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The best way to create a GURPS character is to read Chapters 1-9 of the *GURPS Basic Set* (we'll be using *3rd Edition, Revised*¹) and familiarize yourself with all the rules involved. I know that can be pretty daunting, and so do the designers, which is why they have a "Lite" version covering the essentials of both character design and play:

<http://www.sjgames.com/gurps/lite/3e/gurpslite.pdf>

Their version is properly cross-referenced, too, so I strongly recommend you check it out. In this space, I'll be attempting to summarize it even more, with notes on how this will play out in our setting, using an example that's a little closer to my heart than Dai Blackthorne, the book's example character. For more examples, see the [templates](#).

Aside: There is no "wrong" way to create a character. This time, Alexa and I both started with pretty well-established characters from other games that we're just porting in, making decisions along the way about what "core" abilities we wanted to preserve and filling in "missing" details as we went. Usually, I start with a vague idea of both personality and abilities, then work on both in tandem: I look at the game mechanics and choose abilities that make sense together and sound fun to play as I think about what *sort* of person would have those abilities, where they would've gotten them, how that affects their attitude towards people, etc. This allows for a fleshed-out character that's both playable and fun. It's fine to put more work into designing either abilities or background first, but please check in with me occasionally to make sure you're fitting in with the setting and each other. Of course, you can try to recreate your favorite fictional characters as well, as long as we can work them into the setting somehow. But it's more fun IMHO with at least one or two original characters in the bunch. :D

Introduction

First things first: what is GURPS, and how will it help us keep our upcoming collaborative adventure serial from getting bogged down in questions of "Nuh-uhh, you missed me!"?

GURPS (Generic Universal RolePlaying System) is a "skill-based system", meaning pretty much everything you try to do that has a significant chance of failure will require a "skill roll": Roll three six-sided dice, add them up, and compare the total to your skill level. You're trying to roll *under* your skill, so higher skills are better (which makes sense), but lower rolls of the dice are

¹ We'll be using the simplified system for skill point costs from 4E; see below.

better (which can take getting used to). It's also a "point buy" system; being stronger, or wealthier, or better at Japanese all cost various amounts of *character points*, depending on the relative extent to which that makes your character "better" at being an effective adventurer.² You can also take "disadvantages": certain handicaps, mental, social, or physical, that make life challenging for you in certain ways but give you "extra" points to spend elsewhere. This gives you a *lot* of flexibility in designing your character, but can also be hard to keep track of the first time you try it, since you have to make a lot of individual decisions that would be bundled together in a class-based system or made for you in one where you were rolling randomly. Don't worry too much - just think about what you want your character to be, and we'll work together to make it happen. Hopefully the following extended example will help. Rest assured that I think this is a great system partly because of how *easy* it is to actually play; spelling all this stuff out in advance means you can focus on the story, and when game mechanics come up, it'll all be written down on your sheet already, so you don't have to stop and do arithmetic in the moment beyond adding up dice pips.

Starting characters normally get 100 points to spend on character creation, marking them as "hero material" with the potential to change the world - a cut above "normal" people, who are usually around 25 points. For this campaign, you'll start with **125 character points**, representing that your characters have already proven themselves capable of adventuring in the dangerous realm of Avalon (though not all of you are originally from the area), and may even have already taken their first steps into legend.³ To show you what this looks like, I'll be converting my Dark Heresy character, Augustus "Gus" Betas, a mutant gangster pressed into service as a soldier and then an Inquisitor, and in this timeline, having escaped.

Note that the order presented here and in the official materials is arbitrary. I can't think of a character where I haven't had to go back and adjust something "later" in the process, either to make the points work out or because my conception of the character changed slightly as I got more into it. It does move generally from broad ideas to narrow details, so we'll go with it, but if you know you want your character to be REALLY GOOD at Underwater Basketweaving, feel free to start there.

ATTRIBUTES

Basic Attributes include Strength (ST) (raw power), Dexterity (DX) (agility, coordination, athletic talent, and physical "cleverness"), Intelligence (IQ)⁴, and Health (HT) (constitution, toughness, and endurance.) The human average is 10 each, and it costs 10 for each point above that (more for exceptional scores). Note that a score of 10 in any attribute is free; taking below-average scores gets you "points back" to help you compensate in other areas.

² This is not the same as being a "better" human being or, say, roommate, of course.

³ This also means I'm prepared to give each of you a unique and moderately powerful magic item based on your origin and style; we'll work out the details.

⁴ Note that "IQ" covers book smarts, quick wit, timeless wisdom, and perceptiveness both physical and social. You'll be able to narrow down which of those apply to your character with advantages, disadvantages, and skills.

Example: Gus is, above all, a tough guy in every sense of the word. Even before taking his mutation into account, we'll give him 13 ST (30 points), 12 DX (20), 10 IQ (0), and 11 HT (10), for 60 points. We'll add the scores from his mutation in a minute.

ADVANTAGES

An **advantage** is a catch-all term for a trait that gives your character a significant leg up over the competition. Most "feats" or "talents" from other systems would go in here. Belonging to a different species, subspecies, or "race" to use the traditional gaming term, is also generally considered an advantage. The racial generation system is just an extension of the character generation system; if you want a custom race other than those indicated below, talk to me.

Example: Gus is a [Varkolyn](#); their appearance is brutish and terrifying even to people who know what they are, though being a humanoid mutation the claws and teeth are mostly just for show. His lamplike eyes are wide-set and allow him to see in almost total darkness, though he's never done well with ranged weapons. Stats: +2 ST (20), +2 HT (20), Night Vision (10), Peripheral Vision (15), DR3 (15), Extra Hit Points +6 (30), High Pain Threshold (10), No Depth Perception (-10), Appearance:Hideous (-20), Odious Racial Habit: consuming the flesh of sentient beings (-15), Reduced Manual Dexterity -3 (-9). With that configuration, being a Varkolyn costs 66 points, and he'll be invaluable in a fight. However, this is where I as a GM step in and say that this character would have such difficulty dealing with provincial townspeople - or almost anyone, really - that he's frankly not viable as a party member unless we can tone it down. Let's reduce the stats and HP some - only +1 ST and +4 HP - and "soften up" his appearance to Ugly (-10), and change the Odious Racial Habit to licking his chops in an unsettling manner (-5), bringing the total back to 66. Perhaps he's figured out that the locals react poorly to cannibalism and manages to restrain himself now, and his appearance stands out a bit less in a culture with more diversity than the Imperium. Final totals for stats are then 14 ST, 12 DX, 10 IQ, and 13 HT/17 HP. He's still a scary, antisocial brute, but not so much so that dealing with constant lynch mobs will keep him from participating in the story.

So that all counts as one advantage. As an individual, he also has Alertness +4 (20) - he's no physicist, but he's pretty wary - and Ambidexterity (10), for a total of 96 points.

DISADVANTAGES

Those of you playing along at home will notice that we've now spent 156 points, which is more than the 125 allotted to us, and we still need some skills (a central part of GURPS). We'll need to offset his admirable brawn with some drawbacks that will challenge us to get creative, and hopefully make the game more fun. Careful disadvantage selection is key to creating realistic and believable heroes, though it's also one of the areas that tends most easily toward "munchkinly" behavior, which is part of why I'll be limiting you to a **maximum of 50 points** of disadvantages. (Racial disadvantages do not count separately against this limit, within reason - being a member of a different species is counted as a single advantage, or disadvantage in some cases.)

Example: Gus is a determined, independent, healthy scrapper, so most of the physical disadvantages are out, and things like addictions, compulsions, and delusions don't seem appropriate. Bad Temper, Berserk, Bloodlust or even Impulsiveness might seem tempting, but we risk ending up with a dangerously lopsided character who can *only* fight, and that's not too interesting to play. Besides, one of Gus's most obvious traits (and one that's been a lot of fun to roleplay) is that he's always calm, cool and collected. What we need are some disadvantages that will reflect his established background, encourage roleplaying, and help crystallize his motivations so we can write a good story.

It's been previously established that Gus is a mutant, with no legal standing in his "home" society. Fighting is a means to an end - a way to gain, if not respect, a certain amount of being left alone, and, if not justice for his people, revenge against their tormentors. So how does that play out in game terms?

First, he's not used to doing well financially (although his equipment makes him about average for this world), leading to significant Greed (-15); he feels he needs more resources to protect himself, and will do almost anything to get them. He's also Overconfident (-10) - he's not actually trying to get himself killed, but he's definitely one for risky plans.⁵ That combo should be the setup for some escapades that even Gus might have trouble getting out of alive! He's also started to realize that it's not just the members of his own group that suffer from prejudice of various kinds - he's developed a Sense of Duty to anyone he sees as downtrodden or oppressed (-10). And finally, his past keeps catching up to him in the form of the leader of the inquisitorial squad he escaped from, who, let's say, got flung with him through the terrifying infinity of the Warp when she noticed him escaping and tried to stop him with her powers. Naturally, she blames him for separating her from her position, her goals, and her wealth! Her Grace is a "very formidable" individual, worth -10 points, and appears fairly often (9 or less.) That's a total of 45 points of disadvantages, so we're back in the black - and more importantly, we have a much clearer idea of what conflicts will be driving his part of the story we'll make together.

QUIRKS

Quirks are, in a roleplaying campaign like this one, among the most important things you'll put on your character sheet. Hopefully by now you have a fair idea of your character's background and personality, but it can sometimes be hard to bridge the gap between knowing what sort of a person they are and being able to show it convincingly in the heat of the moment. Quirks are roleplaying aids - little verbal tics, props, personal habits, hobbies, or whatever - that help make characters feel more real, more memorable, and more obviously distinct. Actors make these decisions all the time ("The script doesn't say it, but I always pictured being sort of hunched over from all those years at a desk...") because it's a good way to get into character. You can also use them as "shortcuts" to introduce your character's abilities ("Shows off by guessing strangers'

⁵ Some of you might remember raiding a warehouse full of gangsters and cultists before his own gang showed up...

professions”) or history (“Always wears beat-up brown coat”).

You get one point each for going through the work of thinking them up. (Write dozens if you wish, but you only get points for five. A sufficiently distinctive drawing could substitute for one.) Once the game starts, further character advancement will depend partly on your willingness to roleplay these, so make them good ones - which doesn’t necessarily mean complex! A cigar, a catch phrase, and an unreasonable dedication to the craft of making monster movies went a long way towards making Colonel “Hannibal” Smith stand out from the rest of The A-Team, when he otherwise might have been just The Mario in a group with a lot of shared background, skills, and stories.

Example: For Gus, here’s what we’ve got:

- Rough bass voice
- Calm, terse, unflappable demeanor
- Hates sterile facilities, bright lights, etc.
- Soft spot for young human women - they remind him of an old friend
- Scars on neck (from wearing an explosive collar for years)

Notice that the first two are “hooks”, things that make the character memorable and fun, but also easy to play - I switch speech patterns, and boom, I’m Gus. All the rest of it follows naturally.

The middle three are hints to help me remember how Gus will react to different situations.

Finally, the last three, should they come up, provide opportunities for other players to ask about his background (about which he is not overly forthcoming with strangers, but he opens up more easily than some.)

SKILLS

Skills are the main focus of the game mechanics; advantages and disadvantages have story consequences, but in game terms, they’re basically about determining under what circumstances you’ll be able to use your skills. Basic attributes determine how good you’ll be at them (and are also used directly in situations not covered by a specific skill). Unfortunately, they’re also the hardest step of character creation to figure out, unless you A) know the system quite well or B) particularly enjoy pretending to be database software by making lots of calculations from different tables. If one of those is true, this part is a lot of fun; if not, I have two pieces of good news for you. One, some preparation now will make gameplay and later advancement much easier. Two, **I have simplified the system for buying skills** as the designers did for 4th edition, so the costs will be the same for mental and physical skills, as indicated on the table below.

Skill Table

Skill Level:	Easy	Average	Hard	Very Hard
Attribute-3	–	–	–	1
Attribute-2	–	–	1	2
Attribute-1	–	1	2	4

Attribute+0	1	2	4	8
Attribute+1	2	4	8	12
Attribute+2	4	8	12	16
Attribute+3	8	12	16	20
Attribute+4	12	16	20	24
Attribute+5	16	20	24	28
Additional levels	4	4	4	4

Your skill level depends on three things: the inherent difficulty of the skill (Easy through Very Hard); the amount of effort you've put into learning it (spending character points); and your natural aptitude for skills of that type, as represented by the Basic Attribute the skill is based on (usually DX or IQ unless it says otherwise. Some skills can be based off of more than one attribute - if anything is unclear, I'll rule on a case-by-case basis.) To acquire skills, first **write down the listed attribute and difficulty** (ex. Running HT/H, Fishing IQ/E.) Then think about how important they are to your character - passing familiarity is 1 point, average study is 2, while years of dedication might be 12 points or more. Look in the appropriate column for the difficulty level, then find your final skill level on the far left.

Important note: Those of you who are particularly math-inclined (or dice-obsessed) will notice that an "average" person with an average attribute score of 10 and an average amount of experience with an average skill attempting a task of "average" difficulty ends up with a skill of 10... and that this is only going to succeed 50% of the time. Three things to keep in mind:

- 1) YOU are not average people... you're *adventurers*. So you're going to succeed more often than that.
- 2) Most people put years of work into learning how to do one or two things well. A professional, even an ordinary one, will probably have a skill of 12 or 13 in their primary tradeskill; the 10 is for ancillary skills and hobbies.
- 3) Most importantly, that last "average" is defined as a task under *stressful, adventuring* conditions... doing the sorts of things that heroes do, when life and limb are at stake. If you have the Driving skill at any level, just going to work in the morning wouldn't even require a roll - and even something relatively difficult, like driving in traffic to an unfamiliar location, would still call for a +3 to +5 bonus. So a pizza driver can still find your house, most of the time. "No bonus" is reserved for things like combat maneuvers, races/chases, and other sorts of highly competitive and/or risky situations, such as one might find on an Adventure.

Example: Like I said, skills are important, so it's a little unusual that we're only going to spend 19 points on them. That's okay, though; Gus comes from a world where, one way or another, he's had to employ violence to survive, so that's most of what he's good at, although he is starting to

branch out a bit. This brings up an excellent question: how *has* he been making a living in the Last Realm for the past several months? Obviously not as a butler - we want something where his size and strength will be assets, and even his appearance, if possible. On the other hand, he's memorable enough that anything too overtly violent will bring local law enforcement down hard, not to mention his old friend Hamona. Fortunately, this is a world with a lot of rough neighborhoods and occupations, so he's got some options as hired muscle: guarding caravans and mage's towers, or working down at the docks or on ships that need more protection (all of which conveniently provide ample opportunity for his greed to get the better of him, as well.) Let's go with "all of the above" for now; he has to keep on the move, after all.

So, what skills did he bring with him, and which ones has he been working on since his arrival? Obviously he'll have some combat skills; he's best with his greatsword, though familiar with knife and bare claws as well. Fast-Draw is a big help for those occasions where he's caught by surprise. He knows how to climb around - note that this is based on strength rather than dexterity in his case. He's also a fair driver, on the off chance he should run across a motorized vehicle. And while he lacks finesse, his strength and appearance have been known to help him intimidate people to get his way.

So that's the past. What about more recent adventures? Normally as a guard he'd use a spear, but we can say he likes his greatsword and so far no one's been willing to press the issue. He's too new and disoriented to have picked up much Area Knowledge, which most characters would have, and the scrounging techniques he used at home don't work as well here (people's daily habits are different.) He has, however, gotten better at surviving outdoors by foraging and stalking wild animals. And he's even learning to sail. With that, we're out of points, but he would do well to actually learn to swim if he keeps going in that direction!

So, having determined what skills we need, here's how I'd represent them in your notes: "<points> Skill Name (Stat/Difficulty) - <final skill level>". That makes it easy to do the math in advance, then copy things onto your Character Sheet. For example, Brawling is a Physical/Easy skill, based on DX; looking at the [chart](#), we can see that 1 point in it will get us a level of 12, which is not bad at all. Intimidation is a little tougher, since it's a Mental/Average skill relying on IQ; 1 point in that is only good for one less than Gus's IQ of 10. He'll have to really show off his muscles (or barbarism) in order to scare anyone. The final list will look something like this:

Brawling	DX/E	1	12
Climbing	ST/A	1	13
Driving (Military Trucks and Tanks)	DX/A	1	11

Fast-Draw Two-Handed Sword	DX/E	1	12
Intimidation	IQ/A	1	9 (bonuses for behavior)
Knife	DX/E	1	12
Seamanship/TL4	IQ/E	1	10
Stealth	DX/A	1	11
Survival	IQ/A	1	9
Swimming	ST/E	-	10
Tracking	IQ/A	2	10
Two-Handed Sword	DX/A	8	14

Overall he's not spectacular at anything; even with his greatsword, he relies more on size than skill. We could have specialized more in a few skills, but this gives him better employability and more roleplaying options, and while he's not as good at sailing or hunting as your average sailor or hunter, he's waaaaay stronger than your average guard or ruffian (each of whom, remember, is only built on about 25 points.) Being scarier than most of the hazards he might run into on the road will have to be enough to keep him fed for now until he can get better at professional and practical skills.

EQUIPMENT AND POSSESSIONS

As experienced adventurers, you've probably figured out how to take most of the gear you need with you. You've also picked up a magic item or two. For mundane equipment, "standard starting wealth" is \$1000 for those of you whose home setting is "local" or nearby; check out the lists on pp. B206-212 to see what that might get you, or talk to me if you want something that's not on there. Your special item will be on top of that; I'll work with people to balance them out.

Example: Gus has a well-made sword and excellent dragonhide armor from his previous position. We'll count the dragonhide (40 lbs, PD 4, DR 6, Resist Fire at the second level) as his magic item, and count the greatsword as the listed price of \$800. We'll also get him the following standard equipment:

Whetstone, 1 lb, \$5

Backpack, 3 lb, \$60

Large Knife, 1 lb, \$40

Torch, 1 lb, \$3

Rope, 2x10 yards, 3 lb, \$10

Tent, 5 lb, \$50

Blanket, 5 lb, \$20

Cash, negligible, \$12

That's enough for a place to sleep (outside of town, where no one will bother him). He'll need a new job soon, though, if he wants to keep eating.

Final Notes and Supplementary Questions

There are a few math-y things - move, encumbrance, perception rolls, etc. - that are easier to explain with a proper character sheet in front of you. We can talk about these in person, and you don't so much decide them as calculate them based on other things. For now, have fun! If you're looking for additional tools to help you think about your character from different angles, some old-school gamers have compiled the following list; feel free to explore any of these at your discretion. (Name would be a really good one to answer; try <http://rinkworks.com/namegen/> if you get stuck.)

Full Name

Nicknames

Rank (in any organization)

Politics (any large group that this character cares about, one way or the other?)

Age/Birthday

How old do you look?

Physical Appearance: Height, Weight, Hairstyle/color, Eyes, frame, etc.

Birthplace

Scars or handicaps (physical/mental/emotional)

Educational background

Work experience

Best friend

Romantic Interest

Are you married?

Enemies and why

Parents

Present problem

How the present problem can get worse

Strongest and weakest character traits

Most remarkable and deplorable traits

Sees self as...

Seen by others as...

Sense of humor? what kind?

Theme song

Catch phrase

Order/Chaos? (or Chance/History, Law/Creativity, etc.)

Basic nature

Preferred means of transportation

Ambitions
Philosophy of life
Hobbies and skill in hobbies
Favorite animal
Kinds of music/art/reading material preferred
Dress
Favorite colors
Pastimes
Description of home (physical/mental/emotional atmosphere)
Immediate family
Next of kin
Most important thing to know about character
Greatest achievement
Greatest downfall
One-line characterization
What trait will make this character come alive and why
Why is the character worth playing?
What differentiates this from other similar characters?
Would you say you were strong, agile, in shape, good looking, perceptive, fast, creative, intelligent, strong willed, charismatic, coordinated, sane, modest?
Would I like or dislike meeting this character and why?
Will other players and NPCs like or dislike the character for the same reason?
Why will this character be remembered?
If your character were to be depicted in a movie, what actor/actress would you want to play the part? because of physical resemblance or personality?
What fictional character would this character remind me of, and why?