

Perception & Stealth

Introduction

The existing rules for stealth and perception in *GURPS* work well enough for many games, but peering behind the veil reveals the rules to be a chaotic mashup of older ideas, bandaids-turned-law, contradictions, and ad-hoc additions to patch holes in the system. The rules presented here are an attempt to consolidate the system's handling of stealth and detection into a more cohesive whole as well as replacing the existing abstract rules for Stealth with something more blow-by-blow simulationist (since that's how most people use it anyway).

Advantages and Gear

Advantages like **Invisibility**, as well as gear that mimics such traits, now penalize Sense rolls rather than boosting the user's Stealth skill. This means that invisible creatures are harder to find even if they're not actively being stealthy; they could be fighting, resting, sleeping, or even dead and they would still be harder to detect. The penalty to Sense rolls is equal to the old bonus to Stealth.

Additionally, any penalty to Vision of -4 or worse removes any "in plain sight" or similar bonuses; the penalties are enough to argue that they are no longer obviously standing out and must be actively searched for.

Stealth

Stealth no longer resolves as a Quick Contest vs the Sense rolls of witnesses; instead, it now is a normal roll that can penalize the PER and PER-based rolls of those attempting to detect the user. How these penalties apply differs depending on the relevant sense.

Vision: Any result that's not a critical failure removes the "in plain sight" bonus to see you. Failure gives potential viewers a +4 to see you, while critical success inflicts an extra -4.

Hearing: A successful Stealth check sets the hearing distance of your movement (p B358) to 0.25 yards, or just 9", while failure sets it to 1 yard. Critical success drops it to just 1/32 of a yard (approximately 1") and critical failure sets it to 8 yards.

Detect, Vibration Sense, and Other Senses:

The GM will need to adjudicate on a case-by-case basis, but a good rule of thumb is that success inflicts a penalty equal to your margin of success while failure gives a bonus equal to that margin. This assumes mundane stealth techniques would help conceal the user against the sense at all.

The only modifier to Stealth is the user's encumbrance level. Modifiers for hiding in open or built-up areas are now reversed and applied to observers' Perception rolls; it's very hard to sneak up on someone in an empty hallway. The penalty for moving faster than Move 1 works similarly but sees further changes. Rather than +5 for moving faster than Move 1, bonuses start if moving faster than a Step, and the bonus is +1 per 20% of the character's full Move. Lastly, the penalty for fooling observers with Discriminatory Smell is simply removed, as what it abstracted--that sticking to shadows is less effective at avoiding a good nose--is now addressed directly.

In all cases, the effects of a Stealth roll last until something happens that would give a potential witness a better chance of success with their best Sense. For example, if you close the distance with a target and reduce the range penalty, you need to roll again. Similarly, suddenly entering someone's vision by turning a corner, cocking a gun when outside of someone's arc of vision, or leaving a cover-heavy area for an open one would trigger a new roll.

Camouflage

Similar to Stealth, Camouflage is now a normal roll that penalizes observers' Vision rolls, with the added caveat that the wearer must be still to gain the benefits.

As implied in Basic Set, Camouflage can give intruders a second chance at avoiding detection. When an observer successfully hears the intruder and turns to look, or if the observer succeeds their Vision roll but with a margin of 1 or 2, the intruder can choose to immediately stop moving. If they stop, the observer must pass a second Vision or Vision-based Observation check. On a failure, the intruder is not spotted. On a success, or if the intruder chose to keep moving, the intruder is spotted. Vigilant or paranoid observers can only reroll if they do something to improve their chances of success, such as walk closer or shine a light on the area.

Perception in Combat

In combat, Perception rolls will be required before an attack can be made or avoided. This is an extension of the rules introduced in Douglas Cole's *Dodge This* from issue #3/57 of Pyramid. While vision is understandably the main sense discussed, any sense that can determine direction and distance as well as discriminate between sources will allow a roll (see Powers: Enhanced Senses for more detail on what qualifies).

These PER rolls replace any combat penalties associated with the target being difficult to see (e.g. darkness, invisibility, etc.). Rather than directly reducing the chances of successfully striking the target, this approach makes use of a second roll; the end result, that the attack is harder to make successfully, remains the same.

Stealth In Combat

In combat, Stealth has the same effect as normal--that of removing the +10 bonus to Vision for being in plain sight--but there are a few additional factors to consider.

Firstly, attempting to stealth requires a Ready action and having some sort of concealment from observers. For simplicity's sake, you need concealment from all enemies on the field; this avoids needing to track who keeps the "in plain sight" bonus and simplifies an enemy being able to call out your location to their allies.

Second, stealth lasts until you're detected. As above, assume that once one enemy locates you, your location is more or less known to all enemies. With the chaos of battle and the constant maneuvering of multiple parties, re-rolling when someone has a better chance of spotting you would slow down combat too much.

Camouflage in Combat

As before, Camouflage mimics the effects of Stealth except that it's visual only and requires you to be still. In combat, this limits your options if you want to maintain camo--you can only Aim, Concentrate, Evaluate, or Wait if you want to deny enemies the +10 to spot you. That being said, if you do another action and no one spots you regardless (e.g. you move but it's through an enemy's blind spot, so they still fail to spot you), you automatically shed the +10 to being spotted at the start of your next turn. By moving only during choice opportunities, you can maintain camouflage.

The above effects replace the -1 to hit targets in camo. Like *Perception in Combat*, the end result of you being harder to hit is maintained by requiring a Perception roll to attack in the first place.