size their fighter is. Because there is a mechanical benefit to being larger, every four inches above “neutral” costs 10 XP. For the purposes of the larger-than-life fighters in this supplement, “neutral” is considered 5’8” (1.72 meters). Every 4 inches shorter than neutral provides a +10 starting XP benefit to a character.

If an opponent is using a melee weapon, they might be treated as one or two additional size increments larger than normal (or even three in the case of a longer weapon like a spear) at the GM's discretion (see the new **Reach Weapon Quality**, page 31).



# SETTINGS

Now that we've covered the major rules additions to support characters that depend on unarmed combat, it's time to talk about the settings where characters can thrive. The following section contains five chapters of setting information. Each setting has unique unarmed weapons, armor, and equipment. They also explore important themes or tropes, similar to how settings are laid out in the **GENESYS** Core Rulebook.

The first is what we're calling a "setting layer", which means its information meant to be overlaid on any setting using the **GENESYS** Core Rulebook. Similar to a Tone, but without as many rules, a setting layer can expand any existing **GENESYS** setting (including those you create on your own!) to support unarmed characters with weapons, armor, equipment, tropes, and themes for you to incorporate into adventures.

The four settings beyond that create heightened worlds that spotlight unarmed combatants, letting heroes change their fate, or that of their city, or even their entire nation with a well-placed punch. The settings are flexible, and each can support a variety of different kinds of stories. Each might feel gritty and very much a part of the real world or its history, or just as easily incorporate fantastical displays of magic and mysticism, or somewhere in-between.

## WHAT'S IN THIS PART OF THE BOOK?

Here is what you'll find in this part of the book:

- **Chapter 4—Unarmed Setting Layer:** While not a full setting, the setting layer modifies an existing **GENESYS** setting. Use this if only one or two players in your party are interested in unarmed combat.
- **Chapter 5—The Kung-Fu Setting:** Ancient China, or perhaps some fictional stand-in, is home to wandering martial arts heroes that defend the down-trodden. This setting can run as purely historical setting or add fantasy elements.
- **Chapter 6—The Pro Wrestler Setting:** A world of colorful characters and over-the-top dramatics, Pro Wrestling is a setting where winning over the crowd is just as important as beating your opponent.
- **Chapter 7—The Tournament Setting:** The world of professional fight sports and underground blood sport can include boxing, grappling, mixed martial arts, or no-holds barred tournaments.
- **Chapter 8—The Street Brawler Setting:** Sometimes cities fail, overrun with corruption and crime. The street brawler setting supports contemporary martial arts tales combating inner city crime.



# CHAPTER 4: UNARMED COMBAT SETTING LAYER

This supplement covers a variety of unarmed combat genre settings popularized by various movies and video games. It is built for telling stories about the lone hero (and of course a few friends!), wandering in search of justice, enlightenment, or a true challenge to their skills. They might seek matches with experienced fighters that can teach them a new technique, or throw themselves against hordes of street-toughs to clean up a corrupt town.

This supplement can also showcase stories about professional fighters, be it famous prize fighters flying across the planet to participate in big-money bouts or back-alley street fighters competing in seedy underground tournaments. These tournaments might mimic the high-drama worlds of mixed martial arts, professional boxing, or even professional wrestling and similar entertainment sports ventures.

This chapter details the basics of unarmed combat story tropes, and provides the basic weapons, armor, and equipment common to most every unarmed combat-focused campaign. When using one of the other settings in this

book, consider this setting as a sort of base layer the other settings add to.

## WHAT IS A SETTING LAYER?

Not every campaign setting is built around martial arts. In some cases, it is only one or two members of a party running characters dedicated to mastering unarmed combat. This setting might be **REALMS OF TERRINOTH**, **SHADOW OF THE BEANSTALK**, or a setting of your own creation. In these cases, the unarmed setting layer exists to tweak the existing setting to create space for moments and subplots that cater toward those specific members of your game.

The Unarmed setting layer is also meant to serve as a base layer for the other settings presented in this supplement to provide some basic support and guidance. If you plan to use the tournament setting, for example, you would want to include the content provided here.

## UNARMED COMBAT TROPES

Unarmed combat settings cover a lot of ground within video games, movies, sports, and entertainment, each replete with their own themes and tropes. What makes a character compatible with this supplement is a near-exclusive focus on unarmed combat as a character concept. While some characters, particularly minions, might use weaponry from time to time, the superior skill of the unarmed hero is what ultimately proves strongest.

Unarmed combat characters can exist in any number of historical periods, the modern day, or even a highly fictional cosmic future or inter-dimensional nexus. The key element these specific sub-settings have in common is a focus on unarmed combat as the primary means of resolving problems and executing character arcs. The other factor is that a good number of these fights, particularly climatic character-arc resolving ones, happen one-on-one. The rest is entirely variable. That said, there are a few universal themes and tropes.

## FIGHTING STYLES

There is a proud history of tribalism amongst styles of unarmed combat. Wrestlers think their style is more effective than any striking style, and judo fighters believe their style superior to Roman-Greco wrestlers. tae kwon do fighters think they have better kicks than Savate fighters, it goes on. There are also the infamous rivalries between the many “animal schools” of kung-fu that constantly compete in Hong Kong cinema’s classic tales of ancient China.

While this supplement avoids getting too bogged down in specifics and minutiae of mechanically representing each fighting school or style, this choice is a critical element of a character’s background. Characters should work with GMs to select an existing style or create their own, along with some notes about what kind of combat that style favors to aid in skill and talent selection. There should also be some discussion about who

taught the PC how to fight? Was it at a local dojo, or was it deep in the woods where the final member of an ancient line of masters passed down his school's teachings to the PC? Perhaps the character's parents taught them. A detailed style background helps a GM to create story around that PC, and helps to develop some supporting characters.

Another thing to consider is what the style's goal is. Does the style seek to knock an enemy unconscious, break their bones, or only provide self-defense to create opportunities to escape an attacker? Maybe the style seeks to immobilize an opponent, or convince them to surrender. Once a PC understands the primary goal of their fighting style, it becomes easier to select which skills and talents best represent it.

## DUELS

It is common for heroes to focus on one opponent in particular. This enemy might have betrayed the hero's master, murdered or kidnapped someone they hold dear, or otherwise wronged the hero in some unforgivable way. The object of the hero's revenge might be a fellow entrant or organizer of a tournament, or simply a local criminal, surrounded by hordes of henchmen. A number of early arcade "beat 'em ups" used revenge or rescue as a motivator, with heroes in search of revenge or a kidnapped loved one with nothing but their fists and perhaps some improvised weapons. Such heroes waded through scores of underlings before taking on a more dangerous opponent.

# UNARMED COMBAT GEAR

While by its very nature, a setting focused on unarmed combat should not feel equipment-heavy, a few selections are presented, including a suite of new unarmed "weapons". GMs might allow other weapons, equipment, armor, and vehicles based on the specific time-frame at their discretion. Brawl weapons in particular are well-suited to these settings.

## UNARMED WEAPONS

While all characters begin play with the basic unarmed attack (*GENESYS* Core Rulebook page 109), for unarmed combat specialists, we've created a suite of new unarmed weapons to provide more options. Because these aren't store-bought items, but hard-trained techniques, they are purchased with XP instead of some form of currency. Of course, GMs might require a character to pay an instructor or undergo a training encounter (see page 93) in order to spend the XP.

Crafting an epic adversary to help carry the weight of a campaign in unarmed combat settings is paramount. Such characters should often be Nemesis adversaries, though Rivals can work in some situations. Take time to connect the archenemy to the backgrounds of one or more of the PCs, to ensure the characters feel emotionally motivated to seek resolution. One way to tackle this is to have villains affect supporting characters in some negative way, perhaps during a training encounter.

## SEVERELY OUTNUMBERED

While unarmed combat often focuses on one-on-one combat, there is a long history of moments where heroes battle several or even dozens or hundreds of adversaries, wading through them as a warm up to a larger fight against a more powerful foe. These sorts of battles can show just how skilled the heroes are, or soften heroes up before fighting an arch-rival. This sort of trope is particularly common in Hong Kong cinema and side-scrolling arcade "brawler" video games of the 1980s and 1990s.

To represent such a fight, minion groups can often do the trick. If showcasing the giant gap between low-rent muscle and the heroes is a major theme of the campaign, GMs might even consider adopting "No Mere Mortal" rules from *GENESYS* Core Rulebook page 251 to ensure PC survivability against even enormous groups of minions. These rules also enable a GM to use fewer, but larger minion groups without over-challenging PCs, which speeds up the pace of combat.

For some campaigns, starting all characters with the basic suite of unarmed weapons presented in **Tables 4-1** and **4-2** might be appropriate. In other cases, consider letting players select two striking weapons for every rank of the Brawl (Striking) skill they purchase at character creation, and one grappling weapon for every rank of Brawl (Grappling) they purchase at character creation. Other campaigns might work best requiring a training encounter every time they purchase a new technique.

These weapons otherwise function as unarmed attacks, and can combine with a variety of talents that also modify unarmed attacks. However, GMs should be careful to look over the availability of talents beforehand, and discuss character concepts with their players. There are some talents in other *GENESYS* products that seek to put unarmed combatants on par with melee weapon specialists and ranged combatants via low tier talents. Such talents can be overpowered in settings where the entire campaign focuses on unarmed combat.

**TABLE 4–1: UNARMED WEAPONS**

NAME	SKILL	DAM	CRIT	RANGE	ENCUM	HP	XP	RARITY	SPECIAL
<b>STRIKING WEAPONS</b>									
Elbow	Brawl (Striking)	-1	3	Engaged	N/A	N/A	5	N/A	Knockdown, Pierce 1, Reach -1, Vicious 2
Head-butt	Brawl (Striking)	-1	5	Engaged	N/A	N/A	0	N/A	Concussive 1, Knockdown, Reach -2
Kick	Brawl (Striking)	+2	3	Engaged	N/A	N/A	15	N/A	Exhausting 1, Inaccurate 2, Knockdown, Pierce 3, Reach 1
Knee	Brawl (Striking)	+1	4	Engaged	N/A	N/A	5	N/A	Disorient 2, Knockdown, Pierce 2
Punch	Brawl (Striking)	+1	4	Engaged	N/A	N/A	10	N/A	Accurate 2, Knockdown
Unarmed Attack	Brawl	+0	5	Engaged	N/A	N/A	0	N/A	Knockdown
<b>GRAPPLING WEAPONS</b>									
Choke Submission	Brawl (Grappling)	+3	4	Engaged	N/A	N/A	15	N/A	Ensnares 2, Exhausting 3, Inaccurate 3, Pierce 3, Prepare 2, Stun Damage
Joint Submission	Brawl (Grappling)	-2	1	Engaged	N/A	N/A	15	N/A	Ensnares 2, Exhausting 1, Inaccurate 3, Pierce 5, Prepare 2, Vicious 1
Takedown	Brawl (Grappling)	+1	3	Engaged	N/A	N/A	10	N/A	Disorient 2, Ensnares 1, Exhausting 2, Prepare 1
Unarmed Attack	Brawl	+0	5	Engaged	N/A	N/A	0	N/A	Knockdown

### WIELDING UNARMED WEAPONS

Some item qualities (such as Defensive and Reach) provide passive bonuses gained from wielding a weapon. While it is easy to determine if a character is wielding a melee or ranged weapon (if it is in their hands, they are wielding it), with unarmed weapons it becomes less clear.

As a rule, once a character purchases an unarmed weapon, it is considered wielded so long as the character is not restrained or immobilized or otherwise restricted in their movements. However, there are two caveats. First, item qualities do not stack. Buying two unarmed weapons with the Defensive 1 quality do not grant Defensive 2.

Further, if you make an unarmed attack, you may only benefit from the passive item qualities of the last unarmed weapon used until the start of your next turn. So if you elbow an enemy, you cannot benefit from the Reach +1 provided by the kick unarmed weapon.

### NEW WEAPON QUALITY: EXHAUSTING

Some weapons require a great deal of energy to deploy. Examples include controlling large machine guns in auto-fire mode, using particularly heavy melee weapons, and especially certain unarmed attacks. An exhausting weapon is one that can drain its user of stamina over time. Whenever an attack is made with an exhausting weapon, that character suffers a number of strain equal to the exhausting rating.

### NEW WEAPON QUALITY: REACH

Most melee weapons and even kicks allow a character to strike other characters much further away than simple punches might. Whenever an attack is made with a Reach weapon, the character making the attack is considered to be a number of size increments larger than normal equal to the weapon's reach rating (see **New Rules: Fighter Size**, page 27). A negative Reach rating means the character is considered that many increments smaller.



## ELBOW

Elbows are predominantly a close-in weapon most useful while grappling or tying up an opponent, targeting the head. The odd angle of the elbow strike enables it to slice through an opponent's guard more easily than hand strikes. While elbows that land flush can deal a lot of damage, grazing elbows are known to create cuts on the head that bleed profusely.

Elbow attacks ignore one point of Melee Defense, unless an opponent is wearing a fully enclosed helmet.

## HEAD-BUTT

A dangerous strike, the head-butt often causes as much damage to a fighter as it does their target. Head-butts are often used to escape when an enemy restrains a fighter's arms and legs. If a head-butt attempt generates ☯ ☯ ☯ or ☯, the character making the attack is staggered for two rounds, regardless of if the attack triggered the Concussive quality or not.

At the GM's discretion, characters can perform head-butts even if they are bound, immobilized, or suffering from other conditions or situations where they cannot reasonably perform other unarmed attacks.

## KICK

By far the most powerful weapon in the striker's arsenal, kicks are difficult to land cleanly, but have the potential to deal a lot of damage, a fact amplified by spinning or leaping kick attacks. Still, it takes a great deal of skill to throw kicks without telegraphing them to opponents, and great flexibility and dexterity to throw kicks with power and accuracy. It often takes years of training to throw effective kicks without risking broken bones in the shin, foot, or ankle.

## KNEE

Knees are a great weapon to throw against opponents while grappling, though flying knees can knock opponents out with a single strike. They are effective to the body, head, and legs, especially when in a standing grapple where the fighter throwing knees can control their opponent's head.

If you have an advantageous position in a grapple (no matter if you're standing or on the ground), reduce the crit rating of knee attacks by 1 (minimum 1). Reduce the crit rating twice if you have a superior position (minimum crit rating 1).

## PUNCH

Punches are versatile strikes with the fist that can come from a variety of angles, and can generate sufficient power to knock an opponent unconscious, particularly when thrown in combinations. While boxing is generally limited to jabs, crosses, hooks, and uppercuts, other martial arts add hammer-fists, palm strikes, back-fists, and more.

## UNARMED ATTACK

The standard unarmed attack can narratively represent all manner of unarmed attacks, including those on **Table 4-1**. Every character begins with this attack. However, the character using this attack has incomplete training, and their punches, kicks, knees, and elbows use inefficient technique, dealing less damage than other, trained fighters.

## CHOKE SUBMISSION

Choke submissions, when successful, are fight finishers, but they are very difficult to perform. Most fighters need a dominant grappling position before they can effectively choke an opponent. Chokes work by putting pressure on the carotid artery, cutting off blood flow to the brain and knocking out their opponent in seconds once locked in.



Chokes include collar chokes, arm triangles, leg triangles, guillotines, prayer chokes, and perhaps the most effective—the rear naked choke. Most chokes are held only until an opponent surrenders or loses consciousness (exceeds their Strain Threshold). However, a submission artist is capable of holding the choke until brain death occurs.

If a choke submission is successful, it downgrades the difficulty of the next choke submission attack against the same target once, unless the target successfully escapes. If making a choke attack against a target that is already incapacitated, reduce the choke submission's Crit Rating by 1, to a minimum of 1, for each successive attack against an incapacitated target.

### JOINT SUBMISSION

Joint submissions include a variety of techniques, many taken from judo and jujitsu, attacking joints. These submissions aim to bend joints in directions they are not designed to bend, and in a way where the attacker has a strength advantage (using the strength of the hips to attack an elbow in an arm-bar submission, for example). These submissions slowly exert pressure until a bone breaks or ligament pops, or the pain forces an opponent to surrender.

If a joint submission is successful, it deals damage as normal, and that character is considered to have a superior grappling position (see page 24). Should the attack deal a critical hit, roll as normal on the Critical Injury Result table (**Table 6–10: GENESYS Core Rulebook**). After looking at the result, the attacker may choose to inflict the Critical Injury, or withhold dealing the Critical Injury and write down the result and wait until the next turn. This may give their opponent an opportunity to escape. However, if the opponent fails to escape, when it is the attacker's turn, they may again make the same attack. If successful, and the attack triggers a Critical Hit, they may add their previous result to the new roll, to a maximum Critical Injury Result of 130.

At the GM's discretion, particularly during fights taking place in a tournament setting, the defender against a submission may have to make a **Resilience or Discipline check** to resist surrendering to a successful joint submission attack, especially if the attacker has rolled, but not yet used a Critical Injury Result. The difficulty of such a check should be equal to the current Critical Injury Result difficulty.

### TAPPING OUT

In combat sports, when it becomes clear a character is trapped in a submission, especially a joint submission, most fighters surrender rather than risk joint damage. As such, fighters can tap as an out-of-turn incidental to signal an end to the fight. Of course, not all fighters let go of a submission just because a character tapped. While looked down upon, some fighters misunderstand a bad tap, or have a real desire to injure their opponent. Not releasing a hold after a tap in combat sports might result in a disqualification.

Unfortunately, tapping is not a guarantee of avoiding damage, even if the opponent wants to obey the rules. Sometimes a fighter tries tapping when it's just too late. If a character wants to tap after their opponent has rolled a combat check with a submission weapon, but before damage is applied or critical hits are rolled, they must succeed at an **Average (◆◆) Coordination check** to successfully tap before damage is dealt.

### TAKEDOWN

The takedown is a way for one fighter to move a fight from the standing position down to the ground. There are all sorts of takedowns. There are single and double leg takedowns, where a fighter grabs one or both a fighter's legs and tackles their opponent to the ground. There are a number of trips and hip tosses that come primarily from judo. And there are less orthodox joint locks and shoulder throws as well, not to mention a good, old-fashioned body tackle.

If a takedown attack is successful, it automatically activates the Ensnare 1 weapon quality without spending any **▲**. Further, if the attacker does not have the **▲** necessary to activate the Knockdown weapon quality, they may delay dealing damage by one round, and bank any excess **▲** for their next attempt. On their next turn, assuming the target hasn't successfully escaped the grapple (see page 26), the attacker may make another takedown attempt. After tabulating the check results, if the attack is a success, they may choose to add the banked **▲** to activate the Knockdown weapon quality, or bank more **▲**. If the Knockdown weapon quality is activated, then damage is calculated from the results of the most recent check.



**TABLE 4–2: UNARMED ARMOR**

TYPE	DEFENSE	SOAK	ENCUMBRANCE	PRICE	RARITY
Gi	1	+0	0	100	3
Taped Up	0	+0	1	75	3

## UNARMED ARMOR

While wearing certain protective pads is discouraged in high-level competition, others (like gloves, cups, and such) are mandatory.

### Gi

The traditional Gi consists of a simple tunic and pants, cinched with a belt. While the design is similar to traditional Japanese kimonos, the Gi is cut to make sure the wearer can move without restriction. The durable, baggy material can alter the silhouette enough to make targeting strikes to the body or limbs tricky. A Gi can come in a variety of colors, some of which might provide concealment to the wearer (see **GENESYS** Core Rulebook page 110, Concealment) at the GM's discretion.

### TAPED UP

Fighters usually tape their hands, or wear fingerless MMA gloves over the taped hands when fighting. The tape prevents hand injuries, and wrappings can reinforce other troubled joints, often including taped ankles, knees, and elbows. Soft braces provide additional support.

While such measures provide almost zero combat protection, it does reduce the likelihood of injury. Triggering the Injured Limb result on **Table 3–1** (page 23) while wearing taped up requires ☒ ☒ instead of ☒. Some other unarmed weapons can trigger this same result via variable amounts of threat. In this case, add ☒ to the results necessary to trigger the result. Taping up limbs does nothing to defend against limb injuries created by joint submission attacks or incoming attacks.






## NEW GEAR

There is a host of training and recovery equipment available to fighters and those supporting them.

**TABLE 4–3: UNARMED GEAR**

ITEM	ENCUM	PRICE	RARITY
Rank Belt	0	50	3
Sports Drink	1	5	2
Training Dummy	10	300	5


### RANK BELT

Most martial arts denote a fighter’s skill and experience with a belt. These belts come in a variety of colors, and often, the darker the color, the greater the mastery. Wearing a respected belt of a higher rank than someone else can add  to social checks against that character at the GM’s discretion, particularly Coercion and Leadership checks.

### SPORTS DRINK

Chugging a sports drink can restore a fighter’s energy. Using the sports drink requires a maneuver to apply to oneself or to another willing engaged character. The target character immediately heals 3 strain. While a character can use this item up to three times in a day, it provides diminishing returns. A second drink heals 2 strain, a third heals 1. Additional applications have no mechanical effect.

### TRAINING DUMMY

A variety of heavy bags, training dummies, and traditional wooden dummies exist for training purposes. These items are often used in training scenes, and sometimes destroyed for dramatic effect. Having such a training device can add  to checks during training encounters at the GM’s discretion. This does not stack with the benefits of a training facility (see page 95).

## CHAPTER 5: THE KUNG-FU SETTING

The kung-fu genre is epitomized by films of the 1970s made in Hong Kong by Golden Harvest Studios and the Shaw Brothers. These action movies featured realistic (for the time) and gritty (again, for the era) fight scenes that were a departure from films of the day. Kung-fu movies produced several stars, including Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan, Sammo Hung, and Jet Li, among countless others.

The genre was known as “wuxia,” a word translating to martial (wu) and hero (xia), and focuses on the adventures of the youxia, which loosely translates to “wandering hero.” Youxia aspired to a code of chivalry, and heroes of the genre are often polite and fighting on behalf of the downtrodden. Their enemies are usually corrupt officials, evil crime lords, and those who have perverted deadly teachings. Wuxia and youxia are largely used interchangeably by some scholars as genres, though others draw a firmer line regarding the level of realism and tone. By some definitions, wuxia stories

### CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

If you yourself are not Chinese, and plan on playing in the Kung-Fu setting (particularly in a public venue or for an audience), be mindful that you are gaming in a setting that draws on another people’s real history and culture to provide a game setting. When incorporating cultural elements to a game, take a moment to ask if someone might find what you are doing hurtful or exploitative, particularly someone of the culture you’re referencing.

It is common for many GMs to adopt accents and mannerisms while speaking as NPCs, and players often do the same for their PCs. Take care that these depictions aren’t offensive to others. Avoid using broken English, and keep any affectations subtle. The Kung-Fu setting is meant to celebrate the genre, not ridicule or insult a people or their culture.

have more supernatural elements, though the heroic code of chivalry largely remains the same.

While many kung-fu stories take place in ancient China and Hong Kong during the Qing Dynasty (1636-1912) and earlier, just as many take place in more

contemporary, or even future eras and other lands. What binds them all together is the youxia character archetype, in the mold of the Ronin, Knight-Errant, or even “white hat” wandering gunslinger, and their fight to do what is right and protect the downtrodden. The other details of the setting are largely variable.

## TROPES

**D**espite the wide range of historical, modern day, and even science fiction and fantasy settings that can overlap with the Kung-Fu setting, there are a number universal of tropes to be aware of that bring a unique flavor to stories. The following list is by no means exhaustive, but provides a starting point for GMs to design kung-fu campaigns, adventures, and character arcs.

### CHINESE TRADITION

One key element of kung-fu stories, is that they focus on China and Hong Kong and their people. While this is hardly a requirement, it is important to recognize that kung-fu is a Chinese tradition, and is as much art form there as self-defense system. While characters who are not Chinese (or of Chinese descent) can certainly learn kung-fu, it's worth noting that whoever teaches them can likely trace a lineage of masters and students back to China, perhaps several decades or even centuries.

Because of this historical connection, kung-fu is inextricably linked to a variety of other Chinese cultural traditions. These include religious aspects of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism dogmas, including the shao-lin monks. It can also include iconic elements of Chinese folklore, like dragons, spirits, and the Chinese Zodiac. Even cultural items outside the fantastic, like drinking tea, eating with chopsticks, and clothing find their ways into kung-fu stories.

### WANDERING HERO

The youxia code of conduct defines many heroes of this setting. The youxia are an unofficial classification of vagabonds with strong senses of altruism and justice. While their level of martial skill varies, these wanderers cannot stand idly by while witnessing an unjust act, particularly such an act committed against the weak or the poor. They right wrongs, and help those in distress to the best of their ability, most often through the force of their kung-fu.

One of the earliest recorded codes of the youxia in history was written by Sima Qian (Also credited as Ssu-ma Ch'ien) in the first century BC. Loosely translated, he writes “To save people from distress and relieve people from want: is this not benevolence? Not to belie another's trust and not to break one's promises: is this not righteousness?” While the youxia rarely acted in accordance with the law or rules of social conduct, they are thought of as honest, unselfish, humble, and quick to offer help.





Youxia exist across China for thousands of years, up until the modern day. When Jackie Chan travels to Brooklyn for a wedding in one of his movies, and ends up brawling with a street gang in a grocery store, he is drawing on the tradition of the youxia. The most important factors in using the tradition of the youxia in your stories are that the heroes are visitors, travelers, or nomads, and then witness unjust or evil acts and feel compelled to step in to provide aid or deliver justice.

## TRADITIONAL FIGHTING STYLES

Characters in the Kung-Fu setting take special pride in their mastery of a martial style. While there are literally hundreds, if not thousands, of different martial arts styles from ancient China alone, traditional shaolin kung-fu (which is what many fans of the genre are most familiar with) stems from five primary animal styles: dragon, snake, tiger, leopard, and crane. From these, countless niche animal styles emerged or grew popular, including eagle claw, monkey, mantis, panther, and boar.

There are also a number of styles that aren't within the animal mimicry paradigm, including the great divide between the styles of Northern and Southern China, and other localized geographic styles named for the places they were developed. Family styles were also common, and many associated the success of their family's style of kung-fu with their reputation, making insults to a style very personal for a fighter. There are also styles developed by Buddhist, Taoist, and even Islamic monks in ancient China, each with their own unique philosophical or physical identities.

One of the more important things to remember about traditional styles is their rigidity. Most styles, once developed, place a lot of pride in their system as a whole. Masters are hesitant to incorporate new techniques into the official doctrine of a style, regardless of their effectiveness. This inflexible focus on a style's canon is often unfortunate for fighters without the ideal build to take full advantage of it. That said, traditional forms often include a broad range of techniques usable by many different body types, united by a common philosophical strategy to achieve victory.

## THE EVIL STUDENT

Masters teach kung-fu to any number of students over the course of their lives. Some of these students might leave and use their newfound martial prowess for selfish gain, or toward evil ends. Often such fallen students have amassed much wealth, or learned forbidden techniques. They might be too powerful for local law enforcement to stop, or simply fostered a community of corruption, paying off those who keep the peace. Masters often task subsequent students (perhaps the heroes!) with tracking down and bringing these evil students to justice.

The evil student makes for an excellent arch-nemesis for a player character, or even the entire party. They might be working for an even more powerful, shadowy figure, as well, but the evil student provides an immediate "buy-in" from players, providing motivation for their characters to engage in the adventure ahead of them, thanks to the connection to their own master. If this alone isn't enough, GMs might have the fallen student harm one of the PCs, or one of their beloved supporting characters.

## A DYING MASTER

Masters are often elderly, and in some stories, their passing makes room for the student to grow and fully come into their own as kung-fu masters and heroes. Of course, the dying master often has one final request—a great task for our hero to undertake. This might be setting right a master's one regret, or returning or securing a borrowed item or artifact. It might even mean destroying or hiding the master's secret teachings, for fear they could fall into the wrong hands if left in the open.

Of course, the master's death isn't always due to old age, some are victims of murder. Students of a murdered master have strong motivation to investigate and learn who killed their teacher (often called a Sifu). Once confirmed, the student is also the one who has to bring the killer to justice. The murdered master is often the victim of a former or rejected student (see the Evil Student trope), but could just as easily fall victim to a rival or crime lord threatened by the master and their students.

## IMPROVISED WEAPONS

Made incredibly popular by Hong Kong action star Jackie Chan, kung-fu masters can use their environment as a weapon. The kung-fu hero rarely carries a weapon, but sometimes must fight armed opponents. Even more common in stories set in the contemporary era, when carrying weapons is often illegal, improvised weapons include anything a fighter might pick up. Mundane objects like ladders, tightly rolled magazines, umbrellas, chairs, and more become objects to attack, parry, and help move a hero around a space.

## FORBIDDEN TECHNIQUE

One of the classic kung-fu tropes is the forbidden martial technique. This attack is so dangerous or corrupting, masters refuse to teach it. Alternately, perhaps the technique was lost to history, existing only on some scroll hidden in a lost dojo, mythical forbidden city, or at the bottom of a mystical lake. While on occasion a forbidden technique is seemingly learned in moments, it just as often takes long periods of study and training, worthy of a training encounter.



## USING FORBIDDEN TECHNIQUES

While individual games might vary on how prevalent they want forbidden techniques to see use, the standard recommendation is to treat them as once per encounter Tier 4 or Tier 5 talents that require expending a Story Point to activate. For more information on how to create talent balanced with such restrictions, reference the **GENESYS** Core Rulebook, pages 194-195.

Forbidden techniques can also involve dark powers from evil spirits or demons in more fantasy-friendly stories. For these abilities, consider making use of the magic rules found in the **GENESYS** Core Rulebook, pages 194-195 to represent a variety of forbidden technique effects. Also, consider the selection of sample forbidden techniques on page 87.

The most common forbidden techniques involve nerve strikes that cause paralysis or death, but the concept can express itself in any number of ways. There are stories about forbidden techniques that include mind control, soul devouring, possession, or accepting other supernatural powers from dark sources. In most unarmed combat stories, the forbidden technique is a vital component to defeat an arch-nemesis or otherwise fulfill a character's destiny.

## MYSTICISM

The final major trope of the traditional Kung-Fu setting is martial arts mysticism and spirituality. While Qi or Chi is probably the most common, several other traditions exist. Thematically this represents a hero's inner strength, or a greater power they can channel and call on to perform seemingly superhuman acts. Some campaigns might keep this theme at a realistic level, providing only a sense of serenity around that person. Others might take mysticism to extremes, with weaponized spiritual powers that can split continents.

Traditionally, kung-fu features monks, spiritual practitioners of kung-fu. Shaolin monks don iconic orange robes, and wear or carry prayer beads. These real-world monks are known for dedication to their chosen martial art, and great feats of physical strength, endurance, and agility. They tend to live quiet lives in temples, meditating and training in search of enlightenment.

The Magic system in the **GENESYS** Core Rulebook (page 210) is flexible enough to represent a variety of powers attributed to Chinese folklore, or powers derived from a fighter's Qi. In most cases, if you want to include Qi or some other form of magic, just add the appropriate Arcana (for sorcery), Divine (for Chi or Qi), or Primal (for darker, bestial powers, or dark/corrupted Qi) skill to the available skills list. Also, consider the Qi powers written as special talents in Chapter 8@@ of this supplement.

## EXAMPLE SETTING: KNIGHTS OF SHAOLIN

**T**he Qing Dynasty (1644-1912) is a time of great upheaval in China, filled with war, rebellion, and corruption, and never more so than during the rule of the Qianlong Emperor (1735-1796). It is this time when the people of China need heroes to protect them from bandits, corrupt officials, soldiers, and hunger. Only the youxia (wandering hero) gives them hope, that a stranger might come to town and end the injustices inflicted upon the people from all sides.

### GREAT CAMPAIGNS OF THE QIANLONG EMPEROR

From 1735 until the end of the century, the Qianlong Emperor (5th of the Qing Dynasty) launched a series of military campaigns from Peking (modern day Beijing) to consolidate control over his empire and expand it. Every day of his rule, his nation was at war, but he lived to be the oldest Emperor in the history of China, ceding his throne to his son when he turned 87. His wars

included suppressing rebellions organized by the Miao, the Mongols, the Taiwanese, and the Vietnamese. The Qianlong Emperor was ruthless, slaughtering all who opposed his rule. He committed the Genocide of the Dzungar people, and attempted to do the same to the Tibetans decades later.

While the Qianlong Emperor's wars soaked his hands in a blood that stains his line, they did bring a lasting peace, and a unified China. His Empire produced great cultural works, including the Siku Quanshu, which is the largest assembly of Chinese literature in history. Of course, the Qianlong Emperor had a personal hand in approving works to the collection, and erased many works from history in the process. His literary inquisitors charged many with sedition for speaking ill of the Qing Dynasty during this time, making it a perfect era for a heroic band of Youxia to adventure and lend help where they can.



## ROTTEN HEART

Beneath the veneer of military and cultural strength, The Qianlong Emperor's China is weak. Corruption runs rampant throughout the Empire. Farmers and honest citizens have a hard time telling the local magistrate from bandits, and often must pay off both just to survive. Rebellion is frequent, and the Emperor responds with overwhelming force to even the slightest rumor of insurrection. There are food shortages, too, thanks to the population tripling in size during this era, creating a desperation among some Chinese that drives them to crime, rebellion, or despair.

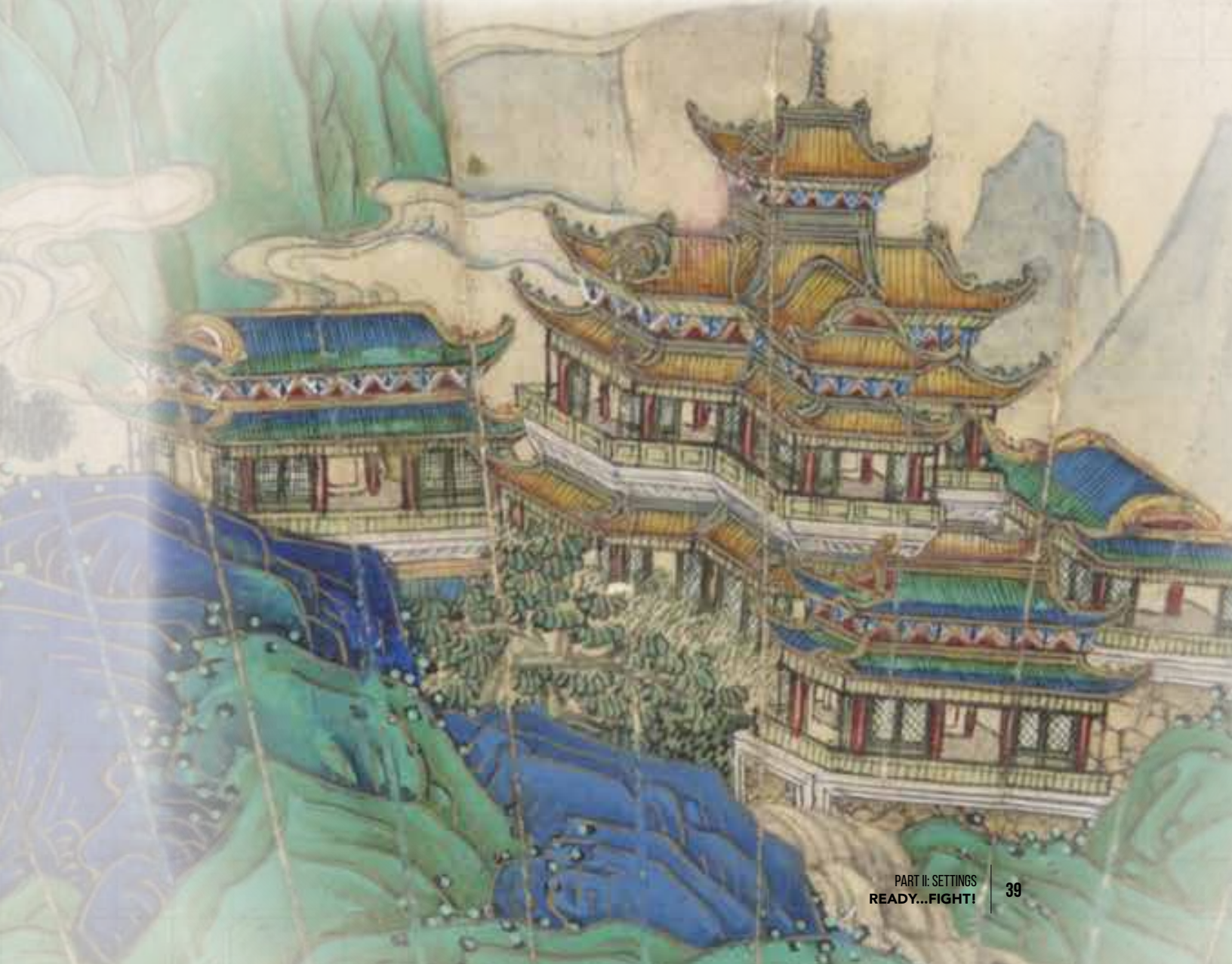
## WORLDLY INFLUENCE

China does not live in isolation. They engage with Russia, negotiating borders and land rights. Also, the Dutch and British East India Companies send a string of representatives to negotiate the sale of Chinese goods internationally. Chinese spices and silk are exported across the globe, creating an influx of silver and an air of resentment among the international community over China's economic self-sufficiency.

## ADVENTURES IN KNIGHTS OF SHAOLIN

The Knights of Shaolin setting provides epic adventures and campaigns set in an era of China fraught with problems for heroes to solve. A party of heroes might unite to defend a city from a large gang of bandits or soldiers punishing people over false rumors of rebellion, or a corrupt magistrate bleeding the people dry in fines and bribes. There could be any manner of natural disasters the youxia must help locals survive.

Adventures in Knights of Shaolin tend to follow a simple basic formula. First, the heroes come to a new town, for any number of reasons. Second, they witness an injustice or dangerous situation, and act to stop it. This sets them on an inevitable collision course with the source of injustice, often a bandit leader, high magistrate, military general, or even a shadowy figure manipulating several such individuals. Once the evil is defeated, and justice restored, the party enjoys their spoils and the lessons they've learned, and then wander on to the next town.





# LOCATIONS

China is a vast and diverse place, influenced by many cultures, predominantly the Manchu, Han, and Mongol peoples. Additionally, the Tibetans, Taiwanese, Vietnamese, and Burmese people also exist in pockets across China. The people follow a variety of Buddhist, Taoist, and Islamic religions, with a lot of local shamanism and Confucianism thrown in. Christianity is also present in Qing Dynasty China, but the Qianlong Emperor prosecuted Christians ruthlessly, diminishing their presence in Chinese culture of the time.

Still, as a result of so many different cultures, each city and town can feel radically different from the next. It also creates a strong cultural exchange—it's not uncommon for people to borrow from a variety of superstitions and religious dogmas to form their personal, local belief systems, which can confuse unsuspecting travelers.

## CITIES

The great cities of China are home to several thousand people. Popular port cities, like Macau, have over 20,000 citizens, and almost as many visitors during peak trade seasons. The largest cities, like Peking, might have upwards of half a million citizens during the Qianlong Emperor's reign. Cities are home to bureaucrats, soldiers, and merchants, but also to artists and entertainers. Big cities are often the center of webs of corruption impacting a city's trading partners in smaller villages. Cities are organized into precise grids of buildings, often surrounded by sloping walls with only a few gates for access.

## VILLAGES

Small villages dot the Chinese countryside, usually in support of nearby farms, mines, and monasteries. Villages are home to anywhere from a few hundred to a few thousand citizens who can process raw goods, and then ship them to larger cities. They also accept deliveries from larger cities to provide goods the surrounding area can't produce on its own, giving rise to markets, restaurants, and tea houses. Unfortunately, these villages attract whatever criminal element might exist in the area, or those passing through. Small villages are vulnerable to crime rings, bandits, and con artists. While most villages host a magistrate with many officers beneath them, they are easily bribed, part of the corruption common throughout China. The majority of youxia stories take place in such villages.

## WILDERNESS

China is a vast empire, and much land is still untamed forest, imposing mountains, unexplored islands, and the rough seas between them. The people of the Chinese frontier live hard-scrabble existences, and are vulnerable to pirates, bandits, and desperate exiles. There are also any number of natural disasters that could destroy a family's odds of survival in these harsh environments. Far from Imperial assistance, the youxia is often the only source of aid for those living on the razor's edge between life and death.





# NEW STARTING CHARACTER OPTIONS

Characters in the Kung-Fu setting are standard human archetypes, as detailed in **GENESYS** Core Rulebook page 35, or those presented earlier in this supplement on page 7. However, humans have a variety of backgrounds, and the Kung-Fu setting might include additional options like those below.

## THE MONK

The shaolin monk archetype represents a character who spent a long time living in a Buddhist monastery where kung-fu is practiced. You should choose this archetype if your character is focused on using Qi to augment their Brawl (Grappling) and Brawl (Striking) attacks. You should also choose this archetype if your character learned kung-fu in a monastery, or has a strong connection to their Qi.

This archetype starts with the Brawn characteristic at 3 and the Presence characteristic at 1. You're starting with a character who has better than average Brawn, earned through extreme strength and endurance training. Monks are known to carry heavy buckets of water up thousands of steps and perform other seemingly impossible feats daily. However, the Buddhist training sometimes keeps them separate from the people of the farms and towns, and they are sometimes treated as beggars, giving some monks less social power, resulting in a lower than average Presence. This character also has higher than average strain threshold, reflecting their seemingly limitless endurance.

Further, this archetype can have a strong connection to their Qi, which lets them perform inhuman feats during moments of perfect balance between focus and mindfulness. During such brief windows of enlightenment, monks seem all but unbeatable.

### ARCHETYPE ABILITIES



- **Starting Wound Threshold:** 10 + Brawn
- **Starting Strain Threshold:** 12 + Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 85
- **Starting Skills:** A martial artist starts with one rank in either Athletics, Coordination, or Resilience during character creation. They obtain this rank before spending experience points, and may not increase that skill above rank 2 during character creation.

- **Focused Qi:** Once per session, may spend a Story Point to add ☯ to the results of a check made by this character.



## THE STUDENT


The Student is likely an orphan, or of a noble family, sent to a kung-fu master who runs a private school. You should choose this archetype if your character is focused on either the Brawl (Grappling) or Brawl (Striking) skill for unarmed attacks. You should also choose this archetype if your character trained under a master outside a monastery.

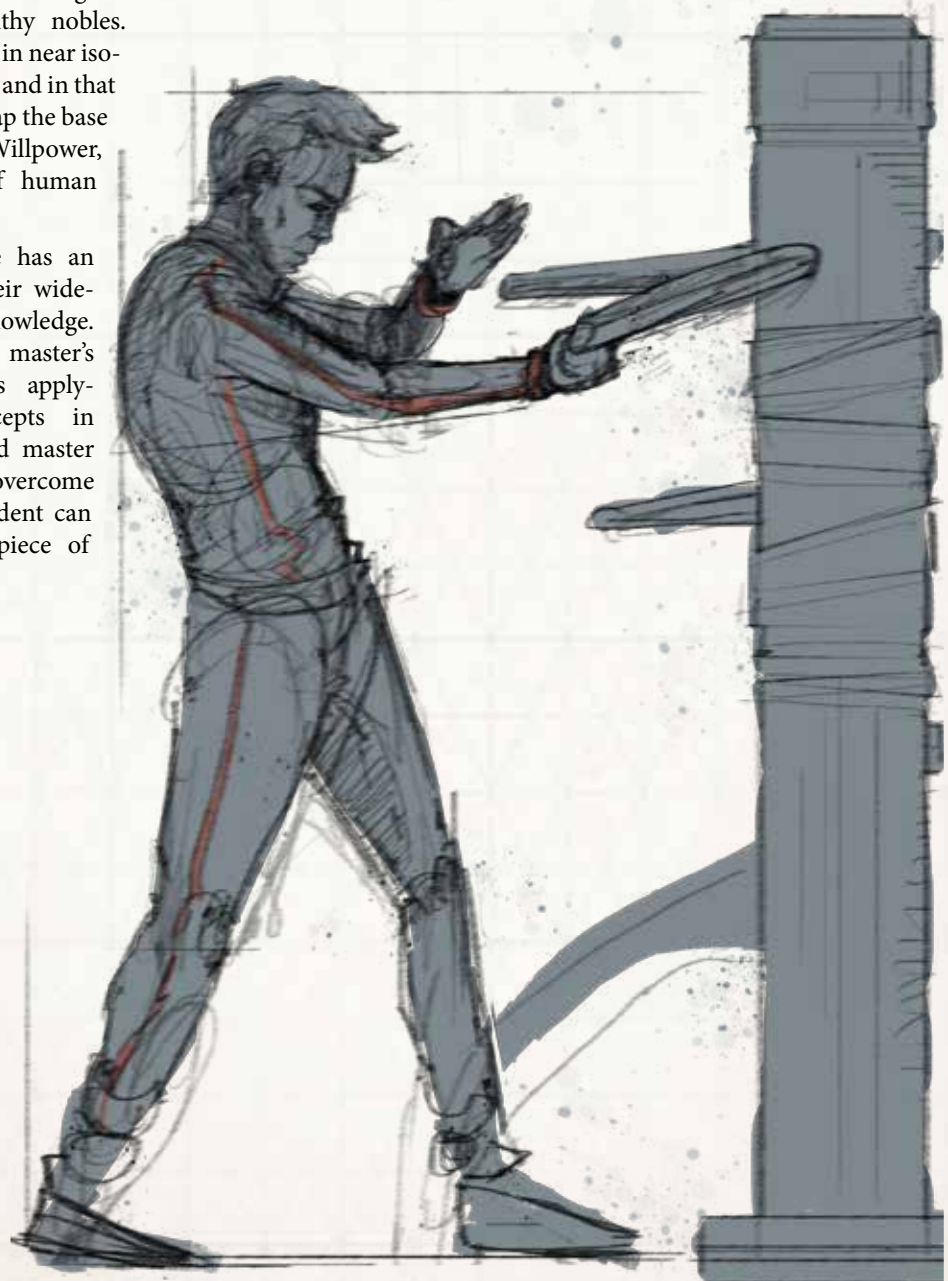
This archetype starts with the Intellect characteristic at 3 and the Willpower characteristic at 1. You're starting with a character who has better than average Intellect, representing a bright, quick-thinking character who has studied not only the physical aspects of kung-fu, but tactics, history, lore, and a variety of other subjects. This come with the trade-off that your character has a worse than average Willpower, representing the privilege and lack of discipline instilled during the childhood of some wealthy nobles. Some students might train in near isolation with a single master, and in that case, GMs may wish to swap the base values for Presence and Willpower, representing the lack of human contact.

Further, this archetype has an ability that showcases their wide-ranging scope of knowledge. Students hang on their master's every lesson, sometimes applying philosophical concepts in unexpected ways. A good master trains their students to overcome any obstacle, and the student can always recall a critical piece of advice when it counts.

## ARCHETYPE ABILITIES

2	2	3	2	1	2
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE

- **Starting Wound Threshold:** 10 + Brawn
- **Starting Strain Threshold:** 10 + Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 100
- **Starting Skills:** A student starts with one rank in Knowledge (Lore) during character creation. They obtain this rank before spending experience points, and may not increase Knowledge (Lore) above rank 2 during character creation.
- **Lessons of the Master:** Once per session, may spend a Story Point to add a number of  equal to ranks in Knowledge (Lore) to any one check.





# SETTING-SPECIFIC GEAR

Kung-fu doesn't overly rely on gear and equipment—the best tools are a person's limbs. However, this supplement details a number of unarmed weapons, as well as the tools and armor of Imperial soldiers and bandits. Further, the shaolin monks have their own religious icons and totems. That said, most equipment in the Fantasy setting in the **GENESYS** Core Rulebook (pages 144-146) is also appropriate for a Knights of Shaolin campaign.

## WEAPONS

Kung-fu has a variety of niche striking techniques, many of which use alternate striking surfaces beyond the traditional fist. Stiffened fingertips poke nerve clusters, clawed hands rip at flesh, and other hand positions can target soft, vulnerable areas of the body.

Note that all of the following striking and grappling weapons can pair with the Power Strike, Leaping Attack, Rebound Attack, and Spinning Attack talents earlier in this supplement.

### LEOPARD PAW

The Leopard Style of shaolin kung-fu relies on speed and aggression. The style has almost no parry, and favors shortened up strikes with the second row of knuckles directed at soft-tissue areas that string together in rapid succession.

When attacking a target that has not yet acted in combat, add **A** to your attack check with the Leopard Paw. If you generate **A** **A** or **A** on a Leopard Paw strike, your character suffers a Critical Injury that narratively effects one of your hands at the GM's discretion.

### SNAKE HAND

The Snake Style of kung-fu relies on circular parrying techniques not unlike the Tiger, but when given the opportunity, strikes with stiff fingers at the eyes, throat, and other vulnerable points to disable opponents.

Upon a critical hit, as long as the attacker deals a **Hard** (♦ ♦ ♦) **Critical Injury** or better, the attacker can choose to deal the Bowled Over, Fearsome Wound, or Blinded Critical Injury instead, regardless of the result.

If you generate **A** **A** or **A** on a Snake Hand strike, your character suffers a Critical Injury that narratively effects one of your hands at the GM's discretion.

### TIGER CLAW

The Tiger Style of shaolin kung-fu relies on palm strikes and raking attacks with the fingernails that can tear flesh. The attack is best suited for making a target bleed, particularly in ways that cause pain, fear, and panic.

Upon a critical hit, as long as the attacker deals an **Average** (♦ ♦) **Critical Injury** or better, they can choose to instead deal the Fearsome Wound, Agonizing Wound, Hamstrung, or Overpowered Critical Injuries instead, regardless of the result.

### CRANE HOOK

The Crane Style of shaolin kung-fu relies on hooking parrying techniques, similar to the Dragon, but when given the opportunity, uses a fist configuration called the Crane Beak (imagine your fingers and thumb joined, similar to the snake hand) to poke at vital areas, specifically the eyes, throat, ribs, and groin, often after parrying or trapping an enemy's limb.

The Crane Hook uses the Crane Beak to, as the name implies, hook incoming arms and legs, trapping them. This is usually followed up with a twisting of the hips to throw opponents off-balance and to the ground. If this attack is successful and results in a knockdown, feel free to use **Table 3-2** to help narrate the check results.

### DRAGON BITE

The Dragon Style of shaolin kung-fu relies on parrying incoming strikes while circling your opponent before returning strikes. The Dragon Bite, also known as Flying Dragon Landing, uses two hands to knock an incoming attack off its target, and maintain control of the limb.

If a target wielding the Dragon Bite (see sidebar on page 31, wielding unarmed weapons) is the target of a failed unarmed attack, the target may spend **A** **A** or **A** from that check to gain an Advantageous Position in a grapple with the attacker at the GM's discretion. If the character has the Improved Unarmed Parry talent, this can also apply to melee attacks.

### BUTTERFLY MACHETE

Nearly a small sword, the butterfly machete has a large, flat blade that extends over 18 inches from the hilt. Designed for one-handed use, the hilt often features a handguard. The blades are best for chopping foliage or making slashing attacks, and can parry incoming melee attacks. They are sometimes used in pairs, and draw little attention thanks to their legitimate use as a wilderness survival tool.



**TABLE 5—1: KUNG-FU WEAPONS**

NAME	SKILL	DAM	CRIT	RANGE	ENCUM	HP	XP	RARITY	SPECIAL
<b>STRIKING WEAPONS</b>									
Leopard Paw	Brawl (Striking)	-1	3	Engaged	N/A	N/A	10	N/A	Pierce 2, Linked 1, Knockdown, Reach -1
Snake Hand	Brawl (Striking)	-2	2	Engaged	N/A	N/A	15	N/A	Pierce 3, Vicious 3
Tiger Claw	Brawl (Striking)	-1	4	Engaged	N/A	N/A	10	N/A	Vicious 2
<b>GRAPPLING WEAPONS</b>									
Crane Hook	Brawl (Grappling)	-3	3	Engaged	N/A	N/A	10	N/A	Ensnare 2, Knockdown, Vicious 2, Reach 1
Dragon Bite	Brawl (Grappling)	-2	5	Engaged	N/A	N/A	20	N/A	Ensnare 2, Defensive 1
<b>MELEE WEAPONS</b>									
NAME	SKILL	DAM	CRIT	RANGE	ENCUM	HP	PRICE	RARITY	SPECIAL
Butterfly Machete	Melee (Light)	+1	3	Engaged	1	1	200	2	Defensive 1, Reach 1
Dao Sabre	Melee (Light)	+2	2	Engaged	1	2	300	3	Defensive 1, Vicious 1, Reach 2
Qiang Spear	Melee (Heavy)	+3	3	Engaged	3	1	100	2	Defensive 2, Pierce 2, Reach 3
<b>RANGED WEAPONS</b>									
Kunai Throwing Daggers	Ranged (Light)	+1	3	Short	1	1	75	6	Accurate 1, Limited Ammo 1, Linked 1
Long Bow	Ranged (Heavy)	+8	3	Long	3	2	150	4	Accurate 1, Unwieldy 3, Prepare 1, Limited Ammo 1

## DAO SABRE

Also known as the Chinese sabre, this single edged sword has a gentle curve, and is generally (but not always) thicker than the straight sword. Wielded in one hand, they are primarily slashing blades, but can also be used in thrusting attacks if need be. Users frequently parry with the sword's scabbard in their off-hand as often as the blade. Add Defensive +1 if this is the case.

## QIANG SPEAR

The traditional spear is nine feet of flexible, durable wax wood, tipped with a leaf-shaped blade. Traditional spears feature horse-hair tassels or even feathers where the spearhead is affixed to the shaft, largely to prevent blood from making the grip slippery. Spears are great parrying weapons, and can also make deadly thrusting attacks.

A spear can be thrown, using the Ranged (Light) skill, dealing 5 damage, and gains the Limited Ammo 1 quality.

## KUNAI THROWING DAGGER

Originating in Japan (but not uncommon in China), these small, short blades have no hilts, making them suitable for throwing. Also known as darts, the blades are effective and silent, and can be coated in various poisons. Specialists carry dozens on their person, and skilled practitioners are known to carry up to six daggers between their fingers, ambushing enemies with a storm of blades. Characters may use the Rapid Archery Talent (**GENESYS** Core Rulebook page 79) in combination with this weapon at the GM's discretion.

## LONG BOW

Popular across China, the long bow can reach great distances by firing in parabolic arcs, often used in formations to launch large-scale volleys in war. However, the bow is just as often used for hunting. Ancient Chinese archers prized accuracy at a distance above all other archery skills.

**TABLE 5–2: KUNG-FU ARMOR**

TYPE	DEFENSE	SOAK	ENCUMBRANCE	PRICE	RARITY
Ceremonial Hanfu	1	+0	2	500	4
Leather Plate Armor	1	+2	4	2,000	7
Parry Wrappings	1	+0	1	25	4

## ARMOR

In the modern era, armor is a rare sight in China, providing little protection from gunfire. However, in the early Qing Dynasty and eras prior, armor is common among soldiers, and even some local magistrates.

### CEREMONIAL HANFU

In ancient China, the ceremonial hanfu (similar to a long Japanese kimono) is a flowing, ankle-length robe with large sleeves, sometimes slit up both legs to allow movement. Simple straight trousers are worn beneath, and the robe is sometimes cinched with a belt. Ceremonial hanfu are often made of painted silk, sometimes restrictive or overly billowing, making movement difficult, but still obscuring silhouette. They are expensive, and often a sign of wealth or nobility. Their status means characters enjoy    to Charm, Deception, and Negotiation checks while wearing a ceremonial kimono.

### LEATHER PLATE ARMOR

This lamellar armor uses small squares of hardened leather woven onto a tunic to provide protection for soldiers. Some wealthy merchants and nobles commission leather plate armor and then cover it in ornate painted silk, enjoying the benefits of the armor without losing status for appearing unfashionable.

### PARRY WRAPPINGS

Monks wrap leather straps or corded rope around their forearms and fists to parry incoming attacks. While such wrappings can hold up to most melee weapons, bladed weapons tend to destroy them in short order. However, wearing these allows a character to use the Parry talent

(GENESYS Core Rulebook page 74) against melee weapons, even when unarmed. At the GM's discretion, if a parried melee attack generates ☉ or △ (particularly if the weapon is edged) the parry wrappings are destroyed.

## GEAR

China is home to rich spiritual traditions, many of which employ various icons to focus their minds.

### PRAYER BEADS

Not unlike rosary beads, Buddhist prayer beads are strings of beads are used to count how many times a mantra is recited, breaths are taken, and other repetitive exercises. They might be made from wood, lotus seeds, or even the bones of a venerated monk. Manipulating prayer beads as a maneuver adds    to any Arcana, Discipline, Divine, or Primal check, though GMs might allow this effect for worn prayer beads as well.

### WAIDAN ELIXIR

This alchemical concoction is said to bring immortality to any who drink it. A single vial of elixir contains 10 sips. Taking a sip of elixir functions as painkillers, healing 4 wounds, but offering diminishing returns, so that the second sip in the same day recovers 3, and then 2, etc.

### NEIDAN ELIXIR

This elixir is mixed by Chinese alchemists and sorcerers to restore vitality. A single vial contains 5 sips. Taking a sip of elixir functions similarly to painkillers, only it heals 5 strain instead of wounds each sip. It still offers diminishing returns, so that the second sip in the same day recovers 4, and then 3, etc.

**TABLE 5–3: KUNG-FU GEAR**

ITEM	ENCUM	PRICE	RARITY
Prayer Beads	1	50	3
Neidan Elixir	0	500	7
Waidan Elixir	0	1,000	8



# SETTING-SPECIFIC ADVERSARIES

We've included a selection of enemies for the heroes of your campaign. This is only a sampling, and you'll want to include a variety of NPCs of your own creation to challenge your Knights of Shaolin. However, if your kung-fu campaign takes place in a more contemporary or even science-fiction era, you might consult the **GENESYS** Core Rulebook or the Rumble City setting (page 70) for more appropriate NPCs.

## BANDIT [MINION]

The Chinese forests and deserts are littered with gangs of bandits, robbing caravans and even raiding small villages. They also engage in ransoming off goods and noble children. Bandits are often exiles, forced into a life of crime just to survive, though some choose the lifestyle. While bandits often have some horses and wagons, just as often they have nothing but their cohorts and a blade. They prefer to surround targets and use threats to achieve their ends, rather than engage in actual violence.



**Skills (Group Only):** Coercion, Cool, Melee, Skulduggery.

**Talents:** None.

**Abilities:** Intimidators (May use Brawn instead of Presence to make an Opposed Coercion vs Discipline check against a target at engaged range. If successful, the GM selects at least two items in that character's possession, and they must surrender one to the bandits).

**Equipment:** Butterfly machete (Melee; Damage 4, Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Defensive 1).

## MAGISTRATE OFFICER [MINION]

The magistrate is the highest government official in a village, acting as police chief, judge, and jury. They usually have a number of officers working for them. These magistrate officers are clad in colorful robes marking them as officers of the law, and carry a short baton. They patrol their village or city in pairs, but they can mass in several groups of five or six to make arrests of dangerous felons. During such dangerous arrests, they might carry swords or spears.



**Skills (Group Only):** Coercion, Perception, Melee, Vigilance.

**Talents:** None.

**Abilities:** Arrest Them! (If the Magistrate makes a successful attack, they may spend a Story Point to convert all damage to stun damage).

**Equipment:** Baton (Melee; Damage 3, Critical 5; Range [Engaged]; Disorient 1).

## RUTHLESS ENFORCER [RIVAL]

The ruthless enforcer represents a strong fighter that enjoys combat, and might lead teams of magistrates or bandits. They have a fair amount of combat experience, and embolden their allies with their great shows of strength. If bandits or magistrates meet resistance, it is common to make way for the enforcer to come deal with the trouble while their allies cheer.



**Skills:** Athletics 1, Cool 2, Leadership 2, Melee 3, Resilience 1, Striking 2, Survival 3, Vigilance 2.

**Talents:** Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once), Coordinated Assault 2 (Once per turn, as a maneuver, may grant up to 2 allies within short range  $\Delta$  to all combat checks until the end of this character's next turn).

**Abilities:** The Best Defense... (If this character deals damage to a target, they gain +1 defense against that target until the end of their next turn).

**Weapons:** Dao sabre (Melee; Damage 6, Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Defensive 1, Vicious 1).

Punch (Striking; Damage 5, Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Accurate 2, Knockdown).

**Equipment:** Leather armor (+1 Defense, +2 Soak)



## AGED MASTER [NEMESIS]

Despite their outward appearance as elderly and frail, aged masters possess great skill, even if their physical capabilities are diminishing. The aged master is often accompanied by at least one student, if not several, depending on the size of their school. Some masters are recluses, rarely taking on new students, while others are fixtures of villages and cities, leading very public lives with political influence.

3	3	2	3	3	4
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE		
3	15	15	2   2		

**Skills:** Athletics 2, Brawl (Grappling) 4, Brawl (Striking) 4, Coordination 1, Discipline 4, Leadership 4, Resilience 2, Vigilance 3.

**Talents:** Adversary 2 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target twice), Defensive Stance 3 (Once per round as a maneuver, may suffer up to 3 strain to upgrade the difficulty of all incoming melee and brawl combat checks a number of times equal to the strain suffered until the end of their next turn), Improved Parry 3 (when hit by a melee or brawl attack, suffer 3 strain to reduce damage taken by 5; when parrying a hit that generated ☒ or ☐ ☐ ☐, the master automatically hits them with a held melee or unarmed weapon, dealing base damage).

**Abilities:** Economy of Movement (Whenever this character suffers strain to activate a talent, they suffer 1 less strain than normal, to a minimum of 1).

**Weapons:** Leopard Paw (Brawl [Striking]; Damage 4, Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Pierce 2, Linked 1, Reach -1).

Kick (Brawl [Striking]; Damage 5, Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Exhausting 1, Inaccurate 2, Knockdown, Pierce 3, Reach 1).

Joint submission (Brawl [Grappling]; Damage 1, Critical 1; Range [Engaged]; Ensnare 2, Exhausting 1, Inaccurate 3, Pierce 5, Prepare 2, Vicious 1).

## WORTHY OPPONENT [NEMESIS]

The worthy opponent represents a character that can challenge most anyone in China. They are incredible fighters, and can pose a long-term threat to any party, or act as a friendly rival. This character can be the leader of a large gang of bandits, an Imperial general, or a student turned to evil. Their kung-fu is strong, and their character flawed, which can lead them in any number of directions.

4	4	2	3	2	3
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE		
4	18	18	2   2		

**Skills:** Athletics 3, Brawl (Grappling) 3, Brawl (Striking) 3, Coercion 3, Coordination 2, Deception 2, Discipline 2, Resilience 2, Skulduggery 3, Stealth 1, Vigilance 2.

**Talents:** Adversary 2 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target twice), Improved Parry 2 (when hit by a melee or brawl combat check, suffer 3 strain to reduce damage taken by 4; when parrying a hit that generated ☒ or ☐ ☐ ☐, the worthy opponent automatically hits them with any held melee or unarmed weapon, dealing base damage), Jump Up (Once per round, may move from prone or seated to standing as an incidental), Second Wind 4 (Once per encounter, may heal up to four strain as an incidental), Swift (This character does not suffer the penalties for moving through difficult terrain).

**Abilities:** Double Threat (This character gets two initiative slots [roll twice], meaning they can take two actions per round of combat).

**Weapons:** Tiger Claw (Brawl [Striking]; Damage 5, Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Vicious 2).

Side Kick (Brawl [Striking]; Damage 7, Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Exhausting 1, Inaccurate 2, Knockdown, Pierce 3, Reach 1).

Choke Submission (Brawl [Grappling]; Damage 7, Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Ensnare 2, Exhausting 3, Inaccurate 3, Pierce 3, Prepare 2, Stun Damage).



# CHAPTER 6: THE PRO WRESTLING SETTING

Professional wrestling has existed in some form for over a century, originating in carnival sideshows and vaudeville performances dating back to the 1800s. However, modern pro wrestling as a television and arena sport grew popular in the 1960s, and exploded into the mainstream in the 1980s.

Pro wrestling features dramatic, pre-determined outcomes to wrestling matches—athletic performances between three or more performers. The wrestlers have complex backstories, and break down into faces (heroic wrestlers the crowd can cheer for) and heels (villains the crowd can boo). The rivalries between the various

wrestlers build over the course of interviews, culminating in a wrestling match, creating a soap opera formatted for television.

Pro wrestling is very popular in the United States, but has rich traditions elsewhere. In Mexico, *lucha libre* wrestling features incredibly acrobatic moves and masked wrestlers. In Japan, *puroresu* minimizes the dramatic storylines, and presents the fighting as real. The drama in *puroresu* comes in how dramatic the fights themselves are, showcasing almost inhuman perseverance and durability.

## TROPES

Pro wrestling has countless tropes and archetypal characters revisited throughout the eras. While pro wrestling campaigns might take place in any era since the 1960s to add unique flavor, the most popular time would undoubtedly be the golden age of wrestling in the 1980s, with the rise of major wrestling events like *WrestleMania*, or the era that followed, featuring major celebrities that went on to become movie stars and even professional fighters.

Most campaigns should center around the classic format of television interviews and backstage encounters leading to matches in a wrestling ring set inside a packed arena. These matches can add variety by having tag-team matches, cage matches, and other gimmicks or side-bets between opponents to raise the stakes.

## CHEATING

Pro wrestling allows all manner of grappling, as well as a variety of punching, kicking, and clotheslines. The official goal of any match is to pin an opponent's shoulders to the mat for a three count by the referee. That said, few wrestlers, especially heel characters, follow the rules. The referees in pro wrestling are notoriously easy to distract. With a referee's back turned, a wrestler's friend might pass a chair, sledgehammer, or other easy

to conceal weapon to smash into their opponent a few times before the ref turns back around. Wrestlers might bite, eye gouge, or pull hair to gain the upper hand. They even throw each other out of the ring, using tables, stairs to the ring, and anything else at hand to bludgeon their opponent.

Official bouts aside, wrestling matches are just as often interrupted or joined by another character. Rivals interrupt matches and help opponents cheat. These individuals might charge the ring and turn a simple match into an illegal beating. In such situations, not even the ref is safe from harm. In such scuffles, pinning an opponent is meaningless. Wrestlers fight to cause as much damage and humiliation as possible. Such antics can escalate a rivalry to the next level.

## EPIC RIVALRY

While all sorts of wrestlers have matches against each other, the most exciting fights are those between a face and their arch-nemesis heel. These matches come with a lot of bad blood and drama, and serve as major moments in both character's storylines. These rivalries can start for any reason, but often start with dueling insults during interviews, and escalate into cheap shots backstage, which eventually spill over into a rage-fueled match in the ring.

It's important for every wrestler to have a rival character to help define their story. Some wrestlers might even go through multiple rivals over time, entering into rivalries with new characters. Rivals might be enemies from day one, or they might be former friends and training partners, or even tag team partners. Falling outs are common, and a betrayal can lend a personal element to a rivalry instantly. Note that a wrestler's rival can just as easily be a manager or promoter, or even a referee, not necessarily another wrestler.

## NOVELTY MATCH

Sometimes having a match in a standard wrestling ring just isn't enough. Sometimes, there needs to be an added element of drama. The most common special bout features a cage over the ring. Presumably, this is so no wrestler can flee the fight if it doesn't go their way, but just as often, it's to prevent outsiders from interfering or interrupting the match. That said, chairs and other contraband can (and often do!) pass through the bars of the cage without much trouble.

Sometimes cage matches feature ladders, with a championship belt dangling from the cage's ceiling. The first wrestler to grab hold of it wins the match. These matches often feature far more than two wrestlers in the cage at once, and the ladder itself often becomes a weapon in the right hands.

Another common gimmick match is a tag team match, where a pair or even trio of wrestlers takes on another group. These matches tend to involve the most cheating, as a single ref is hard-pressed to keep their eyes on four or more wrestlers all at once. Inevitably, at some point during any tag-team match, all the fighters charge into the ring at the same time in a wild melee. Free-for-alls are also relatively common, where three or more wrestlers are in the ring at once, and the last wrestler standing is the winner.

## THE INTERVIEW

Wrestling matches are the main attraction when it comes to pro wrestling, but they are merely the major beats and climaxes of wrestler storylines. These beats are set up with interviews and "backstage footage". Interviews serve to introduce a wrestler and their persona and gimmick, as well as deliver story, often between heaps of over-the-top displays of machismo. During interviews, wrestlers can relay off-screen encounters that serve to start rivalries, or directly call out their opponents.

Most wrestling organizations have a small handful (or even just one!) interviewer. This character is typical of a sports correspondent that does sideline interviews at





sporting events. Interviews can take place in a variety of locations, each with its own storytelling strength.

Interviews conducted near the ring serve to build hype just before a fight, or to provide a bit of epilogue to a fight. They can also serve as great locations to call out or have a face off with a new opponent, propelling that storyline to its next chapter. Ringside interviews are also used to promote the next event, allowing wrestlers not on the fight card to build the drama for their next fight.

Further, there are studio interviews, which allow a wrestler speak to the audience in relative safety. There are also backstage locker room and parking lot interviews, where wrestlers often create new rivalries, get into “real” fights, and engage in other behavior. Some interviews are even conducted via satellite with characters on sandy beaches (often with a rival’s romantic partner!).

## GIMMICKS

The most popular wrestlers can get by on raw charisma and catch phrases alone. However, most wrestlers need a good gimmick to stand out. Gimmicks focus on a really strong theme that is both uniquely executed and has a mass appeal for the audience. The most common themes are the “All-American,” the “Mysterious Masked Wrestler,” and the “Supernatural Creepy Wrestler,” though there are several others.

## PROPS

If a character theme just isn’t enough, many wrestlers work their gimmick into a prop. A guitar the wrestler can play in interviews, and then smash over the heads of enemies is a great gimmick. Many others have been used, including giant scissors, two by fours, coffins, and more. A good prop helps define a wrestler’s persona, and might see use as an improvised weapon. There have even been animals used as prop gimmicks!

## SIGNATURE MOVE

A key wrestler gimmick is the signature move. Wrestlers have bombastic names for their signature fighting moves, and these moves typically showcase that wrestler’s strength or acrobatic ability. In most cases, signature moves are some kind of slam or takedown. Of course, in some cases, the signature move might not get deployed until after winning a match, in which case it might just showcase their cruelty or sense of humor. GMs interested in incorporating signature moves might let PCs select a talent that exemplifies their idea, or

## PREDETERMINED OUTCOMES

While most pro wrestling campaigns should operate with the view that the matches and melodrama of pro wrestling are real, it is possible to run a campaign where the PCs are performers who are trying to achieve specific outcomes. This type of campaign can play with contrasting the drama of the ring with the drama of these wrestlers’ real lives, sure to be filled with just as many problems and perhaps danger.

Running a meta concept campaign like this might be difficult, but GMs might tweak many talents and attacks to use Athletics, Coordination, and Deception instead of Brawl. GMs might even swap out Brawn and Agility characteristics for certain skills with Cunning or even Presence to represent the PCs trying to give the appearance of a fight and win over the crowd without unduly damaging their performance partner.

create a new talent for that express purpose. Otherwise, see page 64 for more information on creating signature weapons.

## SONG

A big part of a wrestler’s gimmick is music. They might have a walk-out song and perhaps a different song for when they win a match. Encourage players to select songs for this purpose, and perhaps play them at the table at appropriate moments to add some atmosphere. Likewise, GMs might consider some opponent song selections for key NPC wrestlers. Keep in mind the era! Games set before the modern day should select music appropriate to the times.

## MANAGERS AND PROMOTERS

The high drama of professional wrestling isn’t limited to the wrestlers—managers, promoters, bodyguards, and other hangers-on can be interesting NPCs or even player characters in their own right. Their main job is to support their wrestlers, and trash talk their opponents and rivals. Such characters are generally safe from the punishment of the ring, but backstage and parking lot interviews present opportunities for face offs and even fights with other wrestlers, or other managers and promoters.

# EXAMPLE SETTING: WRESTLING HEROES CHAMPIONSHIP

The Wrestling Heroes Championship is a window into the golden age of wrestling in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Powerful factions of wrestlers compete for control of the organization, with drama in the front office that might signal doom for the WHC. Players can create their own team of fresh new faces to join the organization, move up the ranks, and restore the WHC to its rightful owner.

## HUMBLE ORIGINS

The Wrestling Heroes Championship organization has been around since the 1960s, where it started in America's Midwest. It languished behind other, more popular organizations until ownership fell to Jimmy Ritter in 1978. He had been with the WHC for years, working as a stagehand as early as 1964.

Mr. Ritter had a close relationship with all the wrestlers, and it was that knowledge of the talent that enabled him to bring the WHC to prominence. By 1986, the WHC was the top grossing professional wrestling organization. The fighters all adored Mr. Ritter and his three adult children (Ethel, Marva, and Maxine), who helped their father ensure fair treatment and opportunity for all his employees. Things were good, and there seemed no limit to how big WHC could get.

## BETRAYAL

In 1988, a scandal broke. Vic Taggart, the WHC's leading heel, stole the WHC Championship Belt from Charlie Rogers, the WHC's most popular All-American face. Vic Taggart was losing the match, until a masked figure passed Taggart a baseball bat and distracted the ref. Charlie Rogers was bludgeoned mercilessly, but by the time the ref chased away the masked figure, the bat was concealed. With his opponent beaten, Taggart easily climbed the steel cage to claim the Championship Belt, which gave him a seat on the board of directors as well.

Vic Taggart and many of his henchmen sold their shares, accumulating since the mid-70s, to Satoru Inoki, a businessman with alleged Yakuza ties, and owner of a controlling interest in Japan's largest pro wrestling

organization. Satoru accumulated enough shares to earn a seat on the board of directors. On New Year's Eve, at the dawn of 1989, Taggart and Satoru forced Jimmy Ritter off the board and back to working as a stagehand, effectively taking over the WHC.

## NEW NORMAL

It is 1989, what Satoru Inoki is calling the "Year of the Snake." He has brought in four of his most deadly wrestlers from overseas, known as the "Four Venoms." Alongside Vic Taggart, the two have reshaped the WHC to their will, giving all Taggart's friends the best matches and pay. The biggest heroes of the WHC are either forced out, in the hospital thanks to the Four Venom's underhanded tactics, or missing.

It is into this dark era that a void in the WHC has opened up, desperate for a new crew of heroic wrestlers. Someone must step up who can restore Jimmy Ritter to the head of the board, give Vic Taggart his just deserts, and uncover the identity of the mysterious masked wrestler who made it all possible.

## ADVENTURES IN THE WHC

The World Heroes Championship setting creates epic wrestling matches between bitter rivals, with the fate of a good man and his company ultimately at stake. A party of heroes might fight to win tag team championships, heavyweight championships, or world championships, or any number of other belts after working their way up the ranks. Jimmy Ritter and his daughters can act as a supporting cast of characters, giving the heroes insider information and dirt on the other wrestlers. Ultimately, the heroes must win all the belts to occupy enough seats on the board to get Ritter his job back.

To do this, wrestlers must win over fans with daring interviews and exciting matches. These matches might be against Taggart's least skilled or favored henchmen to start. They'll have to avoid falling victim to ambushes backstage and in the parking lot from the Four Venoms, Taggart, and his cronies. Until, ultimately, they can create a rivalry with Taggart and challenge for a world title, which will be the fight of their lives.

# SETTING LOCATIONS

The events of a pro wrestling story take place in just a few standard locations, most of which are within an arena. The arena first and foremost features the ring itself, where the action takes place. Wrestlers address the audience via a microphone from the ring before and after fights. There is also often a small side stage for wrestlers walking out from backstage to address the audience or a wrestler in the ring, or just as part of their walkout routine.

Outside the main floor of the arena, there are several other popular areas where storylines unfold. Backstage, there are locker rooms and parking lots, which are popular locations for interviews and encounters (sometimes violent ones!) between wrestlers or other staff. And finally, there is always a studio, where wrestlers and managers get interviewed. This is especially true of interviews via satellite with wrestlers who are outside the arena. Popular satellite locations include the beach, the hospital, and the gym, though any location that helps to tell that wrestler's storyline is possible.

## THE RING

While rings vary in size, wrestling rings are generally 22 feet long by 22 feet wide (though the floor space within the ropes is 20 by 20), set three and a half feet above ground level. The top rope is usually four and a half feet off the mat, and there are usually three ropes. The ropes are held together with turnbuckles at the four steel corner posts.

When using a wrestling ring in game, characters in the ring are either at short or engaged range, at the GM's discretion. Characters outside the ring can slide into the ring as a single maneuver (but they are considered prone after doing so), or spend three maneuvers to use the stairs and go between the ropes. From the edge of the arena to the

nearest fans or color commentators is usually short range, while an alternate walk-out stage might be long range from the ring.

Actual sanctioned matches occur in the ring with two or more fighters and a ref. On occasion, steel cages, foreign objects, or other changes get made to the ring to mix things up. The ring often has a variety of foreign objects stashed beneath it. While most are there for the purposes of setting up the arena for the show, others are stashed by wrestlers just before an event for darker purposes.

## BACKSTAGE

Backstage areas are usually talent locker rooms or private dressing rooms for more high-profile wrestlers, but could also be a food vendor stand in the arena, or an arena bathroom or walkway area. Interviews get conducted in such locations to move storylines forward, and just as often, face offs and fights break out in these locations. When such fights occur, wrestlers use whatever might be at hand to fight their opponent. Locker doors, trash cans, shaving cream cans, a back luffa—it's all fair game.

## PARKING LOT

The parking lot is another popular location for interviews and encounters between wrestlers. Wrestlers come to the parking lot to arrive and depart the show, or host low-key meetings between wrestlers. Wrestlers in a rivalry might use the parking lot location to have words with an opponent, which might break out into a stare down or a fight. In such fights, car doors, items in the car, trunks, it's all potentially as a weapon. Some wrestlers visit the parking lot to simply destroy a rival's vehicle, often with a bat or crowbar.

# SETTING-SPECIFIC GEAR

Like many settings in this supplement, gear takes a backseat to skill in unarmed combat. However, there are a variety of unarmed weapons used in wrestling. Further, wrestlers rely on a lot of pageantry and theatrics to tell their stories, which sometimes necessitate a variety of props and costumes. That said, the melee weapons in the Modern Day setting in the GENESYS Core Rulebook (pages 166), as well as some armor in the Fantasy setting is appropriate at the GM's discretion, as well as weapons from the Street Brawler setting (page 70).

## WEAPONS

Pro wrestling features a variety of high-flying body tackles and powerful slams in their matches. There is also a history of sneaking foreign objects into the ring, such as steel chairs. Note that at the GM's discretion, players can combine most of these unarmed strikes with the Leaping Attack, Power Attack, Rebound Attack, and Spinning Attack talents to create more exciting or acrobatic moves.



**TABLE 6—1: PRO WRESTLING WEAPONS**

NAME	SKILL	DAM	CRIT	RANGE	ENCUM	HP	XP	RARITY	SPECIAL
<b>STRIKING WEAPONS</b>									
Clothesline	Brawl (Striking)	+1	4	Engaged	N/A	N/A	10	N/A	Disorient 1, Knockdown, Prepare 1
Dropkick	Brawl (Striking)	+3	3	Engaged	N/A	N/A	15	N/A	Exhausting 1, Inaccurate 3, Knockdown, Pierce 3, Reach 2
<b>GRAPPLING WEAPONS</b>									
Choke Slam Takedown	Brawl (Grappling)	+2	4	Engaged	N/A	N/A	15	N/A	Cumbersome 3, Exhausting 2, Inaccurate 2, Pierce 1, Prepare 1
Pile Driver Takedown	Brawl (Grappling)	+3	2	Engaged	N/A	N/A	20	N/A	Cumbersome 3, Inaccurate 3, Pierce 5, Prepare 2, Vicious 4
Rope Rebound	Brawl (Grappling)	-3	5	Engaged	N/A	N/A	5	N/A	Cumbersome 2, Ensnare 2, Stun Damage
<b>MELEE WEAPONS</b>									
NAME	SKILL	DAM	CRIT	RANGE	ENCUM	HP	PRICE	RARITY	SPECIAL
Ladder	Melee	+3	3	Short	5	2	50	2	Concussive 1, Cumbersome 4, Reach 3, Vicious 2
Steel Chair	Melee	+2	4	Engaged	3	1	10	2	Cumbersome 2, Disorient 1, Reach 2

## CLOTHESLINE

This move involves extending an arm laterally and either rushing an opponent or waiting for them to rush into you (especially after a rebound on the ropes). The forearm then strikes the opponent in the head or chest, often knocking them to the ground.

The move does take a moment to set up, but if well-executed, it can be a game changer. If a clothesline attack is successful and activates the knockdown quality, the player can spend **▲ ▲** or **⚡** to cause the target to also be either Staggered or Immobilized for one round as they writhe in pain on the ground.

## DROPKICK

The drop kick is a type of jump kick where the attacker's body goes completely horizontal, planting one or both feet into the chest of an attacker. This attack is devastating, and often knocks an opponent to the ground. Unfortunately, the attacking character ends up on the ground as well.

On a successful attack with the dropkick, triggering the Knockdown weapon quality requires one fewer **▲** to activate than normal (minimum **▲**). No matter the outcome, the attacker is considered prone after the attack is resolved.

## CHOKE SLAM

A choke slam entails an attacker picking up a victim by the throat and lifting them bodily into the air. After a moment of kicking legs and fear in their eyes, the attacker slams the back of the victim's head into the ground. This move is often modified in subtle ways to become a wrestler's signature move (see **Signature Weapons**, page 64).

Attempting this attack requires the attacker already have an Advantageous or Superior Position in a grapple (see page 24), or that the opponent is immobilized. Upon a successful attack with the choke slam, the target is automatically knocked prone, as if the attacker had triggered the Knockdown weapon quality.

## PILE DRIVER

This difficult maneuver requires lifting an opponent off the ground with their head pointing down, then slamming their head forcefully into the ground face first. This attack is incredibly dangerous, and can damage the neck and spine irrevocably.

Attempting this attack requires the attacker already have an Advantageous or Superior Position in a grapple (see page 24), or that the opponent is immobilized. Upon a successful attack with the pile driver, the target is automatically knocked prone, as if the attacker had triggered the Knockdown weapon quality.

## ROPE REBOUND

A wrestler can throw an opponent into the ropes, causing them to bounce off and walk right into a drop kick, clothesline, or big haymaker. The momentum of the rebound increases the damage of their attack, though sometimes it backfires.

A successful grappling check to throw an opponent against the ropes automatically triggers the Ensnare 2 weapon quality. This character has no maneuvers, may attempt to break free as normal with a **Hard** (◆◆◆) **Athletics** check (see GENESYS Core Rulebook page 87). Should they fail to break free, the next Brawl or Melee combat check against this character adds ★★▲▲ to the results. Should the subsequent attack fail and generate ☹☹☹ or ☹, the target can make a free attack instead, gaining ★▲ to the check result.

## LADDER

A steel ladder is always underneath the ring to rig lights and such before the event begins. Unscrupulous wrestlers might take this ladder out and bash an unsuspecting rival with it. Alternately, ladders feature prominently in certain types of cage matches, often those with a championship belt dangling from the ceiling, forcing multiple wrestlers to fight their way up the ladder to claim the prize.

Standard ladders require two maneuvers to set up. Once set, they enable a character to reach any location within short range directly above the ladder. If the character stands atop the ladder, they can leap or climb to a location within short range with a **Hard** (◆◆◆) **Athletics** or **Coordination** check. GMs may wish to modify such a check with the fighter size rules versus the baseline height of 5'8".

## STEEL CHAIR

Folding steel chairs are handy near the ring or beneath it. While folded, the chair makes a great melee weapon, slamming into the backs and heads of opponents. However, the chairs have a tendency to fold and break after repeated use. If the steel chair generates ☹☹☹ or ☹ during an attack, or an attack against this character generates ☹, the chair bends or breaks, making it unusable.

## ARMOR

Professional wrestlers tend to favor thematic costumes over actual armor to help win over the crowd and express their theme or gimmick. However, the taped up armor (see page 34) makes frequent appearances, as do knee and elbow pads. Less common are wrestlers in combat pads armor (page 78) or sports pads (page 78), which might be spiked shoulder pads or shiny metal gauntlets or shin guards. This kind of armor is more often worn during walk-outs than during matches, but anything goes backstage.

## CHAMPIONSHIP BELT

In pro wrestling, championship belts are large, gold plated belts that cover much of the torso below the chest. There is no greater prize than to wear the belt, or hold it high above one's head after a hard-earned victory. The belt can also be used as a medium improvised weapon. When held in the hand, it no longer adds soak, but instead adds +1 defense.

## FANCY ROBES

Silk, velvet, bedazzled, or bejeweled-fancy ring robes take a variety of forms to dazzle, intimidate, and impress. When buying a set of fancy robes, the buyer can customize the design to fit almost any theme. The robes might even be more of a costume or custom singlet. Upon purchase, the buyer can select one social skill (Charm, Coercion, Deception, Leadership, or Negotiation). While wearing the robes, downgrade the difficulty of all checks made with that skill once. Only one set of robes can be worn at a time.

## LEATHERS

Wrestlers wear a variety of leathers, often in lieu of the more outlandish robes and singlets. Leathers might include an ankle length duster or a simple vest, or anything in-between. Leathers can distort a character's silhouette, but mostly make a character look supremely cool. Add ■ to all Cool checks while wearing leathers.

TABLE 6–2: PRO WRESTLING ARMOR

TYPE	DEFENSE	SOAK	ENCUMBRANCE	PRICE	RARITY
Championship Belt	0	+2	2	500	7
Fancy Robes	0	+0	3	1,500	5
Leathers	1	+0	2	300	4

## GEAR

Many wrestlers rely on various accoutrements to craft their wrestling persona, especially if there is a gimmick involved. Still, some pieces of equipment are common.

**TABLE 6—3: PRO WRESTLING GEAR**

ITEM	ENCUM	PRICE	RARITY
Bullhorn	1	50	3
Handcuffs	0	15	4
Microphone	0	1,000	6

### BULLHORN

A manager or promoter, or maybe a rabble-raising heel might use a bullhorn to influence the crowd. Or they might even use the bullhorn to shout over another wrestler without one. A character using a bullhorn extends the range of any talent or check involving a social check by one range band at the GM's discretion. If making a social

check against a single character within normal range, the bullhorn can instead add ■ ■ to social checks at the GM's discretion.

### HANDCUFFS

Handcuffs are used to restrain wrestlers, sometimes chaining them to the turnbuckle, making them effectively helpless, immobilized targets. Sometimes they are cuffed backstage, so they can't make it to the ring for their match. Escaping handcuffs requires a **Daunting** (◆◆◆◆) **Athletics** or **Coordination** check.

### MICROPHONE

Microphones are usually connected to a wrestling venue's PA system, or closed circuit television system, enabling the person holding the microphone to address the entire audience. A character using a microphone hooked up in a stadium extends the range of any talent or check involving a social check to include all characters in the arena at the GM's discretion.





# SETTING-SPECIFIC ADVERSARIES

**P**ro wrestling has a few archetypal opponents a party might face in the ring, and a few they might just have to deal with outside it. However, this is just a taste of what you might need to run a pro wrestling campaign, and you'll want to include a variety of NPC wrestlers to go toe-to-toe with your wrestling heroes.

## BLIND REFEREE [RIVAL]

Referees rarely impact the outcome of a wrestling match, and in fact are rarely competent in any way. Despite capturing the cheating clearly on camera, it almost never overturns the results of a match. Additionally, refs who do catch cheaters and try to enforce the rules often find themselves the next target of a foreign object, as the match devolves into a lawless melee. The blind referee stat block is also suitable for use as an interviewer, should GMs need stats for such a character. Simply replace the Athletics skill with Charm.



**Skills:** Athletics 2, Brawl (Grappling) 1, Brawl (Striking) 1, Knowledge (Lore) 3, Leadership 2, Negotiation 2, Vigilance 1.

**Talents:** None.

**Abilities:** None.

**Weapons:** Unarmed attack (Brawl (Striking); Damage 1, Critical 5; Range [Engaged]; Knockdown).

## LUCHADOR JOBBER [RIVAL]

Lucha Libre is a style of wrestling that favors aerial, acrobatic maneuvers to entertain the crowds. Luchadors don colorful masks and capes to bring an air of pageantry distinct from American and Japanese pro wrestling. Still, at their core, Lucha Libre is focused on bravado, drama, and machismo, not unlike their American cousins. The Luchador Jobber is a solid performer that is representative of the wrestlers in a major organization, or the top wrestlers in a backyard or other small organization.



**Skills:** Athletics 2, Brawl (Grappling) 4, Brawl (Striking) 2, Charm 3, Cool 2, Coordination 1, Perception 1, Resilience 3.

**Talents:** Acrobatic Evasion 2 (If this character makes a Coordination check during a combat encounter, they add +2 Melee Defense until the end of their next turn), Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once), Jump Up (Once per round, may stand from prone or seated as an incidental).

**Abilities:** Con Giro (May add Prepare +1 to any attacking with a grappling weapon to add +2 damage), Huracánrana (Once per encounter, may use Agility instead of Brawn when making a Brawl (Grappling) combat check with a takedown weapon, and to calculate damage), Masked (Add ☠ ☠ to any social checks made by this character, and ✕ ✕ to social checks targeting this character).

**Weapons:** Punch (Brawl [Striking]; Damage 4, Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Accurate 2, Knockdown).

Dropkick (Brawl [Striking]; Damage 6, Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Exhausting 1, Inaccurate 3, Knockdown, Pierce 3, Reach 2).

Takedown (Brawl [Grappling]; Damage 4, Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Disorient 2, Ensnare 1, Exhausting 2, Prepare 1).

## MINIONS, RIVALS, AND NEMESSES

The Pro Wrestling setting favors one-on-one encounters between a PC and either a rival or nemesis adversary. However, in some encounters, minions might be appropriate. There are some free-for-all matches where having a few minions can speed the pace of combat considerably. And parking lot encounters, too, might feature a minion group of henchmen or arena security. For minion wrestlers, consider the Street Tough (GENESYS Core Rulebook page 134) or Beastman (GENESYS Core Rulebook page 147).

## THE GIANT [NEMESIS]

Wrestling organizations always have a giant on hand, a wrestler so large they make most of the hulking characters on the roster seem puny. Giants are incredibly difficult to damage thanks to their physical stature, and their strength can do serious damage. However, their endurance is usually poor, and smart fighters can wear them out quickly.

5	2	1	2	2	3
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE		
6	15	10	1	1	

**Skills:** Brawl (Grappling) 3, Brawl (Striking) 4, Coercion 4, Perception 2, Resilience 1.

**Talents:** **Adversary 2** (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target twice), **Ground and Pound** (Add +1 point of damage to Brawl [Striking] attacks when in an Advantageous Position, or +2 when in a Superior Position), **Iron Chin 2** (When hit by an unarmed weapon that uses the Brawl [Striking skill], triggering the Knockdown Quality costs an extra ⚡ ⚡), **Takedown Defense Improved** (May suffer 2 strain to upgrade the difficulty of any incoming Brawl [Grappling] check to initiate a takedown once. Targeting this character with a takedown weapon adds Exhausting +1 to the attack, and Exhausting +1 per net ✕).

**Abilities:** **Invulnerable** (May suffer 3 strain as a maneuver to gain +2 Soak until the end of their next turn).

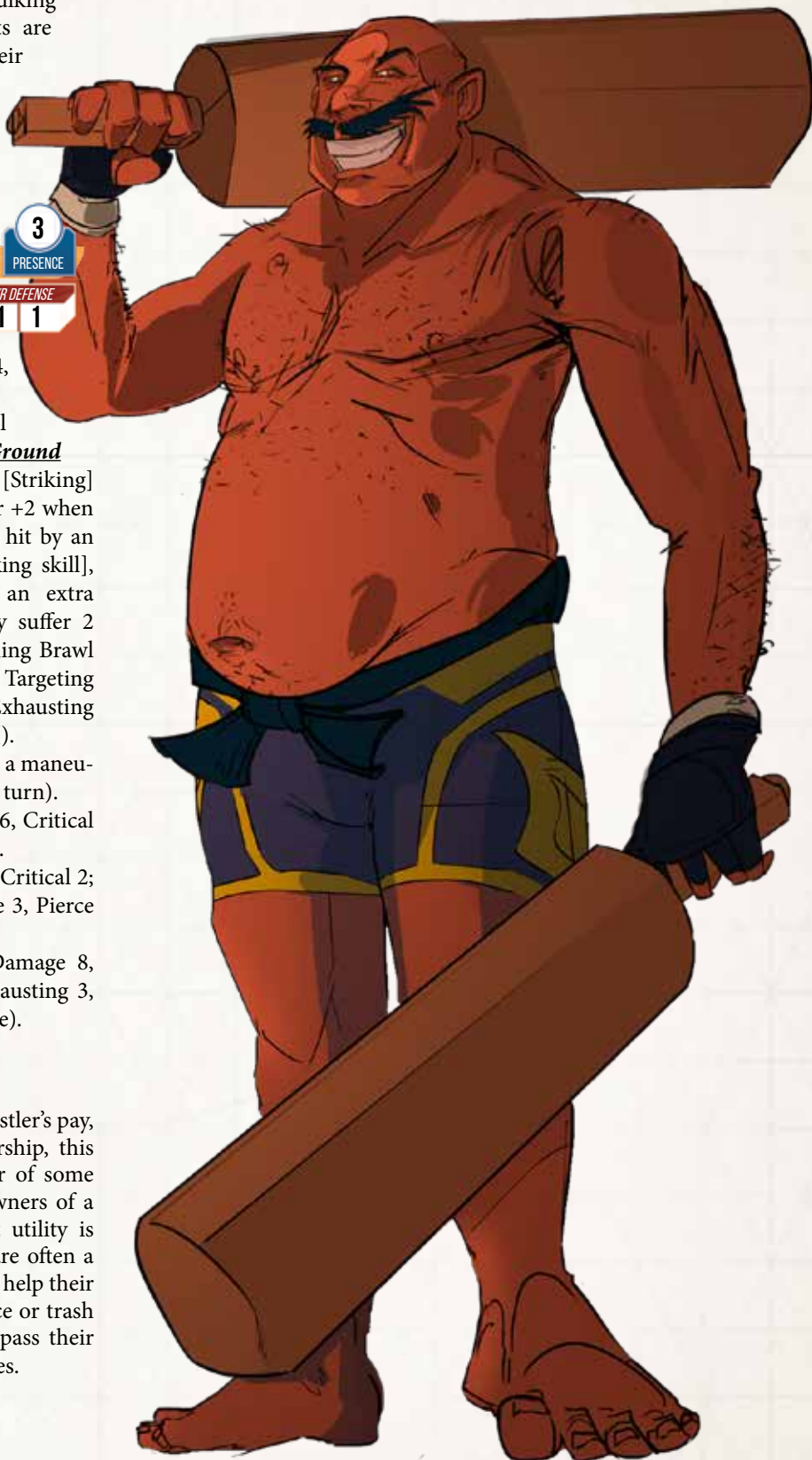
**Weapons:** Punch (Brawl [Striking]; Damage 6, Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Accurate 2, Knockdown).

Pile Driver (Brawl [Grappling]; Damage 8, Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Cumbersome 3, Inaccurate 3, Pierce 5, Prepare 2, Vicious 4).

Choke Submission (Brawl [Grappling]; Damage 8, Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Ensnare 2, Exhausting 3, Inaccurate 3, Pierce 3, Prepare 2, Stun Damage).

## SLIMY PROMOTER [RIVAL]

Essentially a talent agent that negotiates a wrestler's pay, who they fight, and other deals with ownership, this character is an agent, manager, or promoter of some kind. This character might also represent owners of a wrestling organization. While their greatest utility is allegedly in crafting back-room deals, they are often a presence all their own at ringside. They might help their wrestler win over the crowd, or even influence or trash talk their opponent. Promoters might even pass their wrestlers foreign objects, or use one themselves.







**Skills:** Charm 4, Deception 3, Knowledge (Lore) 1, Medicine 1, Melee 2, Negotiation 3, Skulduggery 1, Streetwise 2, Vigilance 1.

**Talents:** **Clever Retort** (Once per encounter, as an out-of-turn incidental, may add automatic 🎲 🎲 to another character's social check), **Counteroffer** (Once per session, may target one character and make an **opposed Negotiation versus Discipline** check as an action. On a success, the target becomes staggered until the end of their next turn. If a successful check also generates 🎲, at the GM's discretion, that character becomes an ally of the Slimy Promoter).

**Abilities:** **Goaded Opponent** (May use Deception instead of Cool or Vigilance when rolling for initiative. May spend 🎲 🎲 🎲 or 🎲 generated by the check to select which enemy character uses their first initiative slot, and which target they attack first).

**Weapons:** Unarmed attack (Brawl [Striking]; Damage 1, Critical 5; Range [Engaged]; Knockdown).

**Equipment:** Bullhorn, fancy suit.

## SADISTIC HEEL [NEMESIS]

The sadistic heel is a well-balanced wrestler that fans love to hate. Heel wrestlers are generally thought of as villains, and use all manner of underhanded tactics, and even outright cheat when they think they can get away with it. They often work with slimy promoters to bend normally moral and heroic wrestlers to their criminal designs.



**Skills:** Brawl (Grappling) 3, Brawl (Striking) 4, Coercion 2, Cool 3, Coordination 1, Deception 1, Knowledge (Lore) 2, Resilience 2, Skulduggery 2.

**Talents:** **Adversary 2** (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once), **Ruinous Repartee** (Once per encounter, may make an **opposed Coercion versus Discipline** check targeting one character within Medium Range. If successful, target suffers 8 strain, 1 additional strain per net 🎲. This character heals an equal amount of strain).

**Abilities:** **Cheater** (Once per encounter, may suffer 2 strain to make a Hard (🎲 🎲 🎲) Skulduggery check as an action. If successful, produces a foreign object of the

GM's choice, and deals damage to a target within short range equal to the object's base damage plus +1 point of damage per net 🎲. Failure might mean the ref noticed the foreign object.).

**Weapons:** Punch (Brawl [Striking]; Damage 5, Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Accurate 2, Knockdown).

Kick (Brawl [Striking]; Damage 6, Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Exhausting 1, Inaccurate 2, Knockdown, Pierce 3, Reach 1).

Choke Slam (Brawl [Grappling]; Damage 6, Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Cumbersome 3, Exhausting 2, Inaccurate 2, Pierce 1, Prepare 1).

Joint Submission (Brawl [Grappling]; Damage 2, Critical 1; Range [Engaged]; Ensnare 2, Exhausting 1, Inaccurate 3, Pierce 5, Prepare 2, Vicious 1).





# CHAPTER 7: THE TOURNAMENT SETTING

The tournament setting includes all manner of fighting organizations (which may have some crossover with the Pro Wrestling settings). This might include real-world sports organizations governing boxing, kickboxing, mixed martial arts, and grappling tournaments. It just as easily can support tournaments of a more fantastical nature, parroting themes common to arcade fighting game franchises like *Street Fighter*, *Mortal Kombat*, and *Tekken*, which bring in various supernatural and sci-fi elements.

Some tournaments might only have a fighter compete in one match per day, every few months. This is particularly common for legalized combat sports organizations. However, other tournament structures force fighters to compete multiple times in a single evening. While this is more common to illegal fighting, legal tournaments that feature minimal repeated striking contact also use this model, such as karate point systems, most grappling tournaments, and the Olympics.

## TROPES

Tournaments have a broad spectrum of other settings they might get combined with, though most take place within the Modern Day setting. Still, others might take place in a more sci-fi, fantasy, space opera, or even historical settings. Of course, regardless of the where and the when, there are a number of defining tropes of the tournament circuit, many of which are discussed below.

### HEAD-TO-HEAD

While it is conceivable to have tag-team tournaments, or even a three-on-three battle royale, most tournament competition is a one-on-one battle. There is something equally romantic and primal about being face-to-face with an opponent, thrown at each other until one proves the superior combatant. There are no teammates to blame for a loss. No one to steal credit for a win. Two fighters enter a ring, a cage, or some other designated fight area, and after a few minutes, seconds, or even an hour, one emerges with their hands raised.

### FRIENDLY RIVALRY

Rival fighters aren't always bitter enemies, and are sometimes friendly rivals, or even just friends. These fighters might be testing their skills, or competing respectfully.

Despite the tension between the two, they trust each other to come together against a common foe. These sorts of moments can highlight just how dishonorable an evil NPC behaves in a fight. They can also present a unique story opportunity in a campaign. Maybe the friendly rival has gone missing after being invited to a tournament. Now the PC must accept a similar invitation in hopes of learning what happened to their worthy adversary.

To represent a friendly rivalry in an unarmed campaign, GMs might have two PCs fight each other. This might occur because of tournament bracket placement, or because the PCs train in the same gym or under the same master, and spar regularly. These fights are often evenly matched, and stopped before anyone is hurt too badly. They go just long enough for there to be a clear victor.

Friendly rivals can also be NPCs used to further the plot, or act as supporting characters. This is especially common when a respected, defeated enemy becomes a friendly rival, not unlike Apollo Creed in the *Rocky* franchise. These allies might act as corner coaches, training partners, or get involved in storylines that take place outside the cage.

## BRACKETS

Brackets are a great visual, easy to draw up if you can come up with a dozen or so enemy fighter names. Seeing a hated rival move up their bracket can add a lot of drama between fights. Brackets require at least four fighters (to have an elimination round and a final), and double in size with each added round. A single-elimination bracket of 16 fighters creates an opening round, a second round of 8 fighters, and a semi-final round of four fighters, which produces the two fighters to challenge for the championship.

Opponents are often given rankings to determine fair match-making. In bracketed tournaments, however, the best fighters are matched up against the lowest ranked fighters, improving the odds of having the best fighters in the finals. This is generally done because it maximizes the number of times fans can see the more popular fighters perform.


In most campaigns, it might be best to separate the brackets by weight class, so PCs don't have to face each other in the tournament. But for some parties who talk about it beforehand, PC versus PC fights might be great roleplaying moments. The important thing is to discuss it with your players, and see how they feel about it first, and also to ensure that PCs have something to do in the story once they are knocked out of the tournament.

## TRASH TALK

There are a number of opportunities for fighters to size each other up and trash talk each other leading up to a fight. These attempts at psychological warfare have questionable merit as strategic moves, but such antics certainly prove entertaining to the fans. Trash talking occurs during promotional events for upcoming fights, during interviews and press conferences, or even via social media. However, the last opportunity for trash talk is at the weigh-in just before a professional fight. Here fighters step on the scale, and spectators can see them square off and judge their physical condition and confidence. If the trash talk gets too heated, it's not unheard of for the fighters to get into a scuffle. For guidance to represent trash talk encounters in an adventure, see page 60.

## CORNER COACHES

The most iconic element of a tournament setting is that fights are generally one-on-one experiences. This can be challenging in an RPG campaign, particularly if you have over four players, but for smaller groups, this can be an ideal campaign structure. Most fighters have corner coaches, who help fighters recover between rounds and provide strategic advice and moral support. A corner usually consists of one to three corner coaches and a corner doctor (often referred to as a cutman or cutwoman).

A fighter's corner coaches are usually instructors and sparring partners from their home gym. Corner coaches watch a fighter's technique, as well as the opponent's. They call out tactical advice during a fight, shouting for specific strikes or grappling techniques, which fighters might choose to perform. This kind of coaching can count as giving assistance on a Brawl check (see Assist maneuver, **GENESYS** Core Rulebook pages 26 and 98). To keep players involved, it's often best to let them roll their own  added to the check, and narrate their own contributions, if any.

Between rounds, coaches can attempt to inspire their fighter, or help them recover by coaching them through breathing exercises. They can also share any complex insight into the fighter's performance or their opponent's weaknesses. Coaches can make a size up check (see page 16) during the fight, and pass the effects of positive results to their fighter at the GM's discretion. They might also use any number of talents that help heal strain, or assist on checks the fighter makes to recover strain, often by providing water, holding ice bags up to a fighter, or massaging muscles or shaking out arms. Corner Coaches can also throw in the towel, and forfeit the fight to protect their fighter from taking dangerous amounts of punishment. If a fighter suffers a critical hit, GMs might have the lead corner coach make a Cool check to resist throwing in the towel, setting the difficulty equal to the severity of the Critical Injury result.

Corner doctors are also known as cutmen or cutwomen, and work on cuts and swelling. In game turns, they attempt to restore wounds or heal critical injuries. Tournament organizers typically hire and provide corner docs for an event, while corner coaches have more personal relationships with the fighter. In many cases, corner coaches are also competitors. In the context of an RPG party, having 2-3 PCs that act as corner coaches while a different PC competes is an easy way to keep all players engaged in the action. Of course, NPCs can also function as corner coaches for smaller parties.

## PERSONAL DRAMA

Fighters have personal lives, complete with problems, goals, and ambitions outside the ring. Most fighters have family members, both biological and chosen, each of which might be a magnet for trouble (be it financial, legal, medical, or anything else), dealing with a host of serious problems, or be various degrees of supportive and exploitive of the PC. Outside family, there are a slew of trainers, coaches, and sparring partners that might bring just as much drama. Incorporating a fighter's life outside the ring can bring additional flavor to a campaign, and enable the GM to vary up the locations and content of encounters.

Beyond the more mundane day-to-day drama, some tournaments have a higher degree of melodrama, especially those set in more fantastical settings. Fighters in such tournaments where the stakes are far beyond a winner's purse and championship belt have similarly magnified drama in their personal life. Here, opponents sometimes have connections to their personal life, which often center around missing, murdered, or corrupted loved ones, personal betrayals, and other tragic backstories. These issues can play out between fighters to add drama to bouts, or add an element of unsanctioned extracurricular combat around the tournament scene.

This kind of stress can drain a fighter. GMs can use these emotional moments to fuel training encounters, or even to sabotage them. When dealing with a social encounter centered around the drama of a fighter's personal life, consider asking for Cool or Discipline checks as things get particularly stressful. Negative dice results might upgrade difficulty or add setback dice to training encounter checks (see page 93), as a fighter's mind isn't solely focused on training.

## COLORFUL CHARACTERS

The world of tournament combat sports features bold personalities that like to stand out in a room. Their outer appearance often reflects their grand persona. Crazy hair colors and styles, bright tattoos not just on

## ROUND-ROBIN

While brackets are the most common tournament organization method, the gold standard for tournaments is the round-robin. In this tournament style, often for smaller groups of competitors, each fighter fights against every other fighter once. The fighter with the best record after every fighter has fought everyone else is the winner. Sometimes the top two records fight against each other in a high-stakes final match.

Round-robin tournaments are often considered a more accurate reflection of who the best competitor actually is. Unfortunately, they often involve twice as many matches, making the logistics and time investment for such a tournament unwieldy for fans and too long a commitment for fighters. But for smaller groups, it is preferred.

the arms, chest, and back, but the neck and even face are common. In settings more in line with video game tournament fighting games, characters are typically built around a theme that connects their culture, their fighting style, and their backstory, and expresses itself in a visual theme.

## INTERNATIONAL DIVERSITY

To really fight the best in the world, tournaments must feature fighters from across the planet (sometimes from much further away!) competing for the honor of victory. This presents an opportunity to bring in a variety of regional martial arts and cultural elements (especially where games include strong mystic and magic elements) to give a unique feel to the various characters. However, despite the opportunity for learning about new cultures, beware crossing the line into offensive stereotype. This is particularly important if you are gaming in a public space, where someone with personal connections to such a culture could feel mocked. See the sidebar on page 72 for more information.

# EXAMPLE SETTING: TRIAL BY FIGHTER

**T**rial by Fighter is a secretive underground fighting tournament that happens annually. The location of the fight is usually somewhere new and mysterious, and fighters attend by invitation only, competing for a

ten-million-dollar payday. This tournament harkens to classic kung-fu movies like *Enter the Dragon*, which went on to inspire a number of video game franchises centered around shady figures running large tournaments.



## SHADOWED PAST

Trial by Fighter is best known in the world as a bloody mixed martial arts tournament that streams over the internet. TBF 1 streamed in the summer of 1997, and became a viral sensation overnight. While no one knows exactly who owns and operates TBF, there is a mysterious character known as the Facilitator in the broadcasts that acts as the event's organizer. Unfortunately, their face is concealed behind an ancient Chinese mask, and their voice is altered to protect their true identity. The Facilitator (or someone in their mask) is present at many of the fights, and winning the tournament is rumored to earn an audience with the enigmatic character.

The events have taken place on small islands, aboard converted container ships, and once they even used Russia's abandoned Olympic facilities from the Sochi games. While there are always formal rings and spectators for major matches, just as many seem to occur at a time and place of the fighters' choosing within the year's facilities. Fights on the beach, parade grounds, rooftops, gyms, and even dining halls aren't out of the ordinary.

Last year's champion was a masked individual fighting under the name Sphinx, who blew through the competition without any opponents landing significant strikes. While most previous champions have led very public lives spending their winnings, Sphinx has yet to resurface. This has led to a number of rumors about the Sphinx's identity and wild conspiracy theories suggesting anything from Sphinx's murder to the idea that Sphinx was a robot built by the Facilitator.

## ADVENTURES IN TRIAL BY FIGHTER

The Trial by Fighter tournament allows for iconic clashes between fighters as they try to unravel and explore the mysteries of the shadowy tournament. Characters

## MYSTERIOUS TOURNAMENT

The true nature of the Trial by Fighter tournament is intentionally shrouded in mystery. The Facilitator, and indeed, the champion Sphinx, are masked and left largely undescribed so that they can easily fit into your campaign. Either masked figure might be a missing master, friend, or family member. Or, perhaps one of the two is responsible for killing/abducting/maiming a loved one. Leaving their true identities vague allows you to have a dramatic unmasking mid-fight.

Additionally, if your campaign incorporates fantastical elements such as mystical energies, or even interdimensional opponents, the setting allows for that. While rumors of dark, supernatural forces are part of the Trial by Fighter tournament, most assume it's mere theatricality. It is up to you to decide how much truth there might be to such rumors.

should receive a mysterious invitation to a private tournament, with a grand prize payday of ten million dollars. This tournament likely has some connection to the character's background or one of their main supporting cast of characters.

Along the way, PCs must fight opportunistic thieves, bitter rivals, and some of the best fighters in the world, and that's just to make it to the tournament site! Once formally entered in the tournament, the intensity of fights increases, and so does the opportunity to learn more about the Facilitator, their shadowy organization, and last year's champion. In the end, characters might get the opportunity to redeem a fallen friend, or get justice for a slain loved one, or just prove they are the best fighter in the universe.

## SETTING LOCATIONS

While stories in Trial by Fighter can take place almost anywhere in the world. It is possible to tell stories that span the scope of the planet, from the local gym, to training with overseas masters, and competing in exotic lands and vast arenas. Below are a few iconic tournament locations for GMs to use.

### DRAGON COVE ISLAND

A small, uncharted island in the south pacific, Dragon Cove Island's location is known to few, and far from any established trade or military routes. Competitors travel by privately licensed ship, and then transfer to submersible for the final leg of the journey. All told, it takes more than three weeks from San Francisco, and two weeks



from Hong Kong, the only known departure locations. It's not uncommon for fights to break out on the vessels before reaching the island. Submersibles use a small dock on the rocky southern coastline beyond the beach, which has a path that leads up to the main estate.

Dragon Cove Island is a mountainous, mist-shrouded, "S" shaped island. The inside curves are both home to sandy beaches. The outer coastlines are rocky, and difficult to traverse with small boats. The southern beach is a fine white-grained sand, while the north-facing cove is much younger, and features coarse, black sands thanks to a geologically recent eruption from the island's lone volcano. Matches often occur at either beach, or even near the volcano's rim during active periods. Beyond the beaches is rocky, mountainous terrain covered in jungle, with a variety of native and escaped wildlife roaming free.

### FACILITATOR'S COMPOUND

Beyond the beaches is the Facilitator's compound, a spire modeled after the Japanese palace towers of old that stretches ten stories into the air. The lowest level features a small arena capable of hosting two-thousand spectators. Above are training facilities, gambling dens, dance halls, grand dining halls, kitchens, and housing for the fighters. The highest level houses the returning champion's quarters, as well as the Hall of Champions, where a bronze statue of each past champion resides, complete with a commemorative plaque and looped video of their championship bout.

Below the tower is a sprawling underground facility. While no one knows for certain what is below, it is speculated to house nearly 3,000 staff members, all the

streaming equipment, power generators, food storage, and the Facilitator's private quarters. The sub-levels are believed to interconnect much of the island, providing potential escape routes and quick access to popular fight locations.

### THE CS COLOSSEUM

The Container Ship Colosseum is a mammoth converted Maersk E-Class Container Ship. The ship is over a quarter mile long, 185 feet wide, with a central T-shaped superstructure that's nine levels high. The ship needs a crew of 13 to run efficiently, but runs on a crew of 30 that works in shifts. Designed to move up to 11,000 standard shipping containers at a time, the Colosseum is instead converted to provide all the luxuries of Dragon Cove Island at sea.

The aft cargo deck is converted into an open-air stadium, complete with lighting and sound. Seating accounts for up to 1,500 spectators, including some private boxes in the superstructure. The internal storage holds below decks are converted into all sorts of areas, including dining halls, training areas, berthing for the nearly one-thousand staff that prepare food, manage the broadcast, provide security, and cater to the eccentricities of the guests.

While the Trial by Fighter tournament rarely hosts more than 64 competitors, a number of additional guests stay at the Facilitator's invitation. These guests are often major players in the worlds of business, martial arts, or the criminal underworld. While taking in blood sport, they enjoy the utmost luxury in lavish quarters, with adjoining rooms for their private security.

## SETTING-SPECIFIC GEAR

**T**ournament fighting doesn't generally allow weapons of any kind, though fights outside a government-sanctioned tournament could have a more lethal bent. Of course, there are security guards and such that employ all manner of weapons. In such cases, most equipment in the Fantasy and Modern Day settings in the **GENESYS** Core Rulebook (pages 144-146, 166-168) is appropriate for a Trial by Fighter campaign.

### SIGNATURE WEAPONS

Many professional fighters have a signature weapon they're well-known for. Examples include Mike Tyson's leaping left hook, Dan Henderson's overhand right (aka the H-Bomb), Ronda Rousey's armbar, and hundreds more. Fighters can, at the GM's discretion, select an existing unarmed weapon (be it a striking or grappling weapon) they possess, and spend 15 XP to upgrade it into a Signature Weapon. It is encouraged for players to name their Signature Weapon, and describe what sets it apart from the standard technique it's based on.

Signature Weapons function as the original weapon, but can only be used once per encounter, and cost a Story Point to use. However, they also immediately

gain the Superior Weapon Quality (see **GENESYS** Core Rulebook page 88). A character may purchase as many Signature Weapons as they like, so long as they spend 15 XP per weapon.

Fighters can refine their technique to improve their Signature Weapon even more, adding more damage, lowering the Crit Rating, or adding various weapon qualities. Which qualities or upgrades are available is at the GM's discretion, and some may be limited by setting details or concepts. While a kick that causes burning damage might work fine in a mystical tournament setting, it'd feel out of place in a more real-world boxing tournament. For a selection of upgrades and their suggested XP cost, see **Table 7-1**.

Upgrading a Signature Weapon requires a training encounter (see page 93). To purchase an upgrade, the character must succeed on the majority of training checks (two out of three checks in most cases). If the character fails, the enhancement is not learned, and half the XP is lost. The difficulty of any Signature Weapon training encounter begins at **Simple** (–), and increases one step with each additional upgrade purchased. So the second enhancement would require a training

**TABLE 7-1: SIGNATURE WEAPON ENHANCEMENTS**

UPGRADE NAME	SUGGESTED XP COST	DETAILS
<b>STRIKING WEAPONS</b>		
Accurate +1 (Max Accurate 3)	15 XP	If a weapon has the Inaccurate Weapon Quality, this upgrade instead reduces that quality by one.
Concussive +1	40 XP	Takedowns might drop a target on their head, while strikes might come with more power.
Disorient +1	10 XP	Keeping a jab in the enemy's face can limit their vision.
Ensnares +1	25 XP	Increasing control during grappling, or moving from striking to grappling more effectively is the key to some fighter strategies.
Knockdown Cost -1	10 XP	Reduce the cost to trigger Knockdown by <b>A</b> with this weapon (minimum <b>A</b> ).
Linked +1	30 XP	Stringing big strikes together is key to finishing opponents.
Pierce +1 (Maximum +3)	15 XP	Use set-ups to avoid an enemy's defenses.
Prepare -1	20 XP	Attacks cannot go below Prepare 0. Learn to set up attacks more quickly.
Stun Damage +1 (Maximum +3)	25 XP	Wear down an opponent by targeting the body with a set-up strike.
Vicious +1 (Maximum +3)	10 XP	Cause fight-ending injuries with a technique.
+1 Damage (Maximum +3)	15 XP	Inflict more damage by improving technique.
-1 Crit Rating (Maximum -2)	15 XP	Minimum Crit Rating is always Crit Rating 1.



**TABLE 7–2: UNARMED ARMOR**

TYPE	DEFENSE	SOAK	ENCUMBRANCE	PRICE	RARITY
Boxing Gloves	2	+1	3	150	3
Mouth Guard	0	+0	0	25	2
Protective Pads	0	+3	11	200	3

encounter at **Easy** (◆) Difficulty, and the next Average (◆◆) and so on. The training encounter must consist of at least three different skill checks.

### OTHER USES FOR SIGNATURE WEAPONS

While these weapons are designed with tournament fighting in mind, they can easily add flavor to character concepts in other settings. Consider the following possibilities:

**Pro Wrestling:** In pro wrestling, wrestlers often have signature slams, finishers, and other uniquely branded moves. Who can forget the Stone Cold Stunner, or Hulk Hogan's Sleeper Hold? PCs can create these moves via the Signature Weapons rules at the GM's discretion.

**Magic and Qi:** The Kung-Fu setting lends itself to fantasy settings that allow monks or sorcerers to draw on internal life energies or external death energies to achieve powerful effects. Tournament video games famously have flaming uppercuts, lightning magic, and more. Consider adding the Auto-fire, Blast, Breach, Burn, and Sunder weapon qualities below to represent more fantastic effects. You might also upgrade or increase the difficulty once for training encounters that involve supernatural signature moves. Each of these supernatural enhancements should cost 20 to 40 XP per rank purchased at the GM's discretion. Note that these attacks should remain first and foremost Brawl attacks. Once you cross over into energy projection like Qi fireballs and such, you should really be using the magic system.

### ARMOR

Tournament fighters are typically barred from wearing any sort of real armor. They often wear a traditional martial arts Gi or robes, or modern athletic wear. That said, many wear a mouth piece to protect their teeth and square their jaw, and wrappings or boxing gloves over their hands. Some tape up or wrap other joints, either for support or friction during grappling (see **Taped Up**, page 34). And during training, protective pads are a common sight, and some of the more lethal underground tournaments might allow combat pads.

That said, the tournament setting is typically a modern day setting, and any armor in the Fantasy and Modern Day settings in the **GENESYS** Core Rulebook (pages 144–146, 166–168) is appropriate, especially for non-competitors. Of course, some settings might incorporate science fiction or fantastical elements, opening the door to more options.

### BOXING GLOVES

These gloves range from eight to sixteen ounces, and resemble large, inflated mittens. Their size makes it easier to fight defensively, providing a fighter two small protective shields. However, the mitten-like structure of a boxing glove is heavy, and makes it difficult to land a clean strike, adding ■ to all Brawl (Striking) checks with fists, as well as Resilience checks to recover between rounds (see **Optional Rules: Rounds**, page 84). It also makes gripping an opponent very difficult, adding ■■ to all Grappling checks. It also makes it nearly impossible to manipulate fine objects with the fingers or hands, upgrading the difficulty of such checks twice at the GM's discretion.

Still, wearing boxing gloves makes the hands immune to the hand-breaking Critical hit suffered on a ☒ or ☒ on **Table 3–1**. The defense provided by Boxing Gloves is Melee Defense only.

### MOUTH GUARD

A mouthpiece can reduce impact trauma, preventing broken teeth, broken jaws, and soft tissue damage. While wearing a mouth guard, reduce the result of critical injury rolls by 10, but add ■■ to any social checks that require the character to speak. Placing or removing a mouth guard is a maneuver.

### PROTECTIVE PADS

These pads protect vital areas, and are made of thick padded material. The most common pieces include headgear, a torso piece, and a codpiece or protective cup. The pads are bulky and restrictive, but enable fighters to train at full speed and strength without causing undue injury. Seeing someone in protective pads outside a gym or dojo is rare and odd. Wearing Protective Pads reduces the result of critical injury rolls by 40 (from brawl and blunt melee combat checks), but upgrade the difficulty of all Agility based checks once.

## GEAR

While fighters might use any piece of technology or equipment appropriate to the era outside of the cage, very few foreign objects are allowed ringside. Still, corner coaches and corner docs are allowed some tools to ply their trade.

### CUTMAN'S KIT

The cutman's (or cutwoman's) kit includes an enswell, gauze, cotton swabs, and petroleum jelly. The enswell is a metal block with a handle kept cold on ice, rubbed on damaged areas to reduce swelling. When it comes to cuts, gauze dries up blood, while cotton swabs apply medications designed to control bleeding before being sealed with petroleum jelly. A cutman's kit contains all of these elements, and enables Medicine checks to attempt to heal Critical Injuries with a severity under 95.

## CORNER KIT

The corner kit includes a stool, a bucket, towels, and a water bottle. The corner's job is to help a fighter recover between rounds, cooling them down, hydrating them, and helping them catch their breath. Characters with a corner kit can make an **Average** (◆ ◆) **Social check** as an action to help an engaged seated fighter recover. The fighter regains 1 strain per net ★ or ▲ ▲.

TABLE 7-3: UNARMED GEAR

ITEM	ENCUM	PRICE	RARITY
Cutman's Kit	2	150	4
Corner Kit	2	100	2

## SETTING-SPECIFIC ADVERSARIES

Tournaments in Trial by Fighter bring together the best fighters on the planet from a variety of combat backgrounds. While there are presumably thousands of such backgrounds and variations, the following is a sampling of some of the more iconic types of fighters to challenge your future tournament champions.

### BOXER [NEMESIS]

The professional boxer is an expert pugilist who has studied the "sweet science" for years. Their footwork combines with a blend of hand speed, power, and accuracy to wear down and pick apart their opponents over several rounds of fighting.



**Skills:** Athletics 2, Brawl (Striking) 3, Cool 3, Coordination 1, Negotiation 1, Resilience 2, Streetwise 1, Vigilance 2.

**Talents:** **Adversary 1** (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once), **Counterstrike** (May spend an action to counter, upgrade the difficulty of all incoming Melee, Brawl [Striking], or Brawl [Grappling] checks to use a takedown weapon twice until the start of this character's next turn. If the attack generates ★ ★ ★ or ★ ★, the attacking character suffers 6 wounds), **Iron Chin 2** (Add ▲ ▲ to the cost to trigger Knockdown from Brawl [Striking] checks against the Boxer).

**Abilities:** **Superior Guarded Stance** (When spending a maneuver to gain Guarded Stance, can spend 2 strain to instead increase the difficulty of all incoming melee combat checks once), **Rope a Dope** (When in the Guarded Stance, adds Exhausting +1 to all incoming melee and brawl attacks).

**Weapons:** Body Shot (Brawl [Striking]; Damage 4, Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Accurate 2, Stun Damage 2).

One-Two Punch (Brawl [Striking]; Damage 4, Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Accurate 2, Knockdown, Linked 1).

**Equipment:** Boxing gloves (+2 melee defense, +1 soak).

### MINIONS, RIVALS, AND ADVERSARIES

While the Trial by Fighter setting focuses on one-on-one fights with other skilled fighters who are nearly equals, it is possible for PCs to pick fights with other minion and rival characters. Minions might represent street gangs, security, police, or militia forces, depending on the specific background of a character. Look to the GENESYS Core Rulebook and the Rumble City Adversaries list (page 79) for out-of-the-cage opponents for your party.

## BRAWLER [NEMESIS]

The brawler has been fighting their entire life, from back alleys to bar rooms and backyards. Brawlers love fighting, and they don't mind taking a punch if it means they get to also hit someone. They are notoriously tough, and they have naturally heavy hands with real knockout power. Brawlers don't focus too much on strategy, they just wade forward and swing as hard as they can, as often as they can. Because of this, they can often get lured into gassing themselves out.



**Skills:** Brawl (Grappling) 1, Brawl (Striking) 2, Coercion 3, Cool 4, Coordination 2, Resilience 3, Streetwise 2, Vigilance 1.

**Talents:** Adversary 2 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target twice), Berserk (As a maneuver, may add ★ ▲ ▲ to all melee combat checks for the rest of the encounter, but opponents gain ★ to all combat checks against this character. Cannot make ranged combat checks while berserk. Suffer 6 strain when incapacitated or at the end of the encounter), Heavy Hands (Reduce the ▲ necessary to trigger the Knockdown quality on a Brawl [Striking] check by ▲ [minimum one ▲]), Iron Chin 3 (Add ▲ ▲ ▲ to the cost to trigger Knockdown from Brawl [Striking] checks against the Brawler), Lucky Strike (Upon making a successful combat check, may spend a Story Point to add 4 damage to the attack), Power Attack (Suffer 3 Strain to add Concussive 1 and Pierce 4 to the next attack with a Brawl [Striking] weapon or a Brawl [Grappling] submission weapon).

**Abilities:** None.

**Weapons:** Looping Punch (Brawl [Striking]; Damage 5, Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Accurate 2, Disorient 1, Knockdown).

## FREESTYLE FIGHTER [NEMESIS]

The freestyle fighter takes techniques from across multiple martial arts disciplines, creating a hybrid style that typically incorporates maneuvers from Muay Thai kickboxing, Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, and American freestyle wrestling. These mixed martial artists are constantly probing their opponents by moving the fight from the ground to the feet and back again, learning where their opponent is weakest before committing to an attack strategy.



**Skills:** Brawl (Grappling) 2, Brawl (Striking) 2, Coercion 1, Coordination 3, Discipline 2, Resilience 3, Streetwise 1, Vigilance 3.

**Talents:** Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once), Control the Distance (Suffer 2 strain as a maneuver to add ✕ 🌀 to all incoming Melee and Brawl [Striking] checks and Brawl [Grappling] attacks with takedown weapons until the start of your next turn), Ground and Pound (While grappling, add +1 damage to Brawl [Striking] checks when in an Advantageous Position, or +2 damage while in a Superior Position), Iron Chin 2 (Add ▲ ▲ to the cost to trigger Knockdown from Brawl [Striking] checks against the Freestyle Fighter),

**Abilities:** Mix it Up (Add automatic ★ ▲ to any brawl or melee check so long as it uses a different skill than the last combat check made by this character this encounter).

**Weapons:** Straight Punch (Brawl [Striking]; Damage 4, Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Accurate 2, Knockdown).

Head Kick (Brawl [Striking]; Damage 6, Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Exhausting 1, Inaccurate 2, Knockdown, Pierce 3, Reach 1).

Double Leg Takedown (Brawl [Grappling]; Damage 4, Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Disorient 2, Ensnare 1, Exhausting 2, Prepare 1).

Arm Triangle Choke (Brawl [Grappling]; Damage 6, Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Ensnare 2, Exhausting 3, Inaccurate 3, Pierce 3, Prepare 2, Stun Damage).

**Equipment:** Taped Up (+0 defense, +0 soak).





## KICKBOXER [NEMESIS]

The kickboxer trains in remote areas, undergoing grueling training to harden their shin bones and learn the deadly art of Muay Thai. Known as the art of eight limbs, Muay Thai incorporates punches, elbows, kicks, and knee strikes to bludgeon an opponent. Kickboxers are aggressive and hit hard.



**Skills:** Brawl (Grappling) 1, Brawl (Striking) 4, Coercion 1, Coordination 1, Discipline 3, Resilience 2, Survival 1, Vigilance 3.

**Talents:** Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target Twice), Fancy Footwork (Suffer 2 strain as a maneuver to add ★ ▲ to this character's next Brawl [Striking] check), Iron Chin 2 (Add ▲ ▲ to the cost to trigger Knockdown from Brawl [Striking] checks against the kickboxer), Leg Kick (If this character scores a critical hit with a kick attack, instead of rolling a Critical Hit, kickboxer may spend a Story Point to cause the target to lose 1 point of Agility while standing. Counts as an Average (◆ ◆) Critical Injury), Spinning Attack (Make a Brawl [Grappling] combat check with a submission weapon or Brawl [Striking] combat check, and upgrade the difficulty twice. If successful, add the Vicious 3 weapon quality to the attack and reduce its Crit Rating by 1 (to a minimum of 1)).

**Abilities:** Eight Limbs (Add automatic ▲ ▲ to any Brawl [Striking] check so long as it uses a different unarmed weapon than the last combat check made by this character this encounter).

**Weapons:** Setup Punch (Brawl [Striking]; Damage 4, Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Accurate 2, Knockdown).

Cutting Elbow (Brawl [Striking]; Damage 2, Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Knockdown, Pierce 1, Reach -1, Vicious 2).

Body Kick (Brawl [Striking]; Damage 6, Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Exhausting 1, Inaccurate 2, Knockdown, Pierce 3, Reach 1).

Knee Strike (Brawl [Striking]; Damage 4, Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Disorient 2, Knockdown, Pierce 2).

**Equipment:** Taped Up (+0 defense, +0 soak).

## SUBMISSION ARTIST [NEMESIS]

The submission artist is a master at a classic submission style, usually judo, jujitsu, or Brazilian jujitsu. They use their unique skills to get fights to the ground, isolate a limb, and apply pressure until bones and tendons snap, or their opponent surrenders. True masters are just as dangerous off their back as they are when on top, and they can even trick opponents into following them to the ground.



**Skills:** Brawl (Grappling) 3, Brawl (Striking) 1, Cool 2, Coordination 1, Deception 2, Streetwise 2, Vigilance 3.

**Talents:** Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once), Leaping Attack (Once per encounter, suffer 2 strain to target an enemy within short range with any unarmed Grappling submission weapon as if engaged. If successful, the attack gains Breach +1 and adds +4 damage to the attack), Submission Specialist (May upgrade the difficulty of a submission attack once to remove Prepare 1 from the weapon), Takedown Defense (May suffer 2 strain to upgrade the difficulty of any incoming Brawl [Grappling] check to use a takedown weapon once).

**Abilities:** Pull Guard (Once per encounter as a maneuver, make an Opposed Deception versus Vigilance check against a target within short range. If successful you are now grappled with that target, on the ground, and the target has the Advantageous Position), Sneaky Guard (Once per encounter while grappling, when the opponent has an advantageous or superior position, this character can act as though they have an advantageous position while making a submission attack).

**Equipment:** Arm Bar Submission (Brawl [Grappling]; Damage 2, Critical 1; Range [Engaged]; Ensnare 2, Exhausting 1, Inaccurate 3, Pierce 5, Prepare 2, Vicious 1).

Hip Toss Takedown (Brawl [Grappling]; Damage 5, Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Disorient 2, Ensnare 1, Exhausting 2, Prepare 1).

**Equipment:** Taped Up (+0 defense, +0 soak).

## WRESTLER [NEMESIS]

Wrestlers endure some of the most relentless physical training of all combat sports athletes. Their fitness, especially their cardio endurance, is off the charts. They excel at two areas of grappling: the takedown, and controlling an opponent from the top. Most wrestlers prefer single and double leg takedowns, which require strenuous effort. Once they've downed an opponent, they work to gain control of their opponent's posture, effectively pinning them and rendering them unable to move.



**Skills:** Athletics 2, Brawl (Grappling) 4, Brawl (Striking) 1, Discipline 3, Resilience 3, Survival 1, Vigilance 1.

**Talents:** Adversary 2 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target twice), Second Wind 3 (Once per encounter, may heal up to 3 strain as an incidental), Takedown Defense Improved (May suffer 2 strain to upgrade the difficulty of any incoming Brawl [Grappling] check to use a takedown weapon once. Attacker suffers 1 strain, +1 strain per net ✕), Will To Fight (May spend a Story Point to treat Brawn as +2 when making a Resilience check).

**Abilities:** Top Control Expert (When this character has an Advantageous Position or Superior Position while Grappling, they double the effects of having that position).

**Equipment:** Joint Submission (Brawl [Grappling]; Damage 2, Critical 1; Range [Engaged]; Ensnare 2, Exhausting 1, Inaccurate 3, Pierce 5, Prepare 2, Vicious 1).

Single Leg Takedown (Brawl [Grappling]; Damage 5, Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Disorient 2, Ensnare 2, Exhausting 1, Prepare 1).

## FAIR REFEREE [RIVAL]

A referee is often an assigned, trained individual knowledgeable about the rules of combat sports. The job can be quite dangerous, standing next to two individuals throwing wild punches. Refs need to be quick on their feet and have great focus and awareness to avoid getting in the way or catching an accidental strike.

## USING THE REF

A referee has ultimate power within the ring. The ref can alter fights in a number of ways, as the GM sees fit, and sometimes fighters lobby a ref via their suite of social skills when they believe an illegal blow was struck, or to be more vigilant of other forms of cheating. A ref's powers are as follows:

**Reset:** When a round ends or whenever there is a stall in the action, a referee can force fighters to their neutral corners. In the event fighters don't want to do this, the referee uses their Leadership skill to order it. Failure to comply can result in a disqualification.

**Illegal Blow:** In the event a referee sees an illegal blow (A GM might decide this accidentally occurs if ☹ ☹ ☹ or ☹ occur on a successful combat check) the fighters are separated while the referee issues a warning and takes a point away on the judges' scorecards (see judges, page 84), or disqualifies the fighter. The severity of the punishment depends on the damage done, and potentially a social check from the fighter in question to convince the ref it was accidental.

**Disqualification:** The fight is over, and the disqualified fighter has lost.



**Skills:** Athletics 2, Brawl [Grappling] 1, Discipline 2, Knowledge [Lore] 3, Leadership 3, Medicine 1, Vigilance 2.

**Talents:** None.

**Abilities:** Clean Break (May make an Average (◆ ◆) Athletics or Leadership check as an action [depending on if the fighters recognize the referee or not]. If successful, two engaged characters are separated to short range).

**Equipment:** Referee uniform, whistle (Add ■ to Leadership checks).

# CHAPTER 8: THE STREET BRAWLER SETTING

The street brawler setting includes two primary inspirations—most kung-fu stories told in the modern day (such as *Rumble in the Bronx*, or the *The Raid*), and most importantly, classic 1980s side-scrolling beat 'em up games like *Double Dragon* and *Streets of Rage*. This setting is also great for street-level superhero stories, like *Batman*, *Daredevil*, or *Iron Fist*. The basic theme is that a small group of heroes who, either for rescue or revenge, must battle their way through several dangerous neighborhoods. Each area is often afforded a unique, over the

top identity and thematic feel. Eventually, they face the orchestrator in a climatic final battle.

While the Pro Wrestling and Tournament settings are focused on one-on-one combat, the street brawler is focused on fighting larger groups. Mechanically speaking, this is a combat-heavy style of game focused on fighting wave after wave of minion groups with a sprinkling of tougher foes, as well as larger-than-life boss-type enemies.

## TROPES

Street brawling stories traditionally open with a kidnapping, though a murder, assault, or missing person is also possible. The victim is usually a love interest or a family member. While this type of story can be told in a variety of ancient, futuristic, and fantasy settings, it is most often told in a modern era, or a retro era set in the 1970s or 1980s, during which gang violence was a major concern in US cities. Of course, regardless of the where and the when, there are a number of defining tropes of the street brawler story, many of which are discussed below.

### THE KIDNAP VICTIM

The classic start to any street brawler story is a loved one being kidnapped or attacked or even killed. While a love interest is the most common victim, kid siblings (genetic or chosen), elderly parental figures, or best friends/twins also serve as targets. The heroes are left to deal with a gang of minions while the big boss escapes with their crimes or their victim, urging the hero on a quest to locate them and get revenge against those responsible.

While such a story can be as simple as you want, it can prove more rewarding to come up with a reason for the initial criminal act. Did a kid brother witness a murder? Is the love interest heir to a secret fortune? Is the elderly parent the owner of real estate a large business needs to build a new billion-dollar condo building? Leaving a reason or some kind of mystery for players to unravel can add to the texture of the story, and give an opportunity to have some non-combat encounters. Players might investigate for clues, have social encounters with witnesses, and more.

It's also an option to end with a twist. The kidnap victim has perhaps switched sides, luring the heroes out of their own neighborhood, and setting them up to take the fall for the villain's other heinous crime. They might have switched sides willingly, lying to the hero for months, or are perhaps under a toxic influence. Such a betrayal can add real drama to the adventure finale.

### SUPERHERO GAMES

The nature of most superhero stories focus on unarmed combat, or at the very least, up close melee weapon combat. Many superheroes are also strongly associated with a single city. GMs might find that the street brawler setting is a good fit for telling certain kinds of superhero stories, particularly those centered on less cosmic and more street level superheroes who don't rise too far above what elite athletes are capable of.

When venturing into a super-powered brawler campaign, make sure to reference the GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 25) Superheroes Tone. There you can find rules for powering up your heroes with super-characteristics and making enemies easier to mow through with puny minions. For some heroes, the magic rules, or some of the Qi-based signature moves (see page 64) can function as brawl-friendly super-powers.



## MINION WAVES

Perhaps the most important trope of the classic brawler is, well, the brawling. Heroes fight a seemingly infinite wave of enemies, each associated with their neighborhood theme not unlike the 1979 cult classic movie *The Warriors*. A fight near a sports stadium might feature enemies all clothed in team hats and jerseys using sports equipment as improvised weaponry, for instance.

Generally speaking, all the muscle and goons are taking orders from the one who engineered the crime that set the heroes on their path. However, it's just possible that these individuals are defending their turf, or have their own past and history with the heroes that make violence their first response. Don't be afraid to add complexity where necessary to add meat to the story, but the strength of this genre is senseless and endless beat 'em up action!

## NEIGHBORHOODS

To go along with the waves of enemies are their native, well-defined neighborhoods. New York City has its five boroughs, each full of several neighborhoods. Chicago has its 50 distinct neighborhoods. Each has its own typical denizen, local landmarks, and a unique vibe. The same is true of the Street Brawler setting. The fictional neighborhoods always have catchy, colloquial names, not found on any official city map, but how the place is known to most residents.

When creating a neighborhood, it's best to consider a single landmark, and build a theme around it. A stadium, park, seedy bar, museum, skyscraper, beach, almost any major building or area in a city can function as the neighborhood landmark. The most important thing is that it's a single area that can tie together the design of the entire location, influencing the clothes, improvised weapons, and overall feel of the enemies and bystanders in the area.

## BOSS BATTLES

After fighting through waves of enemies, there is inevitably a larger-than-life leader who confronts the heroes. This might be a gang leader, a crime boss, or some other "in charge" figure. While these bosses often have support from underlings large and small, they are themselves very formidable in combat. These bosses might employ weapons, including swords, nunchaku, firearms, or something even more exotic that fits with the theme of the neighborhood they represent.

When creating your own boss character, remember to tie them in with the theme of both the local neighborhood and the rival and minion underlings that serve them. These bosses should almost always be nemesis characters, and generally, they need to be able to stand up to a team of heroes pummeling them. To deal with this imbalance, it is best to give them either great soak (4-6) or great defense (2 or 3), and consider letting them have two initiative slots per round, particularly if you have four or more heroes, or if the boss has few underlings to split the attention of the heroes.

## IMPROVISED WEAPONS

One of the more iconic elements of the street brawler setting is the prevalence of "street" weapons. These include weapons used in fictionalized gang violence like switch-blades, chains, bats, and such. However, it also includes more improvised and found weapons, such as bricks, wooden crates, trash cans, lengths of pipe or tire irons. Anything, in the right hands, can become a weapon.

While most improvised weapons are handled through the improvised weapons rules (*GENESYS* Core Rulebook page 109), some deserve special recognition. The local enemies the heroes are likely to run into favor small, concealable weapons, or those that can be mistaken for non-threatening everyday items or sports equipment. That said, some neighborhoods might be exceptions to this rule, either because there is very little law enforcement presence (so carrying weapons overtly goes unpunished) or people are searched for weapons thoroughly (such as a stadium or government building).

## EXAMPLE SETTING: RUMBLE CITY

**R**umble City is a Great Lakes rustbelt city overrun with crime. Gang violence rules the streets, barely insulated from the few wealthy areas of the city, many of which use private protection services. Kids struggle to survive without a gang affiliation. The better off families can afford to send their kids to one of the dojos, which can insulate their kids from the worst of the gang violence. Of course, gangs have started infiltrating dojos in response. Many innocent families are caught in the middle, just trying to survive or escape the carnage.

Police are corrupt and over-extended. There are entire neighborhoods all but walled off from the rest of the city. Once bustling pharmaceutical factories are now taken over by squatters and addicts, or worse—gangs producing opioids and party drugs. Turf wars are common, and ambitious gangs ensure the police barricade around Bangertown extends a little further into Pillsville and Bloodshot Borough every few months.

### A CITY ON FIRE

Rumble City was doing great a few decades ago during the pharmaceuticals manufacturing boom. Unfortunately, about twenty years ago most of them shipped their drug manufacturing overseas. The boom and subsequent bust stranded a lot of working-class people in the city, where the jobs have evaporated, and gang violence and drug use has taken over. The rampant unemployment created a crime wave of muggings, petty theft, and robberies. Worse, many turned to drugs or alcohol, wallowing in despair.

There has always been a strong gang presence in Bangertown, and they traffick in all manner of illicit wares and services. However, their influence was once limited and checked by local law enforcement. The city tax revenue has collapsed in the economic slump, and city officials were forced to accept pay cuts, including police. This bred a system of corruption, where the gangs have found newfound freedom to operate with impunity all across Rumble City.

Today, the city is transformed into a crumbling, rusting skeleton of what it once was. Mayor Covington is seen as an amoral extension of the entrenched corruption rampant throughout the police department and local courts. City services are among the worst in the nation, with some of the lowest quality tap water, sanitation, and electricity service delivery on record.

### SENSITIVE SUBJECTS

The beat 'em up setting, traditionally, deals with cities overrun with criminal elements. In today's world, such story elements can have racial undertones that, if not carefully considered, might inadvertently offend players, or perhaps bystanders if playing in a public venue. Be careful using accents and slang at your table, and make sure to have a discussion with your players beforehand about what is and is not acceptable behavior at the table.

Beyond that, there is an opportunity to tell stories that touch on modern issues of wealth and income inequality, gentrification, drugs, gangs, crime, punishment, and other politically sensitive topics. While we encourage you to explore the full storytelling potential of this setting, again, it is best to have an open and frank discussion with your players beforehand. The purpose of these games is to have fun. Make sure everyone is comfortable and on the same page regarding what is and is not acceptable, so everyone at your table can enjoy the mayhem.

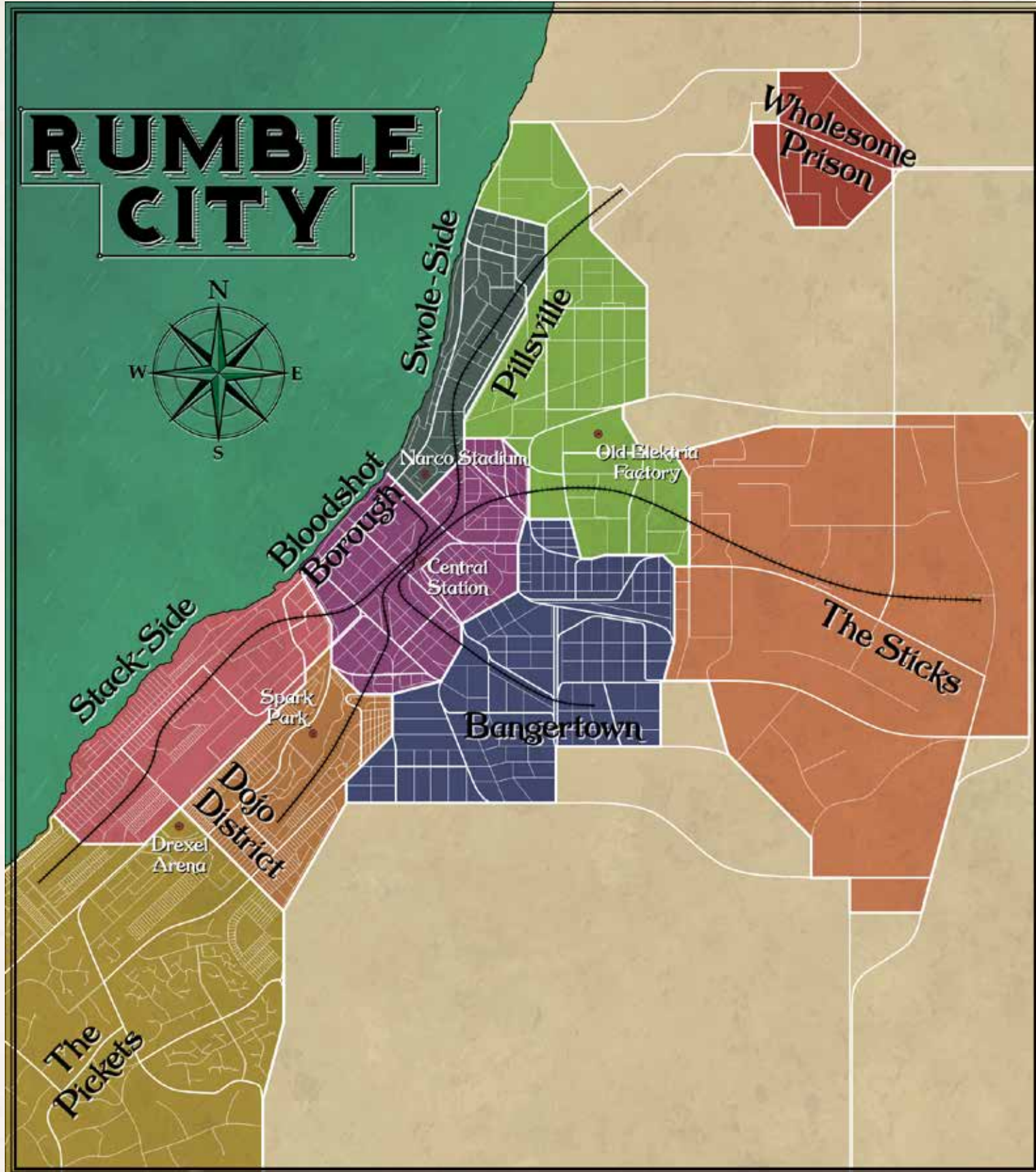
### THE NEW WEALTHY

With factories selling for rock-bottom prices, and a fearful populace, some arms manufacturers have moved into Rumble City, selling guns and other self-defense equipment to the middle and upper class neighborhoods. Steel doors, bars for windows, and high-tech security systems and security contractors are all available to those wealthy enough to own a home. Unfortunately, few outside the homeowners living in the high-rise condos and lavish brownstones of Stackside, or the McMansions of the Pickets can afford such measures. The lower-income rental community is often left to fend for itself, at the mercy of what meager security landlords are willing to provide.

### ADVENTURES IN RUMBLE CITY

Rumble City is a broken city in desperate need of heroes to give hope to what good people remain, and remind those criminals that justice will come for them. In Rumble City, a party of heroes must take to the streets to mete out their own justice to save or avenge a loved one. This path of vengeance will take them across the city, and perhaps to prison, the offices of city hall, or the private stadium box seats of a wealthy sports fan.





Between combat encounters where heroes pummel violent street gangs, corrupt cops, and escaped prisoners. The heroes must juggle their quest for justice and helping their neighbors, often good people just struggling to

get by in a cold and hard world. This conflict between helping the innocent or solving the problems of the city and saving or avenging their own loved one drives much of the internal conflict heroes face in Rumble City.



# SETTING LOCATIONS

**R**umble City has six major neighborhoods within the city proper. While these are hardly the only neighborhoods, and there are several smaller, distinct areas within each, most all city residents are intimately familiar with these six, and their relative level of safety. The suburban areas outside the city range from warrens of trailer home parks and undeveloped woods to closed communities with upper-middle class families.

## BANGERTOWN

Along the south-eastern edge of Rumble City, the crime-infested Bangertown is a failed neighborhood, abandoned by the city and left to the gangs. The train line that once ran from Bangertown through Bloodshot Borough to the lakefront has long been shut down (though rumors of a functioning car used for high level meetings between gang leaders persist), and the police barricade the streets to limit vehicle access. Those living in Bangertown are either fully invested in one of the many gangs that turf out the neighborhood, or desperate people trying to scrape enough money together to escape.

When property values dropped through the floor fifteen years ago, the city bought up the land, technically making nearly all Bangertown government housing. While power, water, and gas still run through the neighborhood, many homes have limited access, and what access they get is unreliable at best. Most people live only slightly better than the squatters next-door in Pillsville.

What few businesses remain are controlled by the gangs, used to launder money and serve as hangouts. A few independent businesses are still around, but most begrudgingly pay protection to one gang or another, and still invest heavily in physical security measures to protect their storefronts. Many business owners eat and sleep at work, always on watch for a break-in or riot.

There are five major gangs in Bangertown, and a dozen smaller ones, each fighting over turf block by block on a daily basis. The Black Vultures are the most powerful gang at the moment, identifiable by their black leathers and red color accents featuring an upside-down anarchy symbol. The Black Vultures control much of the territory near the borders of Bloodshot Borough and Pillsville, and enjoy peace treaties with the West Side Dragons (which controls the border near Dojo District) and the Five Kings Gang (which controls the rest of the Bloodshot Borough Border), as well as half a dozen smaller gangs.

The Black Vultures biggest enemies are the Skinheads. They control much of the meth labs and trailer parks in the Sticks, and fight the Vultures over turf along the Pillsville border. Their other rival for territory is Los Depredadores, which controls a large swath of central Bangertown. While these major gangs have several smaller affiliates and allied gangs, violence and deals across factional lines are common.

## BLOODSHOT BOROUGH

The proper downtown area of Rumble City, Bloodshot Borough (named for the bloodshot eyes across the neighborhood at sun-up) is the bar capitol of Rumble City. There are high-end bars and restaurants along the lakefront, not too far from City Hall and other government buildings. As you get further East toward Bangertown, the prices drop, but so does the safety and cleanliness. The bars along the border with Bangertown are mostly dives, pool halls, and slimy underground dance clubs.

Gang members, particularly Black Vultures, Five Kings, and Los Depredadores often start trouble in the bordering establishments. Police patrol the borough relentlessly, but they can only cover so many spots, and trouble seems to break out at all of them on a nightly basis. Bar owners often look to their own security teams for help, or barring that, brave regular customers willing to stick up for their favorite hangout.

## CENTRAL STATION

The big landmark in the Borough is the mammoth elevated train terminal where the two train lines (and the defunct “rust line” that served Bangertown) meet. The terminal itself is well protected, but pickpockets, con artists, and other criminals are often about, using the crowds to ply their trade.

## DOJO DISTRICT

The Dojo District is a neighborhood best known for its countless fight schools, from traditional dojos to modern boxing and MMA gyms. Here, middle-class families are barely holding the line against the West Side Dragons, who keep expanding their territory southwest and infiltrating dojos. Still, for now Dojo District has functioning public schools, a healthy amount of restaurants and stores to serve the local community, and a moderate police presence, though allegations of police brutality are a growing issue.

Hundreds of fight camps exist in Dojo District, some that have national prevalence in combat sports, such as Rumble City Boxing and Let's Rumble MMA. The high school wrestling programs in Dojo District are always the teams to beat during state and national championships, particularly Baumgartner High. The citizens here feel compelled to fight for what they have, a fact the West Side Dragons have been learning one broken nose at a time.

### SPARK PARK

Just because Dojo District is resistant to gang activity doesn't mean it's free from violence. Known as Spark Park, this centrally located green space in Dojo District is a popular haunt for various combat sports students. In addition to more friendly sparring matches between fellow students, it's common for rival schools to get into fights that sometimes turn into near-riots on the weekends and during holidays.

### PILLSVILLE

The northern end of Rumble City, just East of the beaches of Swole-Side, is Pillsville, the city's manufacturing district. Not long ago, a significant percentage of American pharmaceuticals were manufactured here, before the work was outsourced. Now, hundreds of factories lie dormant, emptied of valuables and evacuated of personnel. The homeless have overrun the district, squatting in rusting factories in hard-scrabble makeshift communes.

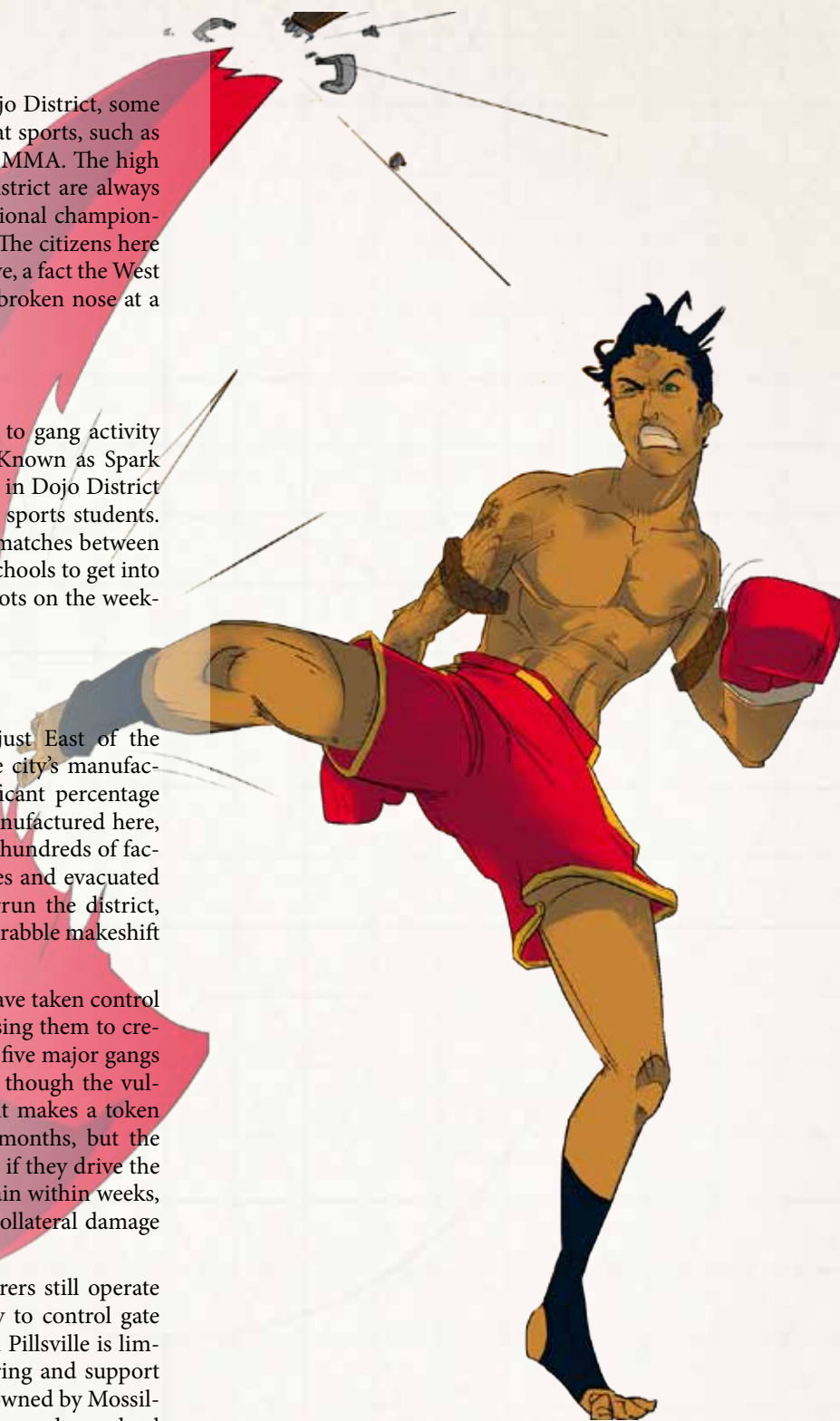
However, a small number of gangs have taken control of a handful of abandoned factories, using them to create mass quantities of illicit drugs. The five major gangs each control at least one such factory, though the vultures operate several. Law enforcement makes a token effort to reclaim factories every few months, but the operations are doomed to failure. Even if they drive the gangs out, the factories are overrun again within weeks, often with intense gang violence and collateral damage as the factions vie for control.

Beyond the gangs, a few manufacturers still operate in the area, employing armed security to control gate and building access. Police presence in Pillsville is limited to assisting legitimate manufacturing and support businesses. The largest such factory is owned by Mossil-Max, which creates testosterone-based powder and gel products.

### OLD ELEKTRIA FACTORY

Long under the control of the Black Vulture Gang, the old Elektria factory used to manufacture male performance enhancement pills, before moving operations overseas

to escape FDA regulations. The Black Vultures use the factory to create a variety of party drugs, running it in secret off independent generators. The drugs, stamped with their anarchy "A", infest the city's nightclubs. It is one of their most profitable facilities, the Vultures' best fighters and weaponry are on site at all times, ensuring police or a rival gang don't make a move on it.



## SWOLE-SIDE

The lakefront property north of Bloodshot Borough is known as Swole-Side, largely for the muscle-bound figures that converge along the boardwalk from sun-up to sunset. Power lifters, joggers, cyclists, skaters, and more sweat under the open sky. There are countless open-air gyms, skate parks, volleyball, tennis, and basketball courts. Thanks to decades of toxic dumping from Pillsville factories, the beach is still closed to swimming more often than not, though the mass exodus of manufacturing has created a trend toward more annual swim days.

While Swole-side is one of the more family-friendly regions of Rumble City, it's hardly safe. 'Roided out power-lifters take offense to the barest slight, eager to prove their strength. Rabid sports fans, filled with too much alcohol and frustration over the latest game at Narco Stadium likewise seek targets for their temper tantrums. And if the sports fans aren't starting fights in impotent rage after a loss, they're starting riots after an unexpected victory.

## NARCO STADIUM

The largest stadium in Rumble City, Narco Stadium is home to Rumble City's Football and Baseball teams. The Poppers are one of the worst teams in all of baseball, and haven't won a title in over sixty years. Still, the fan base is loyal, and the tickets remain cheap, leading to above average attendance at home games. The Howlers (the professional football team) are coming off their first playoff appearance in twenty years, with a young team and a head coach that was born in Rumble City. The Howlers fans are particularly rabid, especially if an unkind word is said about Coach Jimmy Lee Williams.

## STACK-SIDE

The southern lakefront property is known as Stack-side, one of the few affluent areas left in Rumble City. Toward the downtown area, there is a small commodities exchange and shopping district. Southward, the high-end stores give way to restaurants and high-rise condos, and eventually spacious, historical brownstones and beach houses.

While the police presence in Stack-side is significant, most of the wealthy rely on private security. For most kids in the Dojo District, the biggest dreams they have are

getting cushy bodyguard assignments with the wealthy, driving them around shopping and keeping an eye out for gangs and muggers. State-of-the-art security systems often augment the abilities of physical bodyguards and drivers. While attempted break-ins and home invasions are common in Stack-Side, few are successful.

## THE PICKETS

South of Stack-Side is a vast collection of suburbs collectively known as "The Pickets," where families live the idyllic, white-picket-fence lifestyle most Rumble City denizens can barely imagine. The pickets vary from upper-middle-class single family homes to estates and mansions on vast wooded or beachfront properties. Drexel Arena, which hosts the professional basketball and hockey teams, is technically in the Pickets, but near the border with Dojo District and Stack-side. While violent crime isn't much of an issue in the Pickets, break-ins are common. Professional criminals looking for big scores hit the mansions, while lower-rent criminals hit middle-class homes in the suburbs, stealing cars and jewelry.

## THE STICKS

The north-eastern suburbs are known as the Sticks, surrounded by undeveloped property and untamed forest, it's well-isolated from the Pickets. Life in the Sticks isn't much better than Bangertown. The gangs are just as prevalent in the trailer parks, mostly the various skinhead factions who deal in meth and arms. Poverty is as widespread as the crime, and most can't afford to leave their slowly crumbling, long-immobile mobile homes. One of the few hopes for any income is to work with the skinhead gangs, letting them store drugs, money, or evidence on your property.

## WHOLESOME PRISON

In a lot of ways, Wholesome Prison is a microcosm of Rumble City. The gangs are all strongly represented among the criminal population, and those without an affiliation rarely survive more than a few weeks. Fatalities in the prison are frequent, and the guards are said to be as corrupt as those they incarcerate. Warden Fielding is rumored to arrange for the beating and torture of prisoners he dislikes or considers trouble-makers. He's also rumored to be on the take from a number of different gangs, and arranges for contraband or even escapes from time to time.



# SETTING-SPECIFIC GEAR

Perhaps more than any other unarmed setting, Rumble City makes use of weaponry, largely in the form of improvised weapons found in its dark alleyways. Additionally, the equipment in the Modern Day setting in the **GENESYS** Core Rulebook (pages 166), as well as some weapons in the Fantasy setting are appropriate at the GM's discretion.

## WEAPONS

While the weapons of the other settings in this book all function well in the Street Brawler setting, this setting incorporates additional improvised weapons. Further, most ranged and melee weapons from the Modern Day setting of **GENESYS** Core Rulebook (pages 166) are also appropriate.

### BRASS KNUCKLES

A familiar street fight weapon, brass knuckles lend an edge to punching attacks. Easy to conceal and customize, they're a favorite of street gangs. Some brass knuckles appear as jewelry, shaped into words or designs, and in a variety of colors.

When making a Brawl (Striking) attack while wearing Brass Knuckles, add +1 to damage, and either add the Knockdown and Disorient 3 quality, or, if the attack

(such as a Punch instead of the natural unarmed attack) already has those qualities, instead add Disorient +1 and reduce the **A** needed to trigger the Knockdown Quality by one **A** (minimum **A**).

### SWITCHBLADE

Another weapon carried by gang members, the switchblade is a short handle with a concealed, extendable blade. This might represent a butterfly knife, which flips open, or a traditional switchblade, which has a mechanical, spring-loaded release. Either way, these knives are lethal stabbing weapons.




The switchblade adds ■ ■ to attempts to locate it on one's person, thanks to its concealable nature.

### WEIGHTED CHAIN

Barring any better weapons, a length of chain in the right hands can dominate a fight. Chain can parry attacks from swinging bats, legs, and swords alike, and even wrap around them, changing a fight into a grapple. Fighters can also swing a chain to keep attackers at bay, especially if there is a weight on the end of it.

**TABLE 8—1: STREET BRAWLER WEAPONS**

NAME	SKILL	DAM	CRIT	RANGE	ENCUM	HP	PRICE	RARITY	SPECIAL
<b>STRIKING WEAPONS</b>									
Brass Knuckles	Brawl (Striking)	+1	3	Engaged	1	0	25	3	Disorient 3, Knockdown
Switchblade	Melee	+1	2	Engaged	1	1	75	4	Pierce 2, Vicious 3
<b>GRAPPLING WEAPONS</b>									
Weighted Chain	Brawl (Grappling)	-1	5	Engaged	2	1	50	2	Ensnare 1, Defensive 1
<b>IMPROVISED MELEE WEAPONS</b>									
Baseball Bat	Melee	+2	3	Engaged	3	1	75	2	Cumbersome 2, Disorient 2, Knockdown, Reach 2, Vicious 2
Frying Pan	Melee	+1	4	Engaged	2	0	15	2	Defensive 1, Deflection 1, Disorient 2, Reach 1
<b>IMPROVISED RANGED WEAPONS</b>									
Barrel	Ranged	+5	3	Short	8	1	50	3	Concussive 1, Cumbersome 4, Exhausting 2, Interior 2, Knockdown, Limited Ammo 1, Prepare 2
Brick	Ranged	+3	3	Short	2	0	5	2	Disorient 1, Inferior 1, Limited Ammo 1

Add  to all Brawl (Grappling) checks while wielding a chain. If a character uses the Parry talent while wielding the chain, they can spend   generated on the attack to gain the Advantageous Position over that target in a grapple (see page 24). Further, fighters can swing the weighted chain as a weapon. Use the baseball bat stats, but add the Inaccurate 3, Reach 3, and Slow-Firing 1 weapon qualities.

## BASEBALL BAT

Lethal in close-quarters, the baseball bat easily snaps bones and puts down even the toughest fighters. Because it's such a common piece of sports equipment, many openly carry them around parks or stadiums. Still, those with bad intentions might add a spike or nails to cut opponents even on near misses.

When using the aim maneuver to aim for the head as a specific target, the subsequent attack gains Concussive 1.

## FRYING PAN

While hardly an ideal weapon, the frying pan can be useful during a home invasion. Getting bashed in the head with a cast iron pan can knock someone out or give them a concussion. It's also an effective defensive weapon, and the large cast iron surface can stop most weapons, even causing some lighter caliber bullets to ricochet.


## BARREL

Trash cans, oil cans, construction drums, there are all sorts of mostly-empty barrels on the streets waiting to be picked up and tossed at an unsuspecting opponent. Drums once filled with a flammable substance might still be explosive, if gaseous fumes are still sealed inside and they get the right spark.

Full barrels cannot be moved without some kind of forklift or dolly, or a **Formidable** (◆◆◆◆◆) **Athletics** check. But might be full of a flammable or corrosive substance if pierced or knocked over, at the GM's discretion.

## BRICK

Bricks and similarly heavy rocks, or even baseballs can get hurled at opponents to devastating effect. They can also function as a handheld weapon not unlike brass knuckles, slammed directly into an opponent's jaw or temple. Baseballs, hockey pucks, and other, similar items can also use this profile.

A successful melee combat check with a brick deals Brawn +1 damage, +1 damage per net , and still has the Disorient 1 and Inferior weapon qualities.

## ARMOR

While full-blown tactical armor is uncommon in Rumble City outside riot police or some private security, there are other forms of armor that are more common. Sports gear, thick, durable leather clothing, and even spiked or reinforced combat pads aren't unheard of. Further, the taped up armor (see page 34) is common in Dojo District.

## COMBAT PADS

Unlike protective pads, combat pads are sleek and defend striking and parrying surfaces of the body, like forearms and shins. When wearing combat pads, if a character has the Parry talent, they can use it to defend against melee weapons while unarmed. Combat pads often have a hard plastic or metal exterior, which can be spiked. Combat Pads can also act as a brawl weapon, doubling the price can add either +1 damage, +1 Vicious, or +1 Pierce to appropriate Brawl (Striking) checks at the GM's discretion.

## SPORTS PADS

Sports pads include sports helmets, football shoulder pads, and other equipment designed to absorb the shock of hits and collisions during play. Sports pads also reduce the severity of any Critical Injury results by 30, as if providing three ranks in the Durable Talent (GENESYS Core Rulebook, page 73).

TABLE 8—2: STREET BRAWLER ARMOR

TYPE	DEFENSE	SOAK	ENCUMBRANCE	PRICE	RARITY
Combat Pads	2	+1	8	500	6
Sports Pads	0	+2	8	300	4
Spiked Leathers	0	+1	4	300	5

## SPIKED LEATHERS

Many gang members favor spiked leather jackets and bracelets. Often intimidating, the spikes can do real damage under the right circumstances. But for the most part, the spikes are for show, letting anyone nearby know this is not a person to be trifled with.

If an incoming unarmed attack generates ☹ ☹ or ☹ against a target in spiked leathers, the target may spend those results to force the attacker to suffer 1 wound.

## GEAR

Rumble City denizens have all manner of civilian electronics of the era, and many are addicted to locally manufactured supplements and beverages.

### HYDRADE

A sugary sports drink often recalled for the presence of trace chemicals, Hydrade is popular with professional and aspiring athletes across Rumble City. The beverage comes in a variety of flavors that feature electric, almost glowing neon colors. The beverage features a seven-headed serpent as its mascot, each of which has a distinct personality used in advertising to comedic effect.


Drinking Hydrade as a maneuver recovers 4 strain, and adds  to all Brawn-based checks for the rest of the encounter. A character cannot benefit from Hydrade more than once per encounter. At the end of the encounter, reduce the character's strain threshold by two for the rest of the session.


TABLE 8-3: STREET BRAWLER GEAR

ITEM	ENCUM	PRICE	RARITY
Hydrade	1	5	2
Mossil-Max Pills	0	200	5

### MOSSIL-MAX PILLS

An anti-aging and pre-work-out supplement for men, Mossil-Max Pills are a testosterone-based steroid frequently abused in Rumble City. Known side-effects include increased aggression, lack of self-control, irrationality, and long-term, increased estrogen production. Police trying to take down enraged power lifters at Swole-Side Beach compare it to dealing with individuals under the influence of dissociative drugs like PCP.

Taking Mossil-Max Pills as a maneuver gives a character +1 Brawn for the remainder of the encounter. However, the character must upgrade the difficulty of all Cool and Discipline checks once for the remainder of the session. This penalty stacks if Mossil-Max Pills are taken in multiple encounters per session.

If a character who has taken Mossil-Max Pills uses the Berserk talent they must make a Brawl or Melee check every turn possible, even if it's against an ally. But they add  to Brawl and Melee combat checks, in addition to the benefits already granted by the Berserk talent. At the end of the encounter, the character suffers 4 additional strain.

## SETTING-SPECIFIC ADVERSARIES

Rumble City has several potential adversaries that players might encounter on the streets. The following are some extremely generic types of opponents that can belong to a variety of different street gangs, private security firms, or dojos.

### BYSTANDER [MINION]

Despite the threats lurking in every alley, most of Rumble City's citizens are just trying to scrape by one day at a time. Bystanders are often the victims of street gang assaults, kidnappings, muggings, home invasions, and hostage situations. This profile might represent someone street brawler heroes have to rescue, a key witness, or just someone to protect from becoming collateral damage.



**Skills (group only):** Athletics, Ranged, Streetwise, Vigilance.  
**Talents:** None.

**Abilities:** **Safe House** (Heroes in need can make a **Hard** (◆◆◆) **Social** check to convince the bystander to give them a place to lie low. The characters can escape and rest comfortably for up to 12 hours).

**Weapons:** Brick (Ranged; Damage 3, Critical 3; Range [Short]; Disorient 1, Inferior 1, Limited Ammo 1).

Frying pan (Melee; Damage 6, Critical 4; Range [Medium]; Defensive 1, Deflection 1, Disorient 2, Reach 1).



## STREET MUSCLE [MINION]

In Bangertown, gang members sit on every corner, in every hangout, and are lurking down every dark alley. But they are a common sight throughout Rumble City no matter the borough. Most are territorial, flashing their colors, and almost never alone. Seeing street muscle from one gang in another gang's area usually means trouble is about to break out.



**Skills (Group Only):** Brawl (Striking), Coercion, Cool, Streetwise.

**Talents:** None.

**Abilities:** Our Turf (During an encounter on home turf, the street muscle adds automatic **A** to all checks).

**Weapons:** Punch (Brawl [Striking]; Damage 4, Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Knockdown).

**Equipment:** Spiked Leathers (+0 Defense, +1 Soak).

## VIOLENT OFFENDER [MINION]

Some of Rumble City's gang members walk around armed with switchblades, ready to punish anyone who questions their toughness. Unfortunately, it's hard to tell them apart from their less lethal brethren. There's often a few in every pack of youth in gang colors, though. These characters are blooded, and have committed several violent crimes in their short lives.



**Skills:** Deception, Coercion, Melee, Vigilance.

**Talents:** None.

**Abilities:** Don't Start None... (If targeted by a social check that fails, may make a free combat check against that character as an incidental if they are at engaged range).

**Equipment:** Switchblade (Melee; Damage 3, Critical 2; Range [Medium]; Pierce 2, Vicious 3).

**Equipment:** Spiked Leathers (+0 Defense, +1 Soak), Moosil-Max Pills.

## ENFORCER [RIVAL]

Every gang leader has a handful of enforcers, the meanest, cold-blooded killers within their inner circle. The enforcers often lead bands of street muscle and violent offenders to shake down businesses for protection money, or get revenge on those who have wronged the gang or desecrated their turf. Enforcers kill without hesitation when the situation calls for it, but their fear-inducing presence is often enough to let the gang achieve its ends without unnecessary bloodshed. Of course, there is often necessary bloodshed.



**Skills:** Athletics 3, Brawl (Striking) 2, Coercion 1, Cool 2, Ranged 2, Streetwise 4, Vigilance 3.

**Talents:** Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once), Quick Draw (Once per round may draw or holster a weapon or item as an incidental), Quick Strike 3 (Adds **Q** **Q** **Q** to combat checks against targets that have not yet acted this encounter).

**Abilities:** Won't Be None... (When rolling initiative, may spend a Story Point to make up to three enemies within short range upgrade the difficulty of their initiative check once).

**Weapons:** Heavy Pistol (Ranged; Damage 7, Critical 3; Range [Medium]).

Punch (Brawl [Striking]; Damage 4, Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Knockdown).

**Equipment:** Flak Vest (+0 Defense, +2 Soak),

## SECURITY [RIVAL]

No matter if it's police or a private contractor, security personnel are a common sight around Rumble City. In general, their primary concern is protecting their charge, be it a wealthy individual, or their property. Little else matters. While private security is well paid, local police are relatively open to taking bribes to look the other way.



**Skills:** Athletics 2, Brawl (Grappling) 1, Coercion 3, Discipline 1, Leadership 1, Melee 3, Ranged 2, Streetwise 4, Vigilance 3.

**Talents:** Heightened Awareness (Allies within short range gain **H** to Perception and Vigilance checks. Allies at engaged range add **H** **H** instead).

**Abilities:** Protective Detail (May spend two maneuvers to select an ally or object within engaged range. Until the end of security's next turn, upgrade the difficulty of attacks against that target twice), What's in it for Me? (PCs can make a Hard (◆◆◆) Charm or Negotiation check against this character. Upon success, they reveal the location of a character, or other piece of information at the GM's discretion in exchange for 100 credits).

**Weapons:** Pistol (Ranged; Damage 6, Critical 3; Range [Medium]).

Baton (Melee; Damage 4, Critical 5; Range [Engaged]; Disorient 2).

**Equipment:** Flak Vest (+0 Defense, +2 Soak), Extra Clip, Portable Medkit.

### GANG LEADER [NEMESIS]

Behind the low-level muscle and trusted enforces is a gang's leader, who manages the gang's affairs and makes decisions regarding turf to defend, illicit activities to participate in, and who is allowed on their turf and what behavior is acceptable there. Some are relatively noble, defending their home turf from the more predator gangs. Others are greedy, bloodthirsty villains who need to be stopped.

3	4	2	4	2	3
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE		
5	15	13	1   1		

**Skills:** Athletics 2, Brawl (Striking) 4, Cool 4, Leadership 3, Melee 3, Negotiation 1, Streetwise 4.

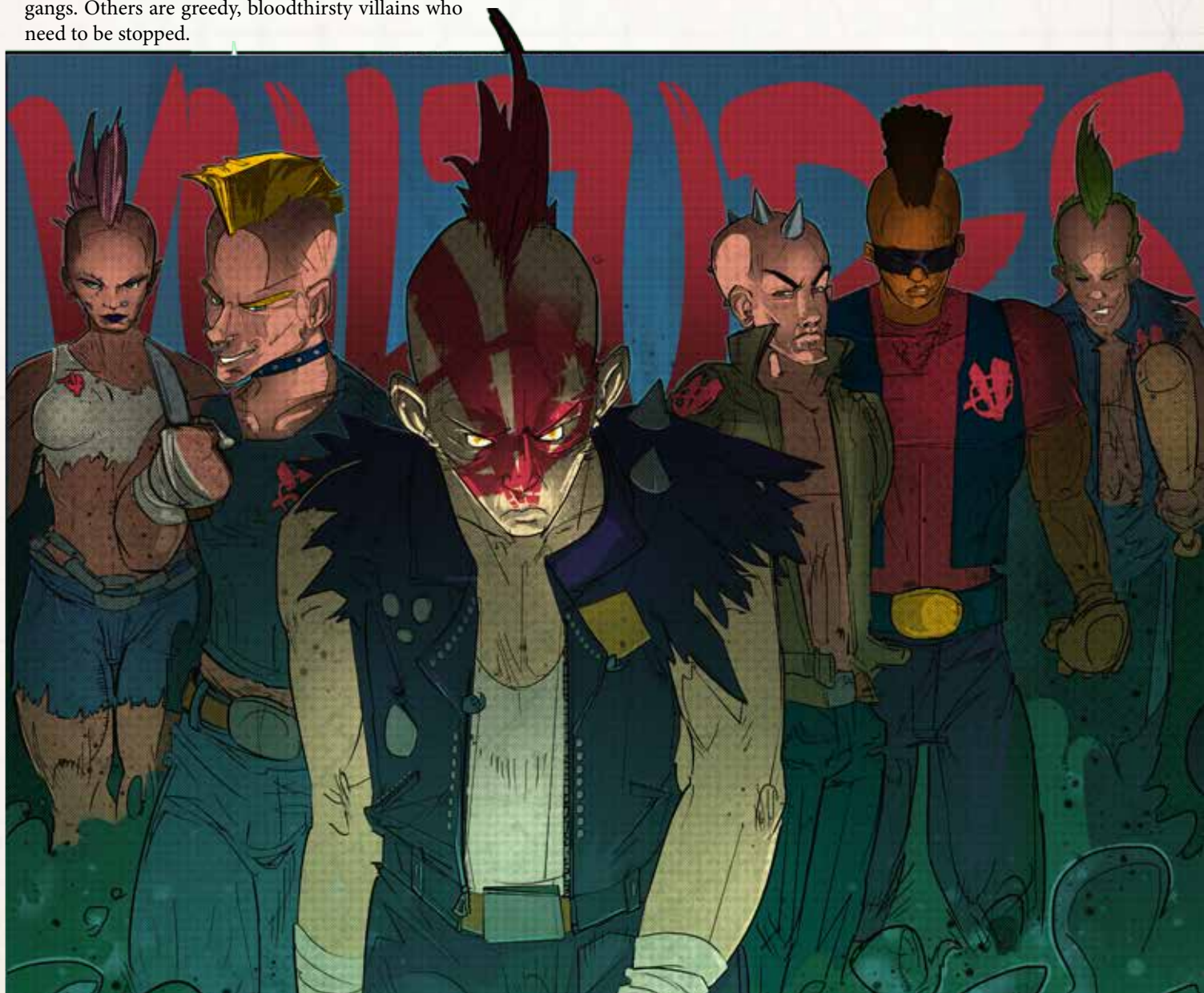
**Talents:** Adversary 2 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target twice), Dual Wielder (As a maneuver, decrease the difficulty of the next combined combat check once), Knack For It (Remove ■ ■ from Leadership and Streetwise checks)

**Abilities:** Beatdown (when making a Brawl [Striking] combat check against a target that is flanked [see page 27], add ✨ ⚡ to the check result).

**Weapons:** Serrated Machete (Melee; Damage 4, Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Defensive 1, Reach 1, Vicious 2).

Punch (Brawl [Striking]; Damage 4, Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Knockdown).

**Equipment:** Flak Vest (+0 Defense, +2 Soak).







# GM ADVICE

**I**n Part I we present the changes to the core rules and character options that you and your players can use. Part II explores the various unarmed settings and how to bring elements of unarmed combat into your own settings. In Part III, we give you tools to help bring those settings to life.

This is accomplished through the inclusion of some optional rules to make certain moments in an adventure feel larger and more impactful, as well as some general GM advice on creating stories that deal with unarmed characters. The optional rules help add structure to very specific types of social and combat encounters found across some or all of the settings presented in this book. The campaign advice provides advice for designing encounters, adventures, and campaigns.

## WHAT'S IN THIS PART OF THE BOOK?

This section is divided into two parts as follows:

- **Chapter 9—Optional Rules:** Presented here are rules that work in one or more of the settings in this book, but only apply to certain kinds of encounters. These rules should only be included when they can add something special to a scene, to lend variety to unarmed combat encounters and heighten the drama.
- **Chapter 10—Building Encounters and Campaigns:** When creating your own stories, developing a skeletal structure for encounters, adventures, and campaigns is important. Presented here is advice for doing just that, along with some new ideas for encounter structures that complement unarmed combat-focused characters.



# CHAPTER 9: OPTIONAL RULES

The following optional rules provide new ways to handle unarmed fighting in very specific moments that are unique to some of the settings in this book. Using one of these sets of rules every now and again can add a unique flavor to encounters that prevents them from feeling repetitive. This section has new rules for getting

knocked down and knocked out, and adding narrative rounds and judges to combat sports campaigns. There are also some sample mystical Qigong techniques and dark forbidden kung-fu techniques included. Finally, there are rules for simulating head games between fighters during interviews and stare downs.

## OPTIONAL RULES: KNOCK-DOWNS, KNOCK-OUTS, AND PINS

In some situations, particularly refereed tournament fights, such as boxing matches, when a character is knocked down they are given a ten count to regain their feet. In such situations, whenever the Knockdown quality is triggered from a Brawl (Striking) check, the target may, on their turn, make a Resilience check to regain their feet. See **Table 9-1** for the difficulty to stand back up after being knocked down.

Note that these same rules might get adapted to set the difficulty to escape the Ensnared status (which immobilizes or pins a character). In such cases, a GM might use these difficulties using an Athletics check instead of a Resilience check to let an Ensnared character kick out to prevent being pinned in a wrestling match. If this check is made simply to escape a pin, then all it does is break the ensnare quality, it does not remove an opponent's advantageous or superior grappling position, or any other considerations (unless dice results allow).



## OPTIONAL RULES: ROUNDS

In settings where combat sports are prevalent, GMs may wish to separate combat by narrative “rounds,” separate from the mechanical rounds of the game’s turn order. Three mechanical rounds are often enough to represent the significant action in a 3 to 5-minute round of combat, as fighters spend a lot of time circling and testing each other’s defenses. After each combatant has taken three turns, each should get a chance to rest for a turn and possibly benefit from a corner doctor and corner coaches. For the purposes of most abilities and talents, GMs might consider the start of each narrative round its own encounter, perhaps even re-rolling initiative.

Between narrative rounds, characters can use Resilience to recover wounds and strain. In this situation, make an **Easy (◆) Resilience check**, recover 1 wound for every net ★, and 1 Strain for every net ▲. If a ☼ is generated, the fighter may roll again for additional recovery. For a real battle of attrition, try increasing the difficulty of the Resilience check every round. Also, various support characters, such as corner doctors and coaches deserve one turn to ply their trade, which might heal additional damage, critical hits, or provide buffs to the coming round.

### USING JUDGES’ SCORECARDS

While the best fights using this supplement are going to have a clear victor, GMs using the optional rule for rounds might find some fights end without anyone defeated. In these cases, fights go to the judges for a decision victory. GMs have a few options to represent this. Which rules a GM chooses might depend on the rules of the actual tournament (does it take into account a holistic view of the fight, or a round by round scoring system).

#### HOLISTIC JUDGING

To take a more holistic view of the fight, GMs might look at who has more wounds at the end of the fight, and decide that character lost on the judges score card.

TABLE 9–1: STAND UP DIFFICULTY

STATE OF HEALTH	DIFFICULTY TO STAND
Current wounds equal two or fewer	Easy (◆)
Current wounds equal half or less of wound threshold	Average (◆◆)
Current wounds equal more than half of wound threshold	Hard (◆◆◆)
Current wounds or strain within 2 of exceeding wound or strain threshold	Daunting (◆◆◆◆)
Easy (◆) or Average (◆◆) Critical Injury suffered	Add ■ per Critical Injury
Hard (◆◆◆) or Daunting (◆◆◆◆) Critical Injury suffered	Upgrade the difficulty once per Critical Injury

#### ROUND BY ROUND JUDGING

Alternatively, many fight sports determine winners by deciding who won the most rounds. GMs can decide who won each round (usually a matter of keeping track of successful attacks or damage dealt, which can be cumbersome). The GM might track the “winner” of each round based on which combatant dealt the most damage (+1 point per point of damage opponent suffers), taking into account knockdowns (+2 points per knockdown) and other significant moments (+3 points per Critical Injury dealt).

This way, should the total number of planned rounds expire, the GM can have judges use a scorecard to select a winner by decision. Of course, judges are flawed, and the GM can just as easily resolve the winner through their own intuition, or by having the fighters spend positive dice results to impact the judges’ scorecards.

#### SWAY THE JUDGES

A third option is to let fighters throw up their hands and attempt to sway the judges with a last moment social check. Have each fighter make a **Simple (–) Cool** or **Deception check** and see who gets more ★. You might make these checks more competitive by upgrading the difficulty once for each critical injury suffered by the fighter, and increase the difficulty once for the fighter who has suffered more wounds.

## OPTIONAL RULES: USING RINGS AND CAGES

Many fights take place in rings and cages, which provide unique environments experienced fighters can take advantage of. The ropes provide some elevation, perfect for adding impact to leaping attacks. Any character not presently involved in a grapple may spend a maneuver to climb the ropes if no enemies are within engaged range. Otherwise it requires an **Average** (◆◆) **Coordination Check** to climb the ropes. Once up, leaping from the ropes upgrades the ability of that character's next attack once.

**Table 9–2** details spending dice results in rings and cages, specifically using the ropes or cage wall as environmental factors in a fight. While the table assumes a fighter spending positive dice results to put their opponent in a bad position, a GM can easily switch ▲ for ♣ and ⚙ for ⚡ to create negative results for a fighter who over-committed on their attack or otherwise put themselves in a bad position.

**TABLE 9–2: SPENDING ▲ AND ⚙ IN RINGS AND CAGES**

COST	RESULT OPTION
▲▲	<b>Up Against the Ropes:</b> The target character has their back to a wall or the ropes of a ring. Add ■■ to the next check that character makes, and ignore one point of melee defense until the character escapes.
▲▲▲	<b>Tangled:</b> The target character becomes tangled in the ropes, as if suffering from the Ensnare 1 weapon quality.
⚙	<b>Backed into a Corner:</b> The target character is maneuvered into a corner. Upgrade the difficulty of the next check that character makes once, and ignore two points of Melee Defense while the target remains in the corner. Escaping the corner requires spending an action on an <b>opposed Athletics</b> or <b>Coordination check</b> (each fighter can use whichever they like).
⚙⚙	<b>Over the Ropes:</b> This character is knocked out of the ring, over the ropes, or something similar. That character suffers falling damage as normal if applicable.

## OPTIONAL RULES: QIGONG TECHNIQUES

Qigong techniques come from drawing Qi (also spelled Chi), a mystical life force shaolin monks attribute their superhuman feats to. This is a common enough theme for martial arts settings that it's worth exploring. These effects might be narratively described as subtle or overtly magical, depending on the setting. These abilities won't fit into every campaign setting concept, so make sure you discuss with your players which Qigong techniques you want to allow, and what shape and overt form they might take.

Qi Techniques are treated as talents, and use the talent Pyramid found in the **GENESYS** Core Rulebook as normal.

### DARK QI AND SORCERY

While all Qi techniques presented in this section rely on the Divine skill to represent the Qi as taught by shaolin monks seeking enlightenment, it is possible these powers come from other, darker sources. GMs may wish to substitute the Divine checks with Primal checks for warriors drawing on a darker reflection of Qi, or even Arcana if the powers are coming from more arcane sorcery.



**TABLE 9—3: QIGONG TECHNIQUES**

NAME	ACTIVATION	TIER
Energy Strike	Active (Action)	3
Fireball	Active (Action)	3
Iron Shirt	Active (Action)	3
Regeneration	Active (Action)	3
Enlightened State	Active (Action)	4
Peerless Athleticism	Active (Action)	4

## TIER 3 TALENTS

### ENERGY STRIKE

The Qi can be channeled into a strike, adding significant force to the blow.

**Tier:** 3

**Activation:** Active (Action)

**Ranked:** No

When making an unarmed attack against a target, once per encounter, may make a Divine check instead of a Brawl (Striking) check for the attack. Add the Breach 1 weapon quality to the strike.

### FIREBALL

Some warriors can project Qi energy at opponents over a distance, creating beams of light or fireballs.

**Tier:** 3

**Activation:** Active (Action)

**Ranked:** Yes

Spend a story Point to make a Divine check as if it were a ranged skill to target an enemy character as if possessing the following weapon:

Fireball (Divine; Damage 5, Critical 5; Range [Short]; Burn 1, Knockdown, Pierce 3)

Each time this talent is repurchased, increase the Damage, Range, and Burn rating by 1, and reduce the Crit Rating by 1.

### IRON SHIRT

When a warrior focuses, they can become seemingly immune to all damage, including bullets, blades, and brute force.

**Tier:** 3

**Activation:** Active (Action)

**Ranked:** No

Make a **Hard** (◆ ◆ ◆) **Divine check** as an action. Increase soak +1 for every net ✨ until the start of your next turn.

### REGENERATION

Individuals can focus their Qi to heal and recover more quickly than most.

**Tier:** 3

**Activation:** Active (Action)

**Ranked:** No

Once per encounter, as an action, may make a **Simple** (–) **Divine check**. Heal one wound per net ✨, and 1 strain per net ▲. Alternately, can instead attempt to heal a Critical Injury, setting the difficulty of the Divine check equal to the difficulty to heal the Critical Injury.

## TIER 4 TALENTS

### ENLIGHTENED STATE

Those who reach enlightenment can have moments of clarity where they seem nigh-unbeatable.

**Tier:** 4

**Activation:** Active (Action)

**Ranked:** No

Spend a Story Point to make a **Hard** (◆ ◆ ◆) **Divine check**. On a success, your character enters an enlightened state for the remainder of the encounter. While in an enlightened state, this character adds ✨ ✨ ▲ to all outgoing Brawl and Melee checks, and may spend ▲ ▲ ▲ or ☸ generated on the initial Divine check to upgrade the difficulty of all incoming attacks once.

### PEERLESS ATHLETICISM

Warriors focusing their Qi can perform superhuman physical acts of strength, agility, and endurance.

**Tier:** 4

**Activation:** Active (Action)

**Ranked:** No

Once per session, spend a Story Point to make an **Average** (◆ ◆) **Divine check**. On a success, select either Athletics, Coordination, or Resilience. For the rest of the encounter, treat any uses of that skill as if the associated characteristic had a score of 6.

# OPTIONAL RULES: FORBIDDEN TECHNIQUES

While not necessarily magical or mystical in nature, the trope of the forbidden martial technique is common to martial arts stories. Those who discover or create these techniques soon realize they are far too dangerous for the un-enlightened to learn, and try to keep them secret from all but the worthiest of students. These abilities won't fit into every campaign setting concept, so make sure you discuss with your players which forbidden techniques you want to allow.

**TABLE 9–4: FORBIDDEN TECHNIQUES**

NAME	ACTIVATION	TIER
Forgetful Touch	Active (Action)	4
Paralyzing Nerve Strike	Active (Action)	4
Dim Mak Death Punch	Active (Action)	5

Forbidden Techniques are treated as talents, and use the talent Pyramid found in the **GENESYS** Core Rulebook as normal.

## TIER 4 TALENTS

### FORGETFUL TOUCH

Specific strikes to the temples can cause a varying degrees of amnesia.

**Tier:** 4

**Activation:** Action

**Ranked:** No

Spend a Story Point before making an unarmed combat check against a target at engaged range as normal. Increase the difficulty of the attack based on how much information you want the target to forget as determined by **Table 9–5**. On a success, the target suffers no damage, but forgets everything that happened during the specified period of time.

**TABLE 9–5: FORGETFUL TOUCH EFFECTS**

MAKE TARGET FORGET	INCREASE DIFFICULTY
The last round	None
The last encounter	Once
The last session or day	Twice
The past month	Three times
The past year	Four times
Total Amnesia	Five times

Targets affected by Forgetful Touch may try to remember the forgotten information up to once a week by making a **Formidable** (◆◆◆◆◆) **Discipline** check. Decrease the difficulty of this check cumulatively once per week, so after two weeks it is a **Daunting** (◆◆◆◆) **check**, and after three it's a **Hard** (◆◆◆) **Check**, and so on.

### PARALYZING NERVE STRIKE

Striking certain nerve clusters can cause complete paralysis.

**Tier:** 4

**Activation:** Action

**Ranked:** Yes

Whenever this character makes a Brawl (Striking) check, they may Spend a Story Point to upgrade the check a number of times equal to ranks in Paralyzing Nerve Strike. On a success, in addition to check resolution, the target is immobilized for a number of rounds equal to times the check was upgraded. Gain   on this check if using the Snake Hand unarmed combat weapon.

Targets can break free on their turn by succeeding on a **Hard** (◆◆◆) **Resilience** check that uses Willpower as a base attribute.

## TIER 5 TALENTS

### DIM MAK DEATH PUNCH

This strike stops the heart instantly.

**Tier:** 5

**Activation:** Action

**Ranked:** No

Once per session, may spend a Story Point to add Vicious +10 to a single Brawl (Striking) check using the basic unarmed attack, Punch unarmed weapon, or other unarmed hand strike weapon at the GM's discretion.

## OPTIONAL RULES: PSYCHE THEM OUT

Fighters sometimes seek to get in each other's heads, making attempts to attack an opponent's fighting spirit and psyche them out before a fight. To accomplish this, fighters might trash talk during interviews or press events leading up to a fight. Fighters might try to intimidate each other during a stare down, which takes place during a weigh-in event, or just before a fight begins. Finally, a fighter might get the crowd on their side, which can demoralize their opponent. Note that promoters, managers, and other allies can sometimes help with these checks or make them in place of a fighter at the GM's discretion.

### TRASH TALK

The main goal of trash talk is to get an emotional reaction from your opponent, or plant seeds of doubt in their ability to win. In most cases, those wanting to participate in trash talk can simply use the existing array of social encounter skills. See **Table 9–6** to view the array of skills that fighters might employ in a Trash Talk encounter.

Generally speaking, GMs can handle Trash Talk encounters as normal social encounters, where two characters make **opposed social checks**, dealing strain damage like attacks. When one character exceeds their strain threshold, they react emotionally, and lose that particular Trash Talk encounter. If a fight only presents one opportunity for trash talk, then the fighter who reacted emotionally (or lost) the war of words suffers the effects noted in **Table 9–4**.



Note that this single social encounter might also work as a training montage sequence that spans several media events, with one check per event (also see Training Montages for creating a framework on page 93). In that case, add the total number of ★ generated by each fighter. The character with the larger net ★ wins the Trash Talk battle. Alternately, GMs might set a ★ threshold for the effects to take place, which might result in both fighters getting in the other's head. In such cases, a threshold of two net successes, plus an additional net ★ per check in the sequence is a fair threshold.

### STARE DOWNS

The stare down is one of the most iconic pre-fight moments before a major bout. Seeing the two fighters stand nose to nose gives fans a chance to see how they size up next to each other. It's also a chance for fighters to try and intimidate each other. Fighters can use the stare down as yet another opportunity to Trash Talk (see the previous section). But in most cases, the stare down is its own thing.

To run a Stare Down, have each fighter make a Fear check, using the opponent's Coercion skill check pool to determine the difficulty. Also factor in Fighter Size (see page 27) differences into this check. To handle the results of the check, see the Effects of Fear (**GENESYS Core Rulebook**, pages 243–244).

**TABLE 9–6: TRASH TALK STRATEGIES**

SKILL	EFFECT
Charm or Leadership	Makes opponent underestimate you (Charm), or expresses supreme self-confidence (Leadership). Add  to all Brawl checks in the first narrative round of the match (usually three rounds of combat).
Coercion	Intimidates opponent, demoralizing them. Treat their strain and wound threshold as 1 less for the first round of narrative combat.
Cool or Discipline	Refuses to engage in Trash Talk, any effects an opponent generates only effect this character for the first mechanical round of combat.
Deception	Make up lies about opponent, enraging them. Opponent suffers adrenaline dump, upgrades the first check they make to recover strain or wounds between rounds twice (does not apply to corner coaches or doctors).
Knowledge (Tactics) or Perception	Point out specific holes in opponent's game, planting doubt. They suffer  to all Brawl checks in the first narrative round of the match (usually three rounds of combat).



## WORKING THE CROWD

Combat sports always have an audience, and their participation can energize or demoralize a fighter. These rules are especially useful for Pro Wrestling and Tournament Settings. Sometimes, when a wrestler is near defeat, the crowd can almost induce an invulnerable state, allowing wrestlers to push past pain and defeat their enemies. A jeering audience can similarly demoralize a fighter when they are already weak.

This is best accomplished by using a skill challenge, where reaching the entire crowd requires a certain number of net ★ results. During interviews, or other opportunities to address the entire audience, wrestlers can spend net ★ (GMs may allow players to spend ▲ to count as ★ for this purpose) to win the crowd over instead of using the results to affect their opponent.

**Easy Crowds:** 5 net ★ to win over

**Average Crowds:** 10 net ★ to win over

**Hard Crowds:** 15 net ★ to win over

**Daunting Crowds:** 20 net ★ to win over

**Formidable Crowds:** 25 net ★ to win over

If a fighter wins a crowd over before a match via interviews and media appearances, they go into the fight with +1 soak and +2 strain threshold. If a fighter fails to win the crowd over, they suffer ■ to all checks made during the match until they win the crowd over.

Fighters can win a crowd during a match, choosing to spend net ★ earned during a fight to add flourishes and crowd-pleasing routines instead of adding to their total. Winning the crowd ends the ■ penalty for not having the crowd, and moves two Story Points from the GM pool to the fighter's.

# CHAPTER 10: RUNNING UNARMED ADVENTURES

This chapter is designed to help you run memorable encounters and adventures focused around unarmed combat. The first part of this chapter discusses narrating unarmed combat, and provides some narrative structures common to martial arts stories. There is also guidance for running training encounters, which can function as vehicles to deliver story in scenes, or fun montages that show

characters growing while moving quickly through time. Finally, there is also support for designing a training facility for the party to hone their skills. This, too, is a great incubator for story. Combined, these tools enable you to craft rich narratives with all the flavor and drama of your favorite martial arts and combat sports stories!

## NARRATING UNARMED COMBAT

The surest way to a fun experience at the table is good narration by a GM after a check. Narration should put a clear image into every player's mind of what just happened. When it comes to hand-to-hand combat, this can present difficulty for some GMs. There are a few points to keep in mind while narrating unarmed combat to provide the best experience possible.

Most importantly, when a player takes their turn and makes a combat check, regardless of which unarmed weapon they might use, remember that combat rounds are an abstraction of time. A single round can be anywhere from 15 seconds to 5 minutes depending on

the type of encounter and situation. Unarmed combat encounters tend to fall within the 30 second to 90 seconds per mechanical round range.

### NARRATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

Obviously, when characters fight, if one makes an attack with the punch unarmed weapon, and their opponent makes an attack with the kick unarmed weapon, that 30 to 90 seconds had far more happen than just a single punch and single kick get thrown. Those were just what combat sports would call "significant strikes", or in the case of a failed attack, attempted significant strikes.

### EXAMPLE HAND-TO-HAND NARRATION

**K**eith, Nolan, and Connie have gathered together to play GENESYS around Nolan's kitchen table. Keith is acting as the GM, Nolan is playing a Matt, a High School Wrestler (Archetype) Competitor (Career), and Connie is playing Patterson, an Amateur Boxer (Archetype) Professional (Career).

We join the group mid-session as the two fighters are in a sparring match at the gym they both use to train...

**Connie (Patterson):** I want to throw a left hook at Matt!

**Nolan (Matt):** Well that's kind of rude!

**Keith (GM):** Okay, you're going to make a Brawl (Striking) check with your Punch weapon to do that. It's against two purples. Nolan, does Matt have any defense or anything?

**Nolan (Matt):** I have one melee defense, and I can do something with this Parry talent, right?

**Keith (GM):** Totally, but we'll get to that. Connie, add one black die to the pool, and let's see what you get. If you want to aim your attack, add a blue, or suffer two strain and add two blues.

**Connie (Patterson):** (Connie collects dice based on her skill and other factors into a pool and rolls.) Success, with two Advantage!

**Nolan (Matt):** That's not so bad.

**Keith (GM):** Do you want to parry the attack?

**Nolan (Matt):** I think I'll just take it. Let's see what you've got!

**Keith (GM):** Connie, is there anything you want to spend that advantage on?

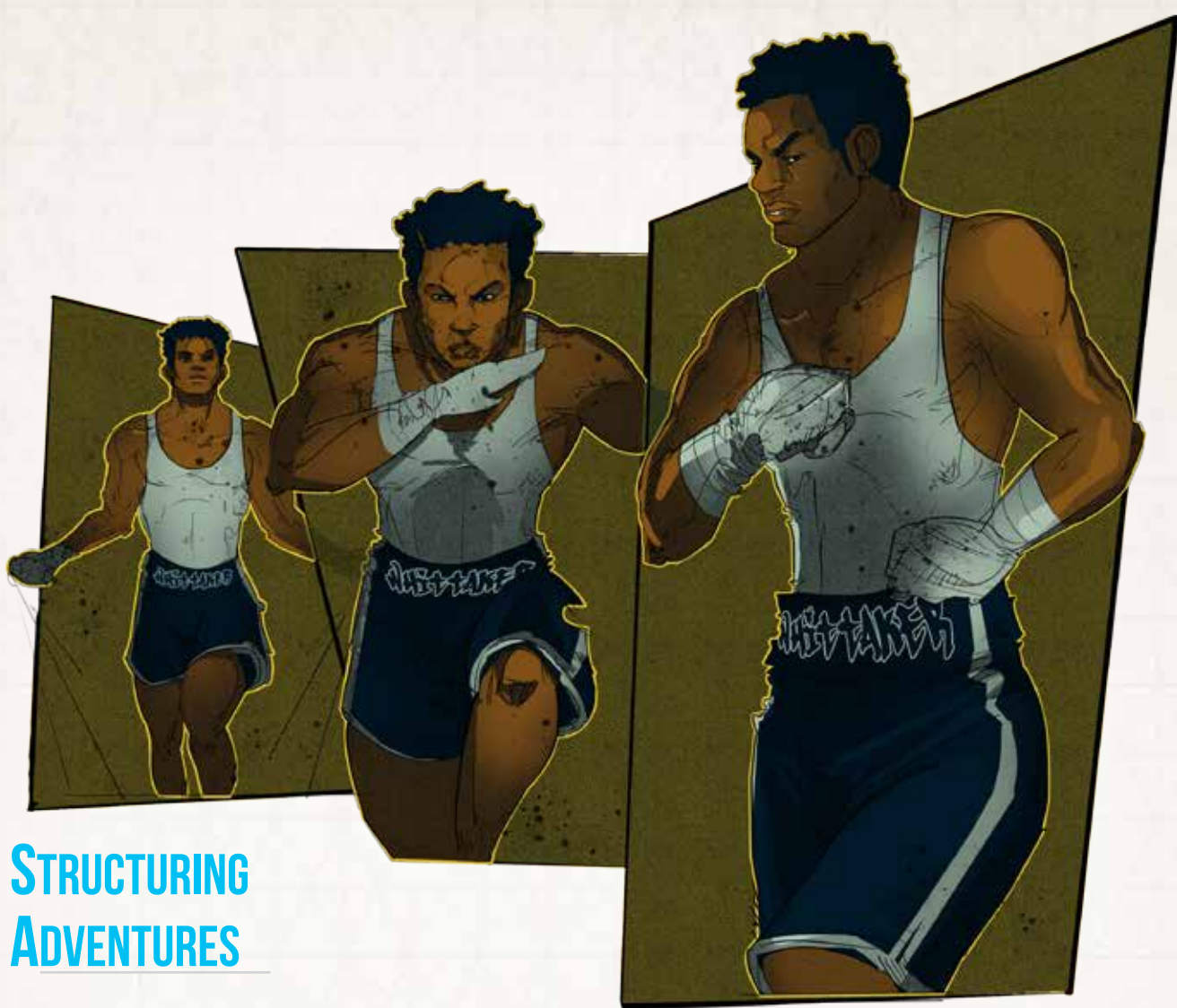
**Connie (Patterson):** Can I somehow maneuver him up against the ropes for next turn?

**Keith (GM):** Sure! Okay, so here's what happened. The two of you are dancing, circling, throwing probing jabs to sort of feel each other out, and then Connie, Patterson feels like she has a measure of the distance, and starts circling to her right, taking the center of the ring. You throw a long jab, which Matt blocks, but you follow it up with a hard right cross, and Patterson commits to the high forward block. This creates an opening on his right temple, and you follow up with the left hook, landing flush and forcing Matt to take two steps backward. Matt, you suffer 5 damage, minus your soak. You shake the strike off, but realize your back is on the ropes, leaving you very little room to maneuver. It's your turn, what would you like to do?

**Nolan (Matt):** Oh, I think it's time to move this to the mat. I wanna do a takedown attack....

There is a host of footwork, feints, blocked and parried strikes (even without the talent, narratively you can still describe blocked attacks as being part of the action), probing strikes, circling, range finding, and set-up strikes that occur before the punch or kick that ultimately lands or misses. In short, there is quite a bit of back and forth during a single combat check. In professional fights, boxers might throw as many as 30 actual strikes per minute (and MMA fighters about half as many). Obviously, tables don't have the time, nor is the game balanced to roll each individual strike separately. Instead, they are abstracted, with only significant moments of the fight worthy of checks.

As a GM, you can describe all of this to your players, but be mindful of their technical understanding of unarmed combat. Colorful descriptions might be more vague on technical details, but give players a better sense of how things are going for the two combatants. Once the player has said what they want to attempt, and you see the dice results, describe the moments before the attempted attack. What exchange between fighters created an opening for the attacker to land their attack cleanly? What happened that the defender was able to see the attack coming and easily knock it aside?



## STRUCTURING ADVENTURES

Creating adventures for heroic characters can draw inspiration from all sorts of places. The works of Joseph Campbell on the Hero's Journey is probably the most popular, and related works by Christopher Vogler and others are also well known. While the hero with a thousand faces archetypes and traditional three-act structure of set-up or introduction, followed by a rising action or confrontation, and then a resolution is familiar and satisfying, it is also a bit general and vague.

Below we discuss some plots common to martial arts and sports movies, and how they can function as adventure plots or character arcs in your games. Most adventures are divided into a series of alternating combat and social encounters, with the occasional skill challenge thrown in. When reading about these plot structures, consider where there are natural points for various encounter types described in this chapter.

### LOSE, TRAIN, WIN

In the Lose, Train, Win structure, a fighter is pitted against a superior foe they cannot defeat, or forced to watch as a friend or loved one fights them instead. In this second case, the friend is almost always killed or

injured badly enough to face death. The hero must then avenge either their loss or their loved one, and train for a rematch against this unstoppable warrior. This structure is popular in combat sports movies like *Rocky*, and the first four movies of the series use this three-act structure to deliver story. The *Karate Kid* and *Kickboxer* movies similarly use this structure.

This can sometimes take time, as they grieve and cope with the loss, and circumstances force them to accept the call to action, usually through a poignant social encounter, or a series of moments shown as a montage. Once the rematch is accepted, the fighter must train and prepare for the coming match. Training is a natural moment for training encounters, be they scenes or montages. There may even be a combat encounter or two in the form of sparring matches or warm-up fights to avoid running multiple social encounters in a row.

Finally, the hero must fight their enemy. Only this time, they have trained and grown as a fighter and as a person. After a grueling bout, the fighter is able to rise up and overcome great adversity to defeat their opponent, thus providing a satisfying conclusion to the adventure.



This is a fantastic structure for a character arc, but can leave other players feeling left out if it is the only plot in an adventure. It works best for smaller groups, or as a broader character arc happening over the course of three or more adventures that focus elsewhere. However, if your table only has one or two players for a session, this structure can make a fantastic one-shot adventure.

## CLIMB THE LADDER

In the Climb the Ladder structure, a fighter must work his way past a series of opponents until he comes face to face with his true opponent. Generally speaking, these enemies get more and more dangerous the higher one climbs. The motivation for climbing the ladder is different for each story using this structure, and some carry more emotional weight than others. However, the reason is ultimately immaterial, the fighter must climb to succeed.

This structure is popular in combat sports movies, where fighters have to work their way up the rankings to challenge for a championship title. This is evident in movies like *Here Comes the Boom*, *Man of Tai Chi*, and

*The Quest*. It is also popular in the stories of brawler video games, or movies like *Rumble in the Bronx*, where heroes must defeat waves upon waves of enemies and their leaders to make their way to the big boss for a final showdown. This structure should generally use two to four major combat encounter set pieces, with at least one montage that shows rapid progress through some of the enemies between.

The Climb the Ladder structure is perfect for a party of heroes, who might all share in the motivation. They might each have subtly different ladders to climb, each on a parallel path. Conversely, the heroes might be working together (likely in the *Street Brawler* setting) to defeat underlings and their bosses as they fight their way to the big bad evil boss. Finally, the heroes might actually get pitted against each other, on a collision course to ultimately see who the best is. You should check with your players before doing this within this sort of structure, to make sure the players are alright with PC vs PC encounters.

## ENEMIES, RIVALS, FRIENDS

In the Enemies, Rivals, Friends structure, the hero starts out with a very negative view of a character, perhaps even hating them. This might be because the person has wronged them on some fundamental level, or it might be a catastrophic misunderstanding, or both. This person then becomes their rival, someone they have to fight. However, through the course of the fight, the hero gains a grudging respect for their opponent, which turns into a strong friendship, almost like family.

This structure is popular in combat sports movies. Taken as a collective whole, *Rocky 1, 2, and 3* use this arc to map the relationship between Rocky and Apollo Creed. It is also a character arc for the Tommy character in *Best of the Best*. Further, this is seen to play out in real combat sports all the time. Fighters who get caught up in talking trash about their opponent can sometimes have a lot of bad blood that comes in the ring with them. After a close fight that pushes both fighters to perform their very best, the two fighters often hug it out and become close friends or even training partners.

The Enemies, Rivals, Friends structure is great as a character arc for a PC, and makes them easy to motivate (just tell them the enemy is there). Even more interesting, a pair of PCs can play at opposite ends of this, and the structure can be used as a great initial adventure to bring the party together. However, in larger groups other players can feel slightly left out if an entire adventure's focus is on this structure centered around a sole PC.



## FRIENDS, BETRAYAL, REVENGE

The Friends, Betrayal, Revenge structure is a twisted opposite of Enemies, Rivals, Friends. In this structure, the hero is close with a sibling, training partner, or friend who betrays them. Once betrayed, perhaps left for dead or set up to take the fall for something the hero didn't do, the hero swears vengeance against the character that was once so dear to them. Eventually, the hero tracks down or crosses paths with this now-despised figure, and the two ultimately fight. While this battle is often to the death, the hero is also frequently given the chance to grow beyond their hate and need for revenge.

This structure is famous among action stories dating back to Alexandre Dumas' *Count of Monte Cristo* and

beyond. It is also evident in some classic martial arts films like *Tai-Chi Master*, and many super-hero stories. The key strength to this structure is in how easy it is to invest the player in their character's quest to get even. This final revenge battle should be a particularly exciting action sequence, taking place somewhere with epic visuals, or a place of personal significance to the initial act of betrayal.

The Friends, Betrayal, Revenge structure works very well as a single PC's character arc. However, it also works well with an entire party. The betrayal can be against more than one PC, and the act itself can invest several PCs in revenge to some degree, though there may be internal squabbling about just exactly how far is far enough in that regard.

## TRAINING ENCOUNTERS

Unarmed fighters' stories often involve learning a crucial new ability prior to participating in a climactic battle. Fighters hone their techniques through intense training. This might entail sanding an old man's patio, demolishing a car with kicks, punching sides of beef until ribs crack, or entering a contraption that forcibly stretches a character into the splits. Of course, more often, training merely entails working with a coach in a gym. In game, GMs can represent these moments with training encounters, broken up into scenes or montages.

Training encounters are a quick series of checks (often done at the start of a session) that are a great way to represent training. This can be done either as a brief scene or a time-lapse montage. Scenes are great for pulling in NPCs and introducing or continuing subplots in the campaign. Montages are better for making leaps through time and showing a fighter's skills improving over that period.

### TRAINING SCENES

The training scene provides an opportunity to introduce and advance plots in scenes via dramatic moments. These sorts of encounters are best for the beginning of a session, or between combat encounters. Training scenes should run relatively quickly, and might involve only one to three characters (at least one of which is a PC). Training scenes provide a very small amount of XP (1–2 XP per successful check), and typically involve three checks.

Training scenes are great to use as connective tissue between encounters, and can provide a great context for NPCs to reveal new information to players, or engage in a

moment of melodrama. However, such moments should be limited to events that can occur in near real time, or over the course of an hour of training. For events that take longer, the training montage is a better choice. Either way, GMs can use a training scene to provide a PC with motivation, or to raise the stakes of an upcoming fight.

### TRAINING MONTAGES

The training montage shows a longer passage of time than the near-real time training scenes, from a few weeks to a few months. In film, such montages leap through time, showing brief snippets of training footage. Often, the protagonist noticeably improves at a variety of training tasks, until they can perform their new skill with a degree of mastery. The training montage is common before a big fight, or after a lost fight, but before a rematch. The primary purpose is to show the PC's new, hard-won abilities.

Training montages typically provide more XP than scenes (5 XP per successful check), and typically involve three checks. However, they are less common than training scenes, often only once per adventure (which might be several sessions). A single montage might involve multiple PCs on different, but colliding or complementary paths as they prepare for the fights ahead. Should this be the case, GMs should do a single check and moment of scene for each character in turn, so all the early, middle, and late montage moments feel like they are happening simultaneously.

Because they take place over a longer period of time, training montages are especially useful for time jumps,



### SAMPLE TRAINING SCENE ENCOUNTER

Our hero is training with Joe, an older family friend that trained the hero's mother (who is missing) during her days as a professional fighter. Joe wants to teach the hero to properly jab, and has tied the hero's dominant arm behind their back. While watching the hero spar, Joe comments how similar their technique is to their mother's.

- Have the hero make a **Hard (◆ ◆ ◆) Coordination check** to follow Joe's guidance and learn the proper technique. This is often done slow, so the hero's muscles can learn the movement with good form before slowly speeding things up. After the check, Joe can comment on the form appropriately, comparing it to the mother's, and then introduce a bit of important information related to the missing mother.
- Convinced the hero is comfortable with the new movements, Joe puts pads over his hands and directs the hero to begin throwing the jab. Make a **Hard (◆ ◆ ◆) Brawl (Striking) check** to hit the pad several times with good form. Joe can comment on the performance appropriately, and then once again reveal more subplot critical information about the mother, perhaps background about a shady business partner during her fighting career days that our hero was unaware of. The hero might have questions at this time, resist answering them until the next check. Joe has begun to breathe hard and has grown more red-faced than usual.
- The hero might grow frustrated with the awkward motion and new revelations about their mother. Have the hero make a **Hard (◆ ◆ ◆) Discipline check** to maintain their composure. They want answers about this mysterious business partner they've never heard of before. Joe seems prepared to answer, but suddenly a confused look crosses his face, and he drops to the ground. The PC is bound and unable to assist.

If the check failed, the PC might have accidentally lost their temper, working Joe harder when he tried to sit down and take a break. Either way, Joe suffers a heart attack, and while he likely survives, he is unable to answer any questions. This can set the hero on a path of trying to learn about this shady business partner, perhaps discovering a tournament they are holding on a remote island. The hero's regular trainer, family friend, and last connection to their missing mother is now in the hospital, raising the stakes.

or even showing what antagonist NPCs are doing during the same time. We famously see montages used in movies such as *Rocky*, *Bloodsport*, and *the Karate Kid*, where the training montages are accompanied by motivational music. You can build an appropriate playlist ahead of time, or let players choose one or two songs each to contribute to a montage playlist to add flavor to these scenes. Alternately, search online for "Training Montage Music" for curated selections of music.

### ALTERNATE MONTAGE USES

The Training Encounter structure is designed to represent a fighter training and learning a new technique over days, weeks, or even months or years. However, it is possible to use this same structure of three checks over time to represent other events common to the life of a fighter. While some alternate montage scenes are listed here, there are other creative uses for a montage you might employ based on the needs of the story you are trying to tell.

Professional fighters in the tournament world often have to drop dramatic amounts of water weight to weigh in under the maximum for a weight class. This sometimes painful experience is not only physical, but also an exercise in mental strength. Represent such an

undertaking using a training montage that calls for Cool, Discipline, and Resilience checks as a character sweats in the sauna, declines junk food, and does intense cardio workouts.

A training montage can likewise represent the entirety of a professional fight's press obligations. Over the course of several press events, interviews, and stare downs, fighters spend weeks promoting an upcoming fight (see page 88). If a GM doesn't want to spend much of the session simulating all the events individually, a single montage can handle the whole of them calling for various social checks, or checks to resist an opponent's social checks.

The montage can also help a GM fast-forward through some fights in a "Climb the Ladder" adventure structure (See page 92). While some fights are great to play out as full combat encounters, there are story situations where the GM needs to show a character working their way up the rankings or through several low ranking underlings to get to a more meaningful fight. A montage can abstract these entire fights each to one decisive moment, speeding through one fight per check, and imparting any useful information based on the results. Such montages usually call for combat checks, but could also call for Athletics, Coordination, Resilience, or other checks as the GM sees fit.



### SAMPLE TRAINING MONTAGE ENCOUNTER

Continuing the example above, our hero's trainer, Joe, has just suffered a heart attack. Our hero spent the last session investigating their missing mother's shady business partner, and got invited to a tournament the shady character is hosting in two weeks. The hero's training is now in service to this tournament. Forced to train alone, but very motivated, our hero has a training montage.

- The hero makes a **Hard (◆ ◆ ◆) Coordination check** to work the speed bag with their left jab only. The task is awkward and difficult. Once the GM has provided that image based on dice results, the scene can briefly cut to the hospital, where Joe is in a hospital bed, unconscious. Our hero is by Joe's side, the PC describing how their character fills the time.
- Perhaps days later, the hero is back in the gym, this time using a variety of strength training equipment to strengthen that left jab. Have the hero make a **Hard (◆ ◆ ◆) Athletics check** to strength train. Afterward, show Joe, his eyes flickering to consciousness, making a funny comment to the hero about training.
- At the end of the montage, the hero is sparring with the right arm again tied back, using only the left jab and footwork to work with a sparring partner. Make a **Hard (◆ ◆ ◆) Striking check** with ■ ■ ■ to spar. Following the sparring, the scene quickly cuts back to Joe, who the hero is pushing on a wheelchair toward the hospital exit, he's been discharged, but told to take it easy. The hero now has enough XP to purchase the Jab talent, representing the hard work done in the gym.

### DESIGNING TRAINING ENCOUNTERS

GMs should work with players on their character concepts, and see which talents or skill ranks players plan to purchase next. This enables GMs to design encounters with checks and flavor related to the new skill rank or talent. Don't be afraid to get creative and use a variety of skill checks to represent the arc of a training session. In montages, there should be a variety of checks. GMs should avoid making repeated checks with the same skill during the same training encounter.

Beyond the surface level training, these encounters are a great time to focus on story. NPCs can introduce

new problems or complications during a training session. These can be anything from an NPC getting hurt or falling ill, to financial woes, or some other problem the NPC needs the hero to help them with. These narrative moments should be brief, but still fully drawn out and described.

It's also a great time to introduce plot elements. You might need a PC to register for a tournament, convince an NPC to help them train for a fight, or even introduce or complicate a relationship between two characters. The spaces between skill checks in a training encounter provide a context for these moments that keeps the focus on the unarmed combat aesthetic.

## TRAINING FACILITIES

**T**raining facilities might be traditional dojos, modern MMA fight clubs, or anything in-between. Fighters use the facility to perfect their fighting techniques and improve their physical fitness. Often this is in preparation for a fight, but might just be to work on general self-defense. Mechanically, training facilities generally help improve the odds of success during training encounters.

However, a Training Facility's utility to a campaign stretches far beyond this. As a home base, the training facility provides a cast of supporting characters you can use to introduce story elements. The PCs might own

the facilities themselves, or merely belong to a gym as a member, but either way, they are going to have connections to their coaches and students. If a beloved coach or student has a problem, PCs are more likely to accept a call to action and investigate.

### TRAINING FACILITY TYPE

There are two basic types of training facilities—traditional schools and modern gyms. When a party joins a training facility, they gain two new career skills based on the type of facility.

## TRADITIONAL SCHOOL

Traditional schools teach things as they have been taught for decades, if not centuries. These training facilities favor the harsh, unpredictable conditions of the outdoors, and natural activities for training, such as kicking banana trees to strengthen shins, or climbing mountains or stairs carrying water to train cardio. Traditional schools place importance on passing down history and instilling a sense of discipline in students.

**New Career Skills:** Knowledge (Lore) and Discipline

## MODERN GYM

Modern gyms use technology to let students train in relative comfort to maximize their focus so they can learn. Training favors high-tech machines, the latest sports science, and other amenities to help fighters train smarter, not harder. Modern gyms usually have the goal of getting their students into the amateur or professional fighting circuit. As such, their courses tend to favor instruction about spotting holes in an opponent's skills and developing a game plan to defeat them.

**New Career Skills:** Knowledge (Tactics) and Perception

## TRAINING FACILITY UPGRADES

There are four primary categories of upgrades for training facilities. Two are related to the equipment and space in the facility, while the other two are related to the personnel within the facility. Reference **Table 10–1** for more information on the mechanical benefits of each upgrade.

Players can purchase upgrades to their gym either by spending money or spending XP (either of which they can collectively pool to make a purchase). Cash expenditures improve facility equipment and staff while XP represents the time spent attracting new staff and students. The costs

listed are for each individual upgrade purchased. This price must be paid again every time PCs wish to upgrade that aspect of their training facility again.

## EXERCISE EQUIPMENT

Most fight training facilities need at least a basic array of equipment to train strength, agility, and cardio fitness. Having better equipment can give fighters an edge during training encounters.







Having no upgrades means the gym has little more than floor space for body-weight exercises. The first upgrade represents basic equipment to train either strength, agility, or cardio fitness. This is usually basic home gym equipment, like adjustable weights, resistance bands, or a treadmill. The second upgrade represents the addition of fight-centric equipment, like training dummies, speed bags, and heavy bags. The final upgrade represents state-of-the-art equipment in that category, often lined with sensors to measure performance.

## SPARRING EQUIPMENT

One of the key elements of a training facility is the ability to spar against live opponents. Having better equipment can enhance the quality of experience during sparring sessions.

Having no upgrades means the gym has little more than floor space for half speed, quarter power sparring between students, with several types of attacks barred. The first upgrade represents the addition of some basic training pads, which allow fighters to spar harder and faster. The second upgrade represents high end training pads that let fighters spar without holding anything back. The final upgrade represents a fight simulation area, often a ring or cage identical to the one where sanctioned fights might take place.


**TABLE 10–1: TRAINING FACILITY UPGRADES**

UPGRADE TYPE	UPGRADE DESCRIPTION	COST
Exercise Equipment	Select either the Athletics, Coordination, or Resilience skill each time you take this upgrade. Each selection adds  to training encounter checks using that skill. This bonus can stack up to three times if you select the same skill. This upgrade can be taken up to 9 times.	1,000 credits
Sparring Equipment	Select either the Brawl (Grappling) or Brawl (Striking) skill each time you take this upgrade. Each selection adds  to training encounter checks using that skill. This bonus can stack up to three times if you select the same skill. This upgrade can be taken up to 6 times.	1,000 credits
Coaches	Select a type of coach. Add automatic  to training encounter checks using skills related to that type of coach. This upgrade can be re-purchased to upgrade a coach once, or add a new coach. Adding a coach creates a new NPC ally with 2 skill ranks in any associated skills, and score of 2 in any associated attributes. Upgrade a coach changes this to 3 ranks. All other attributes are a two.	5,000 credits
Students	Add automatic  to training encounter checks at the GM's discretion. This upgrade can be repurchased once to add more advanced students, which add automatic   to training encounter checks instead. Further, adding students provides revenue to a training facility, netting 100 credits per PC per session. Double this bonus if this upgrade is purchased a second time.	50 XP

## COACHES

There are all sorts of martial arts coaches and trainers. While we outline a few common divisions of coaching for modern MMA below, you can alter this division of labor in many ways. In a traditional kung-fu school, the teacher is known as Sifu, and is responsible for all aspects of training. So while some gyms split up the labor among many individuals, a single Sifu would be responsible for all of these tasks as a single character. Other traditional martial arts might have different titles for their head coaches, so some research can benefit the authenticity of your facility.

Each of these coaches is a unique NPC ally, part of a supporting cast of characters that can each have a unique background, fear, flaw, strength, and motivation. These characters are also great vehicles for GMs to introduce plot elements, or potential targets to motivate the party into taking action. Giving the coaches little quirks and catch-phrases can help ingratiate them with your players. Coaches can also ultimately betray their students, setting up a new enemy that the party is very motivated to defeat. If a coach like this leaves, the party can select a new coach at the same stats for free when the GM feels the time is appropriate.

**Head Coach:** A head coach can help in any training encounter check instead of a specialty coach, merely adds  to the check. In addition to the skills governed by other coaches, a head coach can also aid Cool, Discipline, Knowledge (Tactics), and Perception checks in training encounters (at no penalty).

**Striking Coach:** This coach aids Brawl (Striking) checks in training encounters. They might have a background in boxing, kickboxing, taekwondo, or some other striking-focused martial art.

**Grappling Coach:** This coach aids Brawl (Grappling) checks in training encounters. They might have background in wrestling, jiu-jitsu, judo, or some other grappling-focused martial art.

**Strength and Conditioning Coach:** This coach aids Athletics, Coordination, and Resilience checks in training encounters. They have a background as a personal trainer or dietician.

## STUDENTS

A school is only as good as its students. Fellow students can act as sparring partners and generate some income for the school. How many students, and their relative ages and experience levels should be determined by a conversation between the GM and players at the time the upgrade is purchased. For the most part, it's expected that each purchase represents about a half

dozen students. More importantly, GMs should create some personalities for these NPCs. These characters can bring problems from home to the gym, which require help of the heroes to solve.





## EDUCATIONAL AND INSPIRATIONAL MEDIA

### FILMS

7 Grandmasters  
Ali  
Best of the Best  
Blood and Bone  
Bloodsport  
Cinderella Man  
Creed (1–2)  
Drunken Master (1–2)  
Enter the Dragon  
Fight Club  
Fighting  
Fist of Fury  
Fist of Legend  
Five Deadly Venoms  
Five Fingers of Death  
Game of Death  
Girl Fight  
Here Comes the Boom  
Ip Man (1, 2, 3)  
Iron Monkey  
Kickboxer  
Kung-Fu Panda  
Lionheart  
Man of Tai Chi  
Man With the Iron Fists  
Million Dollar Baby  
Never Back Down  
Once Upon a Time in China  
Ong-Bak (1–2)  
Play it to the Bone  
Police Story  
Raging Bull  
Real Steel

Red Belt  
Rocky (1–6)  
Rumble in the Bronx  
Rush Hour  
Southpaw  
Super Cop  
Tai-Chi Master  
The 36th Chamber of Shaolin  
The Bourne Identity  
The Fighter  
The Great White Hype  
The Hurricane  
The Karate Kid  
The One  
The Protector  
The Quest  
The Raid  
The Warriors  
Undisputed  
Unleashed  
Warrior  
Who Am I

### TELEVISION

Avatar: The Last Airbender  
Daredevil  
Dragon Ball Z  
Iron Fist  
Kung-Fu  
Legend of Korra  
NJPW Wrestling  
Walker: Texas Ranger  
Wrestlemania  
WWE Raw  
WWE Smackdown

### SPORTS

Bellator MMA  
IBF Boxing  
IKF Kickboxing  
NCAA College Wrestling  
Olympic Boxing  
Olympic Judo  
Olympic Tae Kwon Do  
Olympic Wrestling  
ONE Championship  
UFC  
WBC Boxing  
WBO Boxing  
WKA Kickboxing

### VIDEO GAMES

Brawl Brothers  
Combatribes  
Dead or Alive  
Double Dragon (I, II, III)  
Fatal Fury  
Final Fight (I, II, III)  
King of Fighters  
Kung Fu (NES)  
Mortal Kombat (1, 2, X)  
Renegade  
Rival Turf  
River City Ransom  
Street Fighter (2, 3, 4, 5)  
Streets of Rage (I, II, III)  
Tekken 2  
Vendetta  
Virtual Fighter









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