

Steve Jackson's

GURPS™

**GENERIC UNIVERSAL
ROLEPLAYING
SYSTEM**



**GENERAL
THREAD**

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

INTRODUCTION

GURPS stands for *Generic Universal Roleplaying System*. The name was originally a joke, used as a placeholder while the writers tried to think of something to call it. Somehow they never came up with anything better and decades later, they are still using it.

Why Should I Try GURPS?

Because it's a generic system, you can run almost any game in it and there is really, really good support for a lot of genres. The books are written by people who know what they are talking about and have some of the highest editorial standards in the industry.

The rules are comprehensive, with detailed systems for not just combat and magic, but social engineering, chases, inventing strange devices, crafting, managing an army and even farming. However, they mostly use a few simple mechanics and almost all of them are optional. You can pick the rules you want to use in order to give detail to things you care about and gloss over other stuff with simple generic mechanics.

Where Do I Start?

A good first step is to try the free version of the rules GURPS Lite. That should give you a basic understanding of most of the important rules. Note that the games you can really run in GURPS Lite are kind of limited to medieval historical or low fantasy, which is only a fraction of what GURPS can do.

Once you've looked at that, you can move on to the two books of the Basic Set. These have most of the rules material for the system.

If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed, there are a couple of books just to help people understand the system better: GURPS for Dummies and How to Be a GURPS GM.

What Other books do I need?

You don't really need any more than the Basic Set, but the following are some of the best of the system:

- *Powers* is the basis for a lot of exotic abilities written up elsewhere and adds considerable detail to the Advantages from the Basic Set as well as some new rules and loads of examples.
- *Action 2: Exploits* adds a lot of rules for making GURPS less realistic and more abstract, which speeds the system up a lot. It also includes excellent chase rules and a bunch of good advice.
- *Power-Ups 3: Talents* compiles all the various Talent advantages published in a bunch of different books and adds interesting new rules which make them more than just a way of getting skills cheaper.
- *Low-Tech* is the gear catalog for ancient, medieval and fantasy settings, but also has a load of stuff which will be useful in any game since almost every PC eventually finds themselves having to survive with primitive technology. It also re-balances some of the weapons from the Basic Set.

Aren't Generic Systems Inherently Dull and Lacking in Flavor?

To some extent, that is true. GURPS mitigates this inherent weakness by having optional rules which change the way the game feels. While the default rules set is roughly intended to simulate realism with a slight bias towards heroic action, you can easily add 'cinematic' rules to make things more dramatic or meta-game options to give players more control over the narrative.



Any Books to Avoid?

Magic and Ultra-Tech both suffered badly from being some of the first books published for fourth edition and rushed editing. Although most of the content is usable, there are a few balance issues and screwed-up tables. Be sure to check the errata.

I Heard There Was Ridiculously Complicated Math Involved...

GURPS reputation for mathematical complexity is a bit overstated and mostly a hold-over from the 3rd edition Vehicles supplement. However there are quite a few points during character creation where you will have to multiply or divide some numbers, so you may want a calculator when doing that. Some optional rules do have a fair bit of difficult stuff, but you never need to use them.

The Skill List is Huge!

Yes, but don't be alarmed. Most skills can be used at default and there are Advantages like *Wild Talent* and *Jack of All Trades* (from *Power-Ups 3*) which make that easier if you forgot to get something you need.

But if you want a much shorter skill list, check out *Power-Ups 7: Wildcard Skills*. Wildcard skills are much broader than normal skills and allow you to bypass a lot of fiddly detail.

Where Can I Find More Detailed Combat Rules?

Mostly in the Martial Arts line (in GURPS the term 'martial arts' includes basically *all* forms of combat training, including Western weapon forms and even firearms). For gun rules, check out *Tactical Shooting* (realistic) or *Gun-Fu* (cinematic).

I Don't Like the Default Magic System, What are my Options?

Alternative magic systems are generally found in the Thaumatology line. The main Thaumatology book has a couple of complete systems (notably *Path / Book Magic*, which gives a great low-fantasy feel) and options for customizing the default system a lot plus guidelines for writing a new one.

Or you can pick up one of the supplements which add new magic systems:

- *Sorcery* is an Advantage-based system which gives casters some flexibility. The downside is that it has an incomplete spell list, so you will have to do some work, or use unofficial sources.
- *Chinese Elemental Powers* is also advantage based, but considerably less flexible. It is however a complete ready-to-go system and has a very interesting feel.
- *Ritual Path Magic* is probably the most popular of the alternative magic systems. It allows casters to come up with spells in play, defining their effects based on a flexible set of rules.

There are also systems which are similar to Ritual Path Magic in the Discworld Roleplaying Game and *Dungeon Fantasy 19: Incantation Magic*.



What Settings Are Available?

Pretty much any setting you like can be run in GURPS, but the official, published ones include:

- **The Madness Dossier**, a horror world where the heroes are trying to defend reality against monstrous beings who want to return it to the original timeline where they ruled the Earth.
- **Banestorm**, a fantasy setting populated by people snatched from across the multiverse. Notable for having real world religions alongside elves, etc.
- **Lands Out of Time**, where dinosaurs and cavemen live alongside each other.
- **Alchemical Baroque**, a fantasy world more based on fairy tales than Tolkien.
- **Tales of the Solar Patrol**, retro space opera.

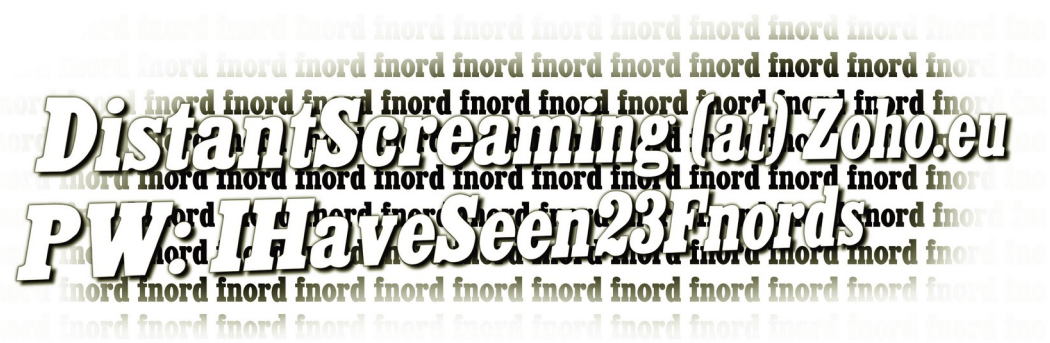
There are also a number of adaptations of existing franchises, such as **Mars Attacks**, **Discworld** and the **Vorkosigan Saga** plus some sourcebooks which don't exactly have a setting as such, but provide detailed guidance for running games in a particular genre, such as **Dungeon Fantasy** (old-school dungeon crawling), **Monster Hunters** (modern-day urban fantasy where you hunt vampires, demons, and other horrors) and **After the End** (post-apocalyptic).

LINKS

The GURPSgen MEGA archive contains many GURPS books. In order to avoid bots taking down the archive, the link is presented in a human-legible format which is difficult for machines to read. Manually type the following into your browser's address bar (note that it is CASE SENSITIVE):



If you want to add material to the archive, the logon details are:



GURPS Character Sheet

This useful app manages your character traits:

www.gurpscharactersheet.com

Simple user guide:

- Create a character sheet using 'file – new character sheet'.
- Open a trait library by clicking in the menu on the left.
- Select a trait you want to add to the character from the menu on the right.
- Copy it to the character sheet by using 'item – copy to character sheet'.
- Edit it by double clicking on the character sheet.
- Traits and items can be placed in 'containers', to group them.
- Create a new container by using the item menu.
- Existing traits and items can be dragged and dropped into containers

Wikis

gurps.wikia.com

gurpswiki.wikidot.com

Official Sources

If you illegally download GURPS products and find them entertaining or useful, consider paying for legal copies from www.warehouse23.com

