

# The Discworld RPG: Under the Bonnet

by Phil Masters

The new edition of the *Discworld Roleplaying Game* incorporates a complete set of *GURPS* game rules. These are based on the full *GURPS* system, but they include only things needed for Discworld games, and they are simplified or tweaked in places. However, we know that quite a few people who buy the book will already know the full *GURPS* system, while others may eventually pick up a copy of the *GURPS Basic Set* (and maybe some of its supplements – see the Bibliography in the back of the *Discworld RPG*) for additional options which might be useful in Discworld games. Hence, they may want to know a bit about these adjustments and simplifications.

This document is for those people. It provides a set of annotations to the book, showing how it adapted the *Basic Set* rules. Anyone who wants to use just the *Discworld RPG* on its own can ignore it, but we hope that enough people will be interested in the full *GURPS* rules, one way or another, to make it a worth creating.

## Chapter 2

### Languages

#### *Multilingual/Universal Translator*

p. 32

These advantages were “built” from more general “components” using rules in the *Basic Set*; Modular Abilities (Cosmic) (p. B71) giving 6 points of abilities, with a -50% limitation (Languages Only) in both cases, plus another -17% to represent the intrinsic limitations and specialisation in the case of Multilingual.

### Wealth and Influence

#### *Special Cases for Status*

p. 38

The Status given by high Rank here isn't quite as generous in standard *GURPS*, but Discworld folk are a bit snobbish about the difference between rank and “real” social position.

### Congregation

p. 38

The Congregation advantage is actually a subset of *Allies* from the *Basic Set*, with the cost for low-value Allies using a rule that's appeared in one or two other supplements, and some tweaks to fit the special requirements here. Allies in general have been left out of this book, to avoid complexity, but this version is important for small gods and some priests.

### Contacts

p. 38-39

The Unreliable option from the *Basic Set* has been omitted here, mostly to save space. GMs are welcome to bring it back in if they wish.

### Advantages

pp. 41-49

The full version of *GURPS* has rules for adjusting the cost of advantages systematically, by taking “enhancements” and “limitations” which modify the point cost by a specific

percentage; see the *GURPS Basic Set* for details and examples. For simplicity, modified advantages are presented in the *Discworld RPG* as variants of the standard advantages, with the cost ready calculated – but these costs have actually been determined using the percentage system.

### *Mad Medicine*

p. 44

In terms of the full version of *GURPS*, Mad Medicine is a second level of Gadgeteer (p. B56-7), with a limitation restricting it to medical skills. It requires TL 5 because of the nature of insane experimental medicine on the Disc – it really is limited to people who are out there on the all-too-frequently-bleeding edge.

### *Superior Staff*

p. 47

Rather obviously, the Superior Staff advantage is just Magery with some gadget limitations (see p. B116-7). It doesn't do *quite* as much as Magery – it doesn't increase the rate at which you can add Magic Points to a missile spell, for one thing – but it's close enough.

The extra cost for a sapient pearwood staff reflects its better DR, indestructibility to magic, and the fact that it can never be stolen *permanently* – or it can perhaps more simply be regarded as an Unusual Background. With sapient pearwood, the normal wizardly problems with mislaid staffs just aren't so much of a worry for you, and you also get a melee weapon that it's very hard for you to lose entirely, although it can still be snatched away temporarily.

### *Unnoticed*

p. 48

This is Invisibility (p. B63) with Can Carry Objects (Heavy Encumbrance), Switchable, Glamour (from *GURPS Powers*), and an Accessibility limitation, "Doesn't work properly vs. mages, some supernatural beings, etc.," which is set at -30%.

### *Voice of Command*

p. 49

This is Mind Control with Area Effect (8 yards), Emanation, Sense-Based, a general -30% limitation to reflect various restrictions on the standard effects, and various other modifiers.

## Perks

### *High-Heeled Heroine*

p. 51

In this version of the rules, this combines the benefits of both "High-Heeled Heroine" and "High-Heeled Hurt" from elsewhere. This saves space, and anyway, in a setting like the Discworld, worrying about heel height is a bit too much detail, unless the high heels also give some other benefit.

### *Longevity*

p. 52

The full *GURPS* rules have detailed rules for ageing, while "longevity" is represented by a set of advantages (Extended Lifespan, Longevity, and Unaging). We've kept it simple and cheap here because it's really just going to be background colour in most freewheeling *Discworld* games; PCs aren't likely to have to worry too much about getting old in the course of play – except as a plot device, perhaps, but even when Cohen the Barbarian or Granny Weatherwax feel age creeping up on them, they don't seem to be slowed down by it much.

However, if you decide to run some kind of epic multi-generation saga on the Disc, long life might become enough of a serious advantage that you should look at the full rules and consider charging the higher rates.

## Disadvantages

### *Bad Back*

p. 55

This has been very slightly adjusted to make sure that even combat-averse and highly skilled

characters suffer the full comic effect, and to match a relevant scene in *The Light Fantastic*.

### *The Barbarian and Dark Lord Lifestyle Rules* p. 58

Anyone familiar with the full *GURPS* rules will recognise these optional rules as slightly variant applications of the Pact limitation (p. B113).

### *Totally Oblivious* p. 61

*Totally Oblivious* is of course Oblivious plus the Incompetence quirk (p. B164) for the skills listed (plus a reminder to roleplay the thing), with the points value rounded off.

### *Pyrophobia* p. 62

Pyrophobia, in the full *GURPS* rules (p. B150), has a straight -5 point base value. However, that makes more sense in high-tech societies; in a setting like the Discworld, full-on (“Major”) Pyrophobia really merits the higher value given here.

## Skills

### *Astrozoology and Natural Philosophy* p. 70-71

In settings with more developed ideas about science, characters are able to learn multiple scientific skills; Biology, Chemistry, Geology, and so on. The Discworld just isn’t that advanced yet, so everything comes under “Natural Philosophy.” That does appear in the full *GURPS* rules, though, as an Expert Skill; see the *Basic Set* for more on that (p. B194). Astrozoology too would be classed as an Expert Skill in the full rules.

### *Combat Sports* p. 72

This book doesn’t get into the complexities of Combat Art or Sport skills, instead representing these sorts of training by requiring

sports fighters to put points into a Games skill. Detail freaks with the full *Basic Set* ruleset to hand may choose to reintroduce the Art and Sport system if they wish.

### *Computer Skills* p. 72

In most settings, Computer Programming is a /TL skill, but on the Disc, that’s not really relevant – there just aren’t enough different computer technologies. Many settings also have Computer *Operation*, the skill of making routine use of a computer for which someone else has written standard software – but no form of computing has advanced that far on the Disc.

### *Interrogation* p. 75

The scope of this skill has been *slightly* broadened for Discworld games, to cover “hard questioning” by newspaper reporters and the like as well as by watchmen and soldiers. This fits a certain style of fiction, in which some such people display a flair for cross-examination which isn’t very different from police interrogation techniques. (In other sorts of fiction, some lawyers display much the same skill in the courtroom.) Arguably, a few reporters may have this skill in the real world.

### *Medical Skills* p. 77

The breakdown of medical skills in the *Discworld RPG* doesn’t quite correspond to standard *GURPS*, in which Herbalism is called Pharmacy (Herbal), and completely replaces Physician at TL 4 or below. However, this approach fits the chronicles better.

### *Professional Skills* p. 79-80

Professional Skills are essentially as in the *Basic Set*, extended somewhat to encompass various skills which are listed separately there but which fit well enough in this category for *Discworld* purposes.

## Shield

p. 81

The *Discworld RPG* doesn't bother with specialisations of Shield skill; that's simply more complexity than the game needs, given

that shields only appear occasionally in the chronicles. If you're running a Discworld game under full *Basic Set* rules, you'll have to decide what sort of shield any given character with the skill uses.

# Chapter 3

## Racial Advantages

### Burning Attack

p. 87

The three types of Burning Attack were built using the more general rules for Innate Attacks in the *Basic Set* (p. B61), and then had the costs rounded off for simplicity. *Short-Range Flame* has the Costs Fatigue and Melee Attack limitations; *Flame Jet* has Jet; *Lightning Bolts* have Accurate, Increased 1/2D Range, Overhead, and Side Effect. Lightning bolts aren't given the Surge enhancer because there are (almost) no electrical devices on the Disc.

### Cast-Iron Stomach

p. 87

In full *GURPS* terms, Cast-Iron Stomach is Reduced Consumption 3 with the Cast-Iron Stomach limitation (p. B80).

### Dimension Shift

p. 88

Dimension Shift is based on the Jumper advantage in the *Basic Set* (p. B64), with some additional options from *GURPS Powers*.

### Foot Manipulators

p. 89

In *GURPS Basic Set* terms, Foot Manipulators are two Extra Arms with the Foot Manipulators and Short limitations (p. B53).

### Pressure-Proof

p. 90

Pressure-Proof is called "Pressure Support 3" in the standard *GURPS* rules (see p. B77-8),

which also contain lesser versions for beings which can tolerate high but finite levels of pressure.

### Protected Eyes

p. 90

Protected Eyes is called "Nictitating Membrane" in the standard *GURPS* rules (p. B71), but this term seemed better for this setting. Protected Eyes *may* represent a nictitating membrane that slides over the eyeball, but it can also represent, say, eyes made of tough silicon compounds.

### Repairable

p. 90

The value of Repairable was determined by combining a couple of modified advantages and disadvantages. On the one side, it's Regeneration (Fast) with the cost reduced by 20% to represent the need for a skill roll and materials, the risk of catastrophic failure, etc.; it also includes Regrowth with a -50% limitation because the severed parts must be found and re-attached, rather than growing back. On the other hand, it includes Unhealing (Partial) with a -50% limitation to represent the fact that, instead of natural healing under rare circumstances, you get something faster and fairly easy.

### Super Climbing

p. 91

This is a simplified, non-levelled version of the Super Climbing advantage in the *Basic Set*. Treat it as two levels of *Basic Set* Super Climbing if you prefer.

## *Swarm Body*

p. 91

Swarm Body is technically a *meta-trait* – a composite character feature combining several independent advantages and disadvantages from the **Basic Set**, specifically 360° Vision, Flight, Injury Tolerance (Diffuse), No Fine Manipulators, and No Legs (Aerial).

## *Supernaturally Powered Beings*

p. 92

This setting-specific rule gives beings with the listed set of advantages the same 0-point “Doesn’t Use FP” feature as is given to beings with the Machine Body meta-trait in the **Basic Set**. It is here as the simplest way to represent the untiring nature of Discworld golems.

## *Temperature Tolerance*

p. 92

This – along with the whole *Temperature Extremes* rules section in chapter 5 (p. 191) – has been simplified substantially for this book. However, the systems should be broadly compatible. The level values attached to Discworld Temperature Tolerance are *not* related to levels of standard **GURPS** Temperature Tolerance; it is better to convert using the point costs of the different versions of the advantage, if necessary.

# Racial Disadvantages

## *Aerial*

p. 94

Aerial is listed in the **Basic Set** as No Legs (Aerial) on p. B145.

## *Arcane Automaton and Quadruped*

p. 94 and 96

Readers who are familiar with the full **GURPS** rules will recognise that Arcane Automaton and Quadruped are also meta-traits like Swarm Body (see above). Indeed, Quadruped is defined as such there (p. B263).

Arcane Automaton is composed of Hidebound, Reprogrammable, and Slave Mentality.

## *Dread/Fixation*

p. 95

The Dread disadvantage is straight from the **GURPS Basic Set** (p. B132-3), while Fixation was added here to represent the peculiar habits of some Discworld vampires. The value was set the same because the differences were judged to balance out; a Fixation doesn’t allow you to be driven off, isn’t automatically detected, and lets you defend yourself, but on the other hand it can tie you up for a long time and obliges you to try and follow the subject around.

## *Faith Maintenance*

p. 95-96

Faith Maintenance is of course simply an application of the general Maintenance disadvantage (p. B143).

## *Short Arms and Legs*

p. 96

In **GURPS Basic Set** terms, the Short Arms disadvantage is the result of applying the “Short” limitation from Extra Arms (p. B53) to the standard humanoid two arms. Short Legs is evaluated by applying the Short limitation to the Extra Legs advantage that is incorporated in Quadruped.

## *Troll Brain and Troll Nocturnalism*

p. 97-98

The Troll Brain disadvantage mostly consists of a bunch of positive and negative modifiers to IQ for different temperature ranges which could in fact just about cancel out. However, it adds up to a problem overall, at least when operating in human societies.

Troll Nocturnalism is simply the Nocturnal disadvantage from the **Basic Set** (p. B146), renamed and slightly rephrased for the setting.

### *Unnaturally Fragile*

p. 98

In the full version of **GURPS**, Unnaturally Fragile is called Fragile (Unnatural) (p. B136-7). However, the cut-down rules in the **Discworld RPG** don't use any of the other forms of the Fragile disadvantage.

## Racial Quirks

### *Short Lifespan*

p. 99

As with Longevity, the full **GURPS** rules have a more detailed treatment of this issue, and treat Short Lifespan as a full-blown disadvantage (see p. B154). GMs looking to run long-term campaigns may wish to look into this. Certainly, *very* short-lived creatures might not

fit comfortably in a campaign which is likely to cover years of (Discworld) time.

## Racial Templates

### *Tracker Golems*

p. 106

The *Tracker Golem* ability was constructed using the rules in the **Basic Set** and **GURPS Powers**; it consists of Detect (Identified Target, Rare) with Precise (+100%) and two levels of Long Range (+100%).

### *Vampires*

p. 109-114

*Native Soil Bed*, the special disadvantage mentioned here, is of course a version of *Dependency* from the **Basic Set**.

# Chapter 4

### *Price Conversions From Other GURPS Books*

Most **GURPS** books measure prices in "dollars," an arbitrary currency unit that happens to be worth a *lot* less than the Ankh-Morpork dollar. If you use those other books as a source for information about other equipment, divide all prices listed there by 20 to get the price in Ankh-Morpork dollars.

### *Weapon Names and Variations*

pp. 149-155

A few weapons on the tables in the **Discworld RPG** are renamed from their appearances in chapter 8 of the **GURPS Basic Set** or other books in order to match the chronicles better. The Axe here is equivalent to the Throwing Axe there, while the Big Club is equivalent to the **GURPS Low-Tech** treatment of the Maul, the Large and Small Truncheons equate to the light club and baton respectively, and so on. (The large truncheon is really just a

fair-sized, fairly well-balanced club, which is why it's so cheap.) Also, some weapon statistics have been borrowed from **GURPS Martial Arts** and **GURPS Low-Tech**, sometimes with name changes.

In fact, **Low-Tech** also makes a few very minor changes from the weapon details in the **Basic Set**. The **Low-Tech** changes are improvements, so they've been followed here. GMs who decide to merge weapon tables from different books will just have to decide which take precedence.

### *Shields*

p. 155

Because shields don't feature much in the chronicles, the **Discworld RPG** assumes that any which do appear are equivalent to the **Basic Set** medium shield. Other sizes from the **Basic Set**, with different weights, costs, and Defence Bonuses, could be used in Discworld games if you want, though.

# Chapter 5

## Optional Rules from the *Basic Set*

If you've got a copy of the *GURPS Basic Set*, you'll be aware that there are a number of optional rules there which GMs might consider importing to *Discworld* games, especially once your players have got the hang of the rules generally. Just to start with, the whole *Tactical Combat* system detailed in Chapter 12 of the *Basic Set*, using a map and figures or counters, can make fight scenes more interesting, if you're prepared to do the set-up work. Likewise, the *Hit Location* rules in Chapter 13 of that book are good for the "feel" of low-combat games, as they make injuries seem more realistically painful. (If you do use them, do check how the full rules for advantages such as Supernatural Durability interact with them.) In fact, combat and injury in the chronicles are realistic and painful enough that the *Bleeding* rules in Chapter 14 are worth considering.

Conversely, if the GM wants the PCs to be a little more dramatically heroic, and to have a chance of surviving in a game that's heavy on the swordplay and stunts, consider the optional rules for *Influencing Success Rolls* in Chapter 10 and the *Cinematic Combat Rules* in Chapter 13. Incidentally, the Blade-Proof Bare-Chestedness perk (p. 50) already gives some characters access to some of the latter; they can't claim the benefit twice, but if everyone gets it, they shouldn't have to buy the perk.

And for even more options in combat, see *GURPS Martial Arts*.

### *Resistance Rolls*

p. 166-167

Observant readers will note that there is no Rule of 16 mentioned in this version of the *GURPS* system. This is deliberate. Powerful *Discworld* spell-casters are *supposed* to be overwhelmingly powerful. If you want to batter

their best attacks aside, you just have to be very capable yourself. (Which some *Discworld* heroes are.)

### *Specific Hit Locations*

p. 183

The *Knockout Blow* rules are drawn from *GURPS Action 3* rather than the *Basic Set*. They fit the traditional-story feel of the *Disc* well.

### *Falls*

p. 189-190

The rules given here are of course simplified from those in the *Basic Set*. (Actually, they're derived from those in *Dungeon Fantasy 2*.) Being heavily simplified, they do mean that a 19 HP character has a much better chance of surviving many falls than a 20 HP character; anyone who worries about that should use the more detailed collisions and falling system in the *Basic Set*.

### *Riding the Narrative*

p. 197-198

If you're using the full *GURPS Basic Set* rules, somebody's *Destiny* advantage or disadvantage being worked out also counts as a story.

### *Discworld Magic vs. Standard GURPS Magic*

pp. 191-217

The *GURPS Basic Set* and *GURPS Magic* detail a different, "general-purpose" magic system, based on the idea that each spell is treated as a separate skill (see chapter 5 of the *Basic Set*). You could use that instead of the one given here for *Discworld* games, although the feel might be slightly off unless the GM and players carefully control which spells are used by which sorts of *Discworld* caster. In that case, treat most of the *Disc* as Normal Mana, with

some zones of High or Very High, and nothing below Low.

Alternatively, you could use the spells listed there – especially the full book’s worth in *GURPS Magic* – as guidelines for spell assessments in games using the Discworld

system. Energy cost converts directly to Magic Point cost, while the Prerequisite Counts given in the appendix to *GURPS Magic* (or the slightly adjusted and improved ones in *GURPS Thaumatology*) can help determine appropriate skill penalties.

## Chapter 7

### ***GURPS City Stats and Ankh-Morpork***

Because this book is intended to stand alone, we didn’t use things like the data formatting in *GURPS City Stats*. However, Bill Stoddard did define Ankh-Morpork using that system, just as an exercise:

#### **Ankh-Morpork**

*Population:* 1,000,000 (Search +3)

#### ***Physical and Magical Environment***

*Terrain:* Plains

*Appearance:* Unattractive (-1) Hygiene: -1  
Normal Mana (Rare Enchantment)

#### ***Culture and Economy***

*Language:* Morporkian Literacy: Accented  
*TL:* 4

*Wealth:* Comfortable (¥1)     *Status:* -2 to 6

#### ***Political Environment***

*Government:* Dictatorship/Oligarchy  
*CR:* 2 (Corruption -1)

*Military Resources:* \$0.5M     *Defense Bonus:*  
+5

#### ***Notes***

The dictator of Ankh-Morpork is, of course, the Patrician—but he wields his tyrannical powers with a singularly light hand, except when street mimes are involved. On the other hand, very little “corruption” takes place in the

city without his awareness and toleration. The oligarchy is mainly the city’s guild leaders.

The city spends remarkably little on military forces, given its size and political influence. The Defense Bonus comes from its TL3 walls, now largely fallen into disrepair.

Unseen University is virtually a small independent state within Ankh-Morpork; treat it as a dictatorship/thaumocracy with CR3 and Corruptibility 0. It doesn’t maintain its own military forces, but its magical resources provide the moral equivalent! Within the university, enchantment is Common. The Unreal Estate has High or Very High Mana.

#### **Watch Armour**

Anyone using the full *Basic Set* armour and hit location rules might want to know what Ankh-Morpork Watch armour (p. 256) looks like using that system. It actually consists of a mail shirt (DR 4/2\* on the torso, 16 lbs., AM\$7.50), an iron helmet (DR 4, covers skull and face, 6 lbs., AM\$7.50), a light iron breastplate (an extra DR 3 on the torso front, 4 lbs., AM\$15), leather knee breeches (DR 1\*, 1 lb., AM\$1; roll 1d on a leg hit, and on a 4-6, the armour applies), a leather rain cape (treated as a light cloak, and protects the back if worn; DR 1\*, 2 lbs., AM\$1), and sandals or boots depending on the season (DR 0-2, 0.5-3 lbs., AM\$1.25-AM\$4). Total weight worn is thus 27.5-32 lbs., depending on weather, and cost is AM\$32.25-AM\$36; all close enough to Medium Armour in the simplified system. (The breastplate pushes the cost up a bit, but GMs might assume that the city got those cheap for bulk orders years ago.) Actual DR does run as



high as 7 for the torso front, but the wearer's face, arms, and lower legs are completely unprotected.

Gnome watchmen don't wear significant armour, while troll watchmen just get a helmet and breastplate, both with cost and weight doubled for SM +1 (see *Special Cases* on p. 161 of the *Discworld RPG*); 20 lbs. and \$45, which translates as Very Light, overall DR 1. (The

weight's about right – close to the appropriate 18 lbs.; the cost for Very Light at SM +1 is actually \$15, but this discrepancy can be explained by assuming that trolls are issued with the cheapest salvage the Watch can acquire, bringing the cost right down.)

*GURPS Low-Tech* would give even more detail and slightly different numbers, but that's left as an exercise for serious *GURPS* fans.

## Chapter 9

### *Detritus*

p. 325-326

In the chronicles, Detritus's crossbow (Piecemaker) is a cinematic creation with more than a little narrativium in its construction, and the treatment in this book reflects that rather than attempting too much hard realism. However, there was some logic involved.

Basically, it's a troll crossbow rated to ST 90 (!), using an integral windlass mechanism which, following the description in *GURPS Low-Tech* (p. 79), effectively *triples* the strength of the person drawing it, at the cost of increased preparation time. This makes it possible for Detritus to ready it. If it fired a single bolt, that would end up doing 10d+7 damage, corresponding to a 12d "blast" at short ranges; the multiple arrow hit rules for greater distances draw on the standard *GURPS* multiple-shot rules and some rules for high-tech weapons in other supplements.

Similar weapons might show up elsewhere on the Disc, mostly mounted on wheels for use in sieges.

### *King Verence II*

p. 336-337

As this book (mostly) disregards defaults between different skills, Verence spends a point more on Acting here than he would under full *GURPS*, where it gets a default from Performance.

### *Agnes Nitt*

p. 341-343

In terms of the full *GURPS* rules, Agnes Nitt's alternate personality Perdita doesn't quite rate as a Split Personality, because she and Agnes share a little too much, and both are basically sane; she's just another side to Agnes, although she's certainly worth a quirk.

Agnes's scream is Affliction 6, with modifiers Area Effect (8 yards), Sense-Based (Hearing), Costs Fatigue, Dissipation, and Emanation.

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