GURPS

Fourth Edition

# POWER-UPS 8 LIMITATIONS



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You've got to know your limitations. I don't know what your limitations are. I found out what mine were when I was twelve. I found out that there weren't too many limitations, if I did it my way.

– Johnny Cash

## Introduction

"Wait, you're saying limitations . . . are power-ups?"

Absolutely! Most players would agree that they never seem to have enough character points to build the awesome protagonists of their dreams. So many advantages cry out to be purchased, yet point budgets can be spread only so thin. How can a gamer cut those costs? Limitations.

Chosen well, a limitation isn't just a point savings; it's also a way to add depth and color to your character. It can raise ques-

tions that are *fun* to answer! If your Legal Enforcement Powers are Informal (p. 15), what line would you have to cross to get them taken away? Why do the police trust an outsider so much? Who loves you at the precinct . . . and who hates your guts? How did you even prove yourself to begin with?

GURPS Power-Ups 8: Limitations is here to help raise those questions, flesh out your adventurer, and save you some points while doing so. It collects all of the new general limitations released since GURPS entered its Fourth Edition in 2004. Just as important are the new advice and tips; uses

of limitations that you might not have thought of; and pointsaving tricks that, while not *technically* limitations, work in much the same way. Finally, all the limitations from the *GURPS Basic Set* and this work are summarized in a convenient table.

Sometimes the best way to power up is to find a fun and creative way to power down. Let *Limitations* show you how!

#### **Publication History**

*GURPS Power-Ups 8: Limitations* is a new supplement, but as of mid-2014, it includes every general limitation introduced after the *GURPS Basic Set*. Specifically, it draws upon

concepts and limitations from GURPS Bio-Tech, GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 3: The Next Level, GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 9: Summoners, GURPS Fantasy, GURPS Horror, GURPS Martial Arts: Yrth Fighting Styles, GURPS Power-Ups 5: Impulse Buys, GURPS Powers, GURPS Psionic Powers, GURPS Social Engineering, GURPS Supers, GURPS Thaumatology, GURPS Thaumatology: Chinese Elemental Powers, and GURPS Zombies.

## Out of limitations comes creativity.

- Debbie Allen

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

As the Subgenius Reverend Pee Kitty, Jason Levine has overcome the limitations of reality to become the Assistant *GURPS* Line Editor. His RPG-fu has served him well in the creation of the *GURPS Monster Hunters* series; his "psychic trilogy" of *GURPS Psionic Powers, GURPS Psionic Campaigns,* and *GURPS Psis;* the popular *GURPS Thaumatology: Ritual Path Magic;* and many other books. His influence also extends to *Pyramid* magazine, in the form of editorial assistance and regular articles. He lives on the Georgia/Tennessee state line with his wife (who has the Cosmic enhancement rather than any limitations) and family.

#### **About GURPS**

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*Errata*. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata pages for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are available on our website – see above.

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set*, *Fourth Edition*. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

#### LIMITATIONS ON DISADVANTAGES

Disadvantages can take limitations; some of the disadvantages from the *Basic Set* have special limitations, and Mitigator (p. B112) is a general limitation designed specifically for them. However, this doesn't mean limitations should be applied freely to disadvantages. Many general limitations produce unbalanced results when added directly to disadvantages. To illustrate, consider these two characters:

Ada has IQ 10 [0] and IQ +2 (Accessibility, Only during the day, -20%) [32], for a total of 32 points.

Bob has IQ 12 [40] and IQ -2 (Accessibility, Only at night, -20%) [-32], for a total of 8 points.

Both have IQ 12 during the day and IQ 10 at night, but Bob has spent a fraction of what Ada has. That's because most limitations in *GURPS* have *modest* values; a trait losing 50% of its utility might save only 20% of its value. (See *Accessibility*, pp. 4-5, for more.) With positive traits, like increased attributes and advantages, this helps prevent abuse. But with negative traits, like reduced attributes and disadvantages, it can actually *facilitate* abuse.

### Mitigator (Horde Intelligence)

A common fantasy and sci-fi trope is the horde of creatures who are moronic individually, but who act with frightening intellect as a *group*. To represent this, give them a racial IQ penalty with Mitigator, Horde Intelligence (-60%). This value doesn't vary by how tough the creatures are, because regardless, the mob is ephemeral.

When using this limitation, the horde's density is what matters. Two creatures or more per square yard is a true mob, and needed to erase the full penalty. For a less-dense horde (0.3 people per square yard is the average on a city sidewalk outside of rush hour, while one person per square yard is a visible crowd), multiply the IQ penalty by [1 - (crowd density/2)] and round for the worse to find the current penalty. Remember that IQ penalties lower Will and Per, and skills based on IQ, Will, or Per. Thus, each -1 to IQ mitigated gives +1 to all these things.

In all cases, an actual horde is needed – no tossing two critters in a closet to make them smarter. If there are fewer members than the point value of the IQ penalty, the Mitigator doesn't kick in.

*Example:* Because ants exhibit a strange proto-intelligence in groups, the GM gives his giant ants IQ 6 along with IQ-4 (Mitigator, Horde Intelligence, -60%) [-32]. Normally, they have IQ 2, but in hordes of at least 32 ants, their IQ *may* increase. Packed at densities of 2 ants/square yard, they function at IQ 6. Down to 1.5 ants/square yard, they have IQ 5. Below that, to 1 ant/square yard, they get IQ 4. Until 0.5 ant/square yard, they get IQ 3. At lower densities, they're IQ 2.

Thus, for the most part, general limitations (aside from Mitigator) shouldn't be applied to disadvantages. Instead, the best option is to take the disadvantage at full value, and then take an advantage that *counters* the disadvantage to apply any limitations to.

*Example:* The counter to Deafness [-20] would be No Deafness [20]. So, rather than take Deafness (Accessibility, Not when under direct sunlight, -10%) [-18], it's more fair to take Deafness [-20] + No Deafness (Accessibility, Only in direct sunlight, -30%) [14], for a net -6 points.

Though slightly more complex, this method produces fair results. To keep things simpler, the GM might want to figure out what limitations would be applied to the "counter" advantage, subtract those from -100%, and treat the result as a special limitation for that disadvantage.

Example (continued): No Deafness (the "counter") ended up with a -30% limitation. -100% minus -30% is -70%; thus, rather than writing out both traits on the character sheet, the GM could tell the player to treat "Not under direct sunlight" as a -70% limitation here. It works out the same: Deafness (Not under direct sunlight, -70%) [-6].

#### **EITHER/OR LIMITATIONS**

Some concepts call for an "either/or" limitation. For example, a creature with Damage Resistance may have thick skin and an armored carapace on its belly (either Tough Skin or Partial, Vitals Only). Or using your Luck may have to be declared in advance for everything except defensive rolls (either Active or Defensive). When such a combination comes up, just multiply the percentage values of both limitations together to find the fair value. (Exception: If either exceeds -80%, reduce it to -80% before this calculation.)

*Example:* A fantasy race can produce pheromones that knock out males automatically, but give females a HT roll to resist. The Fatigue Attack thus has *either* Accessibility, Males Only (-20%) or Resistible, HT (-30%) as a limitation. Since  $0.20 \times 0.30 = 0.06$ , this is a -6% limitation.

This value is guaranteed to be *mathematically* fair, since it's just an inverted way of applying *Limited Enhancements* (p. B111). However, after obtaining the value, the GM may wish to adjust it slightly to produce a result that *feels* fairer overall. In the example above, rounding that -6% down to -10% wouldn't be unreasonable. In all cases, though, the final value *must* give less of a discount than either of the base limitations.

#### PARTLY LIMITED ABILITIES

You needn't apply the same modifiers to every level of a "leveled" advantage like Damage Resistance or Innate Attack. Applying a limitation to only part of the advantage lets you create an ability that's more potent in situations where the limitation doesn't interfere. Other modifiers can still apply to the entire ability.

*Example:* Summer has TK 10 [50] and TK +20 (Accessibility, Only in direct sunlight, -30%) [70]. She can always use TK 10, but her level increases to 30 in direct sunlight.

#### Requires (Attribute) Roll

#### Variable

This limitation works like Unreliable (p. B116), except that instead of rolling against a fixed activation number to trigger your advantage, you roll against DX, IQ, HT, Will, or Per (choose one when you buy the ability). This is worth -10% for a DX, IQ, or HT roll, or -5% for a Will or Per roll. Things that temporarily modify your score do affect this roll.

For a defensive ability, roll each time the defense would mitigate an attack or a hazard – or once per minute, for constant exposure. If your roll fails, *all* future attempts to activate it (until you succeed) cost a flat 1 FP but are at no additional penalty. However, if you drop to 3 FP or less from this, your ability shuts down until *all* FP are regained.

If the attribute roll that you make can be resisted by potential subjects as a Quick Contest, add -10% to the value of this limitation. For example, Invisibility (Requires IQ vs. Per Roll, -20%) would require you to win a Quick Contest of your IQ vs. the Perception of anyone who might see you. This cannot be combined with Glamour (pp. 13-14) or Resistible (p. B115), and is incompatible with any trait that already allows a resistance roll. Advantages that currently necessitate an attribute roll to work may turn that roll into a Quick Contest for a flat -10%. Note this, for example, as Empathy (Requires IQ vs. Will Roll, -10%) if you must win a Quick Contest of IQ versus Will to use your Empathy.

See *Under the Hood: Active Defense* (p. 10) and below for notes on customizing this limitation further.

Requires (Skill) Roll: As a special effect that does not change the value, Requires (Attribute) Roll may be turned into Requires (Skill) Roll, as long as the skill in question is based on that attribute. For example, Requires Mathematics (Applied) Roll would be priced identically to Requires IQ Roll (-10%), because Mathematics (Applied) is an IQ-based skill.

Hard skills are the most balanced when used in this manner, but using an Average or Very Hard skill is not a significant enough change to warrant altering the limitation value. An Easy skill, however, reduces the size of the limitation by 5% (e.g., Requires Carpentry Roll would be a -5% limitation).

#### Requires Concentrate

-15%

Your ability requires a series of Concentrate maneuvers to maintain. Taking any other maneuver (such as Attack or Move) causes it to switch off. Thus, you can only move one step per second while using it, and can't attack, aim, etc. Your ability shuts down if you lose your concentration (e.g., if attacked and you fail your Will roll).

You can't combine this with All-Out (p. 11), All-Out Concentrate (p. 11), or Requires Ready (below). Normally, only switchable advantages that would otherwise stay on without an active effort can take this limitation. A passive ability without definite activation conditions (e.g., Empathy) can also take it; if so, it requires a Concentrate maneuver to use.

Requires Ready: As above, except that your ability requires a series of Ready maneuvers. This is less of a limitation because foes cannot cause you to lose the ability to ready as easily as they can make you lose concentration. -10%.

#### Requires Low Gravity

Variable

Your ability doesn't function in gravity fields over a certain strength. This can be appropriate for movement abilities that work better in lower gravity, such as Clinging or Flight. This is worth -5% for each 0.1G under 1G at which the ability does not work (-5% at 0.9G, to -50% if the ability works only in zero gravity).

For Flight specifically, this limitation assumes a standard-pressure atmosphere (1 atm). In other environments, multiply the gravity in which the flier can operate by the atmospheric pressure. Thus, someone who can only fly in up to 0.2G could fly in 0.3G if the atmosphere were 1.5 atm, but would be limited to 0.1G if it were 0.5 atm.

#### You've Got the Touch

To convert a ranged ability or attack to a touch-based one, add Melee Attack, Reach C (-30%), from p. B112. Despite this modifier's name and its classification as an attack limitation, the ability need not be offensive; for example, you could use it to change Telesend to touch-based telepathy.

An ability that is unaffected by DR and works via touch – either inherently or because of Melee Attack – can be restricted further, by giving it *one* of the following mutually exclusive options.

*Touch-Based* (p. B109): Your ability works only if you make contact with the target's skin, or through light clothing at most. Any DR or rigid covering that prevents him from feeling your contact will stop the effect. -20%.

*Touch-Based, Reversed* (below): Your ability works only if you touch the target with your bare hand. You cannot wear even light gloves. The subject's clothing, armor, etc., have no effect, but *you* must feel the connection. -20%.

Contact Agent (p. B111): You must make skin-to-skin contact with the target. Your skin must touch his. -30%.

#### Sense-Based, Reversed

Variable

This variant has the same value as normal Sense-Based (p. B109), but works "in reverse" – through the *user's* senses, that is, your senses. To affect your target, you must see it with your unaided eyes (Vision-Based), hear it with your own ears (Hearing-Based), touch it with your bare hand (Touch-Based), and so on. If you can't – or if you're deprived of your sense (e.g., by a blindfold for Vision-Based or heavy gloves for Touch-Based), or using a technological or paranormal intermediary – your ability doesn't work. This variation is allowed as a limitation only on an advantage that's normally unaffected by DR.

#### Short-Range

-10%/level

Your ranged ability uses a worse class of range penalties than usual. Each level of Short-Range, to a maximum of three, makes the penalties one step more unfavorable on the table on p. 18.

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Style reflects one's idiosyncrasies. Your personality is apt to show more to the degree that you did not solve the problem than to the degree that you did.

- Charles Eames

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