



d20 FIREARM MECHANICS (BETA VERSION, 09-06-2001)

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Firearm Attributes

Firearms have several special traits that make them different from other weapons, particularly muscle-powered weapons, like the crossbow and sword. These traits are discussed below.

Chemically Propelled

Unlike bows, slings, and crossbows that use mechanical, muscle-based force to hurl a projectile, firearms rely on simple chemical combustion. The propellant detonates, transforming into a gaseous state. The gas expands, forcing the bullet down the barrel of the weapon. The bullet (and some of the gas) escapes the end of the barrel in excess of the speed of sound, with a loud crack and flash.

The only practical limit to the velocity of the bullet is the rate at which gases can expand. This is quite unlike more “primitive” muscle-powered weapons that are limited by the strength and skill of the user. Regardless of who wields the firearm – from a withered crone to an Austrian bodybuilder – the bullets come out with the same force and inflict the same damage.

What does this mean for a d20 game? A character does not apply his Strength bonus to the damage inflicted by a firearm.

(It also means that if you have a society with plentiful, cheap firearms, it probably will not be able to support an elite social class of warriors. Firearms equalize death-dealing potential. Jealous peasants with guns can make mincemeat of aristocracy.)

Accuracy

The bullet fired from a gun travels far faster than an arrow, sling stone, crossbow bolt, or hurled knife. In comparison to these weapons, it has less need to “lead” a target (i.e., aim in front of it) at long ranges. To all practical means, a bullet is invisible because of its speed and moves so fast as to be nigh impossible to dodge. It is easy to aim and capable of precise targeting at relatively long ranges. Wind, rain, and other

environmental effects do less to spoil its trajectory in comparison to more primitive weapons.

For these reasons, this system gives firearms an attribute called Accuracy. A firearm’s Accuracy is a modifier to your Attack rolls when you use that gun.

Normally, a firearm has an Accuracy modifier of +2. A weapon’s recoil and other special attributes can reduce or increase its base accuracy.

Recoil

When a gun is fired, it is pushed backwards, towards the shooter, and the muzzle pitches upward.

This is called recoil or “kick.” Recoil is the gun’s *reaction* to its *action* of propelling a bullet. (Newtonian physics! Huzzah!)

Generally speaking, the lighter the firearm, the more it kicks. The more powerful a round fired by a gun, the more the recoil. The shorter the barrel – which causes more propellant gas to be wasted – the greater the recoil.

The more powerful a firearm’s recoil, the less accurate the firearm. When fired rapidly, recoil spoils the aim of the shooter, driving the barrel up and off target.

In this system, a single number designates Recoil. The caliber of the round, the size of the propellant, and size of the firearm determine it. Accessories, like a muzzle brake, can reduce that number.

The effects of the Recoil attribute are described below.

Recoil and Rapid Fire

In this system’s simplified model of firearms, Recoil applies a negative penalty to your attack rolls when you attempt to fire a gun rapidly. When you fire faster than single fire, you’re going to suffer the effects of recoil. The exact effects are described in each rate of fire (see below).

Heavy Recoil

If a weapon has Recoil of 4 or more, it is considered to have heavy, brutal kick when fired and suffers a negative penalty to Accuracy. Table Rcl-1 shows the Accuracy penalties for different degrees of Recoil:

Table Rcl-1: Accuracy Penalties for Recoil

Recoil	Accuracy Modifier
3 or less	+0
4-5	-1
6-7	-2
8-9	-3
10+	-4

Penetration

In the 1850’s, a black-powder rifle, the Swiss Federal Carbine, was capable of firing a 10.5mm ball with such force that it could “pierce three one-inch thick wooden boards at a thousand paces” (quoted from *The World’s Great Rifles*, by Roger Ford). Late 20th Century cartridge firearms are capable of penetrating 24 or more layers of ballistic kevlar, the material used to make “bullet-proof” vests. It is not uncommon for accidentally discharged firearms to punch holes through the walls of several houses in a row. Even firearms of

Campaign Breakers . . .

Of all the attributes possessed by firearms, the two most likely to “break” a campaign setting are Accuracy and Penetration. These two characteristics make firearms clearly superior to other, more primitive weapons, like bows and axes.

If you want your setting to focus on the use of close-quarter melee weapons, bows, and the like, then it would be wise to ignore both Accuracy and Penetration. This will make firearms an alternative, but not necessarily superior choice.

moderate caliber can punch through the metal body of automobiles; some are even capable of piercing the engine block.

Because firearms shoot a small projectile faster than the speed of sound, they can punch through solid objects with ease. This attribute is called Penetration. It is the ability of a firearm to ignore armor.

In the *Grim-n-Gritty Hit Point and Combat Rules*, for which these firearm rules were created, Penetration permits a weapon to ignore a few points of Protection when it determines its damage. Firearms typically have Penetration from 4 to 8.

Penetration has no effect on Damage Reduction.

Penetration in Standard d20 Combat

If you are not using the *Grim-n-Gritty* rules, you should carefully consider the implications of a weapon that routinely defeats armor. This is especially important when you are using the standard Armor Class rules where armor is an all-out-or-nothing sort of defense.

There are three major options for implementing Penetration in a standard d20 setting that uses AC:

The “Realistic” Option: The weapon’s Penetration rating is the total amount of armor, natural armor, and shield bonuses to the target’s AC that the weapon can ignore.

For example, if the target has AC 19 (+3 Dexterity, +6 armor) and you shot them with a Penetration 4 weapon, you would only have to roll against AC 15. The four points of Penetration let you ignore four points of armor.

This option is no more complex than the standard Penetration rules, but does require a little calculation, so it has the potential of slowing play.

The “Guns Ignore All Armor” Option: In this option, it is assumed that firearms can penetrate any medieval type of armor. All firearm attacks are resolved as Ranged Touch Attacks.

The Penetration statistic is not used in this version of the rules.

There are two drawbacks to this option. First, it completely negates the value of armor for large, low Dexterity creatures, like dragons. Second, it eliminates the Penetration distinction between different sizes of gun.

The Cinematic Option: Ignore Penetration altogether. This option keeps combat simple. The high rates of fire, internal ammunition, and relatively high damage will make firearms useful in this type of campaign, even if they have the same Penetration as a dart or knife.

Rates of Fire

With a modern, self-loading firearm, you can fire off several shots during the time of a typical sword swing or thrust. Pumping out a veritable cloud of lead is nothing more difficult than rapidly pulling the weapon’s trigger. To simulate this in d20 play, several new Rates of Fire have been created. Using a weapon with a special Rate of Fire lets you shoot several times with a single attack action.

These new Rates of Fire are designed with KISS principle in mind: “Keep It Simple, Stupid.” While more accurate ways of modeling fully automatic fire exist, they require a high degree of rule complexity, bogging down the play of the game. These rules attempt to model automatic fire and still maintain the game-speeding abstraction that underlies the d20 system.

Certainly there are more types of burst-fire in the “real world,” but for purposes of this system, only three, five, ten, and fifty round bursts have been created. Again, this keeps things simple.

Standard Fire (SF)

Standard Fire allows you to attack with a firearm as many times as you have attacks per round.

Almost every firearm permits you to perform Standard fire. There are exceptions, though. For instance, certain machineguns and submachineguns only let you fire bursts.

Double Fire (DF)

Double Fire lets you fire two shots with each attack. Each shot suffers a penalty to hit equal to half the weapon’s recoil (round up, –1 minimum).

Double Fire may be directed at two separate targets. This imposes a –4 penalty to hit both targets.

Damage bonuses for specialization and the like apply to each shot you perform with Double Fire.

Double Fire Example . . .

Jack has an Attack bonus of +8/+3. He wields a double-action revolver with recoil of 3. Jack decides to Double Fire on both of his attacks.

One-half the recoil of his revolver is 1.5. This is rounded up to 2, so Jack suffers a –2 penalty on his attacks.

The first attack would normally be +8. With Double Fire, it is two shots at +6/+6.

The second attack would normally be a single shot at +3, but with Double Fire, it is two shots at +1/+1.

Jack gets four attacks: +6/+6/+1/+1.

Triple Fire (TF)

Triple Fire lets you shoot three times with each attack. Each shot suffers a penalty to hit equal to the weapon's recoil (-2 minimum).

Like Double Fire, Triple Fire shots may be directed at separate targets, but with a -4 Attack penalty against each target. Damage bonuses for specialization and the like apply to each shot.

Double-action weapons and auto-loaders are capable of Triple Fire.

Triple Fire Example...

Jack has an Attack bonus of +8/+3. He wields a double-action revolver with recoil of 3. Jack decides to Triple Fire on both of his attacks.

Recoil 3 imposes a -3 penalty to Jack's attack rolls in Triple Fire mode.

The first attack would normally be +8. With Triple Fire, it is three shots at +5/+5/+5.

The second attack would normally be a single shot at +3, but with Triple Fire it is three shots at +0/+0/+0.

Jack gets six attacks: +5/+5/+5/+0/+0/+0.

3-round Burst (B3)

A burst occurs when several bullets are rapidly and automatically fired with a single pull of a firearm's trigger. The advantages of a Burst: it is easier to hit your target, and it is possible that you might hit your target with more than one bullet, inflicting more damage.

A 3-round Burst counts as one attack; three bullets are fired with a single pull of the trigger. If you perform a Standard Attack Action, you can do one burst. If you perform a Full Attack Action, you can perform one burst for each attack.

A 3-round Burst provides a +3 Attack bonus.

For every 2 + Recoil points you roll over the number needed to hit your target, an additional bullet hits and inflicts normal damage, up to the total number of bullets fired at your target. Resolve the damage of each bullet separately. (For example, if you use a Recoil 3 weapon, for every five points you roll higher than the amount needed to hit your target, another bullet hits and inflicts damage.)

You cannot hit an opponent more times than the shots in your burst. For instance, if you fire a three round burst, no more than three shots can hit your target.

You cannot direct a three round burst at multiple targets.

Damage bonuses for specialization and similar abilities apply to the first bullet in a burst, but not any others.

Point Blank Burst: If you fire at Burst at a target within 5' and hit, all bullets in the burst automatically hit the target.

3-round Burst Example...

Jack has an Attack bonus of +8/+3. He wields an assault rifle with recoil of 3. Jack is going to perform a 3-round burst.

The burst gives Jack a +3 bonus to hit. For every 5 (2 + 3 Recoil) points he rolls higher than the target's Defense, he will hit the target one additional time.

Jack attacks and rolls a 23. His target rolls a 15 for Defense. Jack hits.

Because Jack rolled 8 points higher than his target's Defense, one additional bullet hits.

Jack resolves the damage for two bullets striking the target.

5-round Burst (B5)

In a 5-round Burst, five bullets are automatically and rapidly fired with a single pull of the trigger. A 5-round Burst works like a 3-round Burst, except it provides a +5 Attack bonus.

10-round Burst (B10)

A 10-round Burst is an extended burst intended to spray an area with a hail of bullets. With a single pull of the trigger (one attack), 10 rounds are automatically fired from the weapon. For all practical purposes, a 10-round burst is rock-n-roll, fully automatic fire.

10-round Bursts are treated like area-effect attacks. It affects a 5' wide path in a straight line out the weapon's maximum range. Everything within that path suffers damage from the burst. A Reflex saving throw halves the damage. The DC of the saving throw equals 10 + your Attack bonus - the weapons' recoil - any penalties for range.

At one range increment, the weapon inflicts double normal damage; roll two times the normal dice and double all damage modifiers. At two range increments, it inflicts normal damage. At three or more range increments, a successful Reflex saving throw means the target suffers no damage at all.

Targets of a burst may apply Deflection bonuses to their Reflex save.

10-round Burst Example...

Jack has an Attack bonus of +8/+3. He is firing a submachinegun (recoil 5) in 10-round Burst mode. The submachinegun normally inflicts 1d10+1 damage with a 50' range increment.

Since Jack has two attacks per round, he is going to fire two bursts. The first burst uses his +8 attack bonus to determine the Reflex save DC. The result is DC 13 (10 + 8 attack - 5 recoil). The second burst uses his +3 attack bonus for a DC of 8 (10 + 3 attack - 5 recoil).

At one range increment, the burst inflicts 2d10+2 damage. At two or more range increments, 1d10+1.

50-round Burst (B50)

Some self-loading fully automatic weapons, like modern Gatling guns, are capable of 50-round bursts.

A 50-round Burst is similar to a 10-round burst in mechanics, except it affects a 10' wide path, the DC for the saving throw is $15 + \text{your Attack bonus} - \text{the weapon's recoil} - \text{any penalties for range, and damage is greater.}$

At one range increment, the weapon inflicts triple normal damage; roll three times the normal dice and triple all damage modifiers. At two range increments, it inflicts double normal damage. At three range increments, normal damage. At four or more range increments, a successful Reflex saving throw means the target suffers no damage at all.

Report and Muzzle Flash

Firearms are more conspicuous than muscle-powered, primitive weapons. Where a crossbow makes no more than a “twang” when fired, a gun makes a loud, resounding “crack” and spits a ball of fire.

Two things cause the loud crack when a gun is shot. One is the chemical combustion that propels the round; the expanding gases make a loud pop. The other is the bullet breaking the speed of sound and causing a small sonic boom. The loud noise of gun firing is its *report*.

The ball of fire spit from the muzzle of a gun when it fires is called *muzzle flash*. Muzzle flash is the burning of wasted propellant. In some guns, it is so bright that it can be seen in broad daylight. Usually, the shorter the barrel of the weapon, the less effectively propellant is burned and the greater the muzzle flash.

Report and muzzle flash makes it easy to detect a firearm when it is shot.

The sound of a firearm shooting can be heard about half a mile away in open country and about two hundred yards in urban areas. You do not need to make Listen checks to hear it. However, if you wish to pinpoint the direction from which the sound came, you must make a Listen check against DC 0 (modified normally for distance).

A Spot check against DC 0 detects muzzle flash at night, DC 10 during the day.

Sound suppressors and sub-sonic ammunition can reduce or eliminate a firearm's report. A flash suppressor makes the muzzle flash more difficult to detect. These are accessories, described later in this document.

Customization

Few weapons lend themselves to customization as readily as firearms. A scope or optical sight can increase the accuracy of a gun at long ranges. A stock could be added to a pistol to make it more stable. Armor piercing ammunition increases penetration, while hollow point rounds increase damage. Larger magazines let a weapon carry more ammunition. A muzzle brake reduces recoil. The accessory choices are almost without limit.

Two sections in this document — Variant Ammunition and Accessories — will discuss the means of customizing your weapon.

Modeling a Firearm

This section contains the nuts-n-bolts for modeling a real-world firearm in the d20 system.

The Method to the Madness . . .

There are six steps to building firearms in this system . . .

1. Choose Propellant Size
2. Choose Bullet Caliber
3. Choose Barrel Length
4. Choose Receiver
5. Choose Feed
6. Model Special Attributes

There are six steps to building firearms using this system. First, you have to figure the size of the ammunition used in the weapon. This is steps one (choose propellant size) and two (choose bullet caliber). Then, you figure out the overall size of the weapon (choose barrel length). You determine how ammunition gets loaded into the weapon (choose receiver) and how much ammunition the firearms carries (choose feed). Finally, if the firearm has any special attributes, you apply these to your model.

Following these steps, you should be able to model almost any cartridge-based firearm in the d20 system.

1. Choose Propellant Size

A round (one unit of ammunition for a firearm) consists of two parts: propellant and bullet. Propellant is the “go-juice” of a firearm’s ammunition, a general measurement of the amount of powder the cartridge

contains. The more propellant there is in the cartridge, the more velocity imparted to the bullet and the harder the bullet hits.

There are two size categories of propellant: light and heavy. Pistols generally use light propellant rounds. Rifle usually use heavy.

The generic term, “propellant,” is used in these rules, instead of powder or gunpowder. This is because advanced propellant types, like electrothermochemical (ETC) and magnetic acceleration, do not use gunpowder.

Propellant size, combined with bullet caliber, determines the base damage inflicted by your firearm.

Light

Light propellant ammunition corresponds to straight-necked cartridges, like those found in pistol rounds. This is a smaller, less powerful type of ammunition.

A light propellant round inflicts one die of damage.

Heavy

Heavy propellant ammunition is the larger, necked cartridge found in rifles. These have a large amount of propellant, providing a lot of punch to the bullet. The extra propellant allows them to take better advantage of barrel length to increase the round’s damage.

In this system, heavy propellant rounds inflict two dice of damage. This increases their average damage, representing their greater stopping power and muzzle energy.

2. Choose Bullet Caliber

Force equals mass times acceleration. For the purposes of these rules, the propellant in a cartridge provides the acceleration part of this equation, while the caliber (size) of the bullet provides the mass part. The bigger the bullet and more the propellant, the more force with which the bullet will strike its target and the more damage it inflicts.

Having decided the propellant size of your round, you now figure the size of the bullet. These two attributes determine the damage inflicted by the round, as well as Penetration and Recoil.

There are three general calibers (sizes) of bullets in this system: Small, Medium, and Large. Small caliber bullets are around 5mm or .22 to .25 inches in diameter. Medium caliber bullets are about 9mm to 10mm or .30 to .40 inches in diameter. Large caliber bullets are generally over 10mm or .45 inches in diameter.

The bullets in light propellant rounds tend to be short and stubby, usually round at the tip. The bullets in heavy propellant rounds are longer and often pointed.

The caliber-based statistics for light propellant rounds are listed in table BC-1. Heavy propellant rounds use table BC-2.

Reality Check . . .

Here is a list of “real world” ammunition and its propellant size and bullet caliber in this system:

- .22 Long – light propellant, small caliber.
- .22 Short – light propellant, small caliber.
- .357 Magnum – light propellant, large caliber.
- .44 Magnum – light propellant, large caliber.
- 10mm Pistol – light propellant, medium caliber.
- 5.56mm NATO – heavy propellant, small caliber.
- 7.62mm Warsaw Pact – heavy propellant, medium caliber.
- 9mm Parabellum – light propellant, medium caliber.
- Browning .50 – heavy propellant, large caliber.
- Colt .45 ACP – light propellant, large caliber.

Ammunition is NOT interchangeable!

In this system, 9mm and 10mm pistol ammunition are both light propellant, medium caliber rounds. Even so, you cannot use 9mm ammunition in a 10mm pistol and vice versa.

When you determine the ammunition for your firearm, make sure you record its actual, “real world” size. Suspension of disbelief is disrupted when a player can take a .357 magnum bullet and fire it with equal ease from his .50 caliber pistol.

Regardless of ammunition size, all firearms have a Critical of 18-20, x2. Damage type is piercing.

Handling ammunition with these general categories tends to downplay the performance differences between relatively similar rounds, like 9mm Parabellum and 10mm or .357 Magnum and .44 Magnum. However, accounting for damages of each specific caliber of ammunition can make for an unwieldy system that requires a great deal of technical knowledge to use properly.

Table BC-1: Caliber Effects for Light Propellant Rounds

Caliber	Base Damage	Penetration	Recoil
Small	1d8	4	2
Medium	1d10	4	3
Large	1d12	4	4

Table BC-2: Caliber Effects for Heavy Propellant Rounds

Caliber	Base Damage	Penetration	Recoil
Small	2d6	6	3
Medium	2d8	6	4
Large	2d10	6	5

3. Choose Barrel Length

Barrel length affects several characteristics in a firearm. The longer the barrel, the more propellant burns completely and cleanly, adding more force to the round. Also, the longer the barrel, the more accurate the weapon at longer ranges. Finally, the longer the barrel, the heavier the firearm; the heavier the firearm, the lower the recoil.

Heavy propellant rounds make the best use of barrel length to improve their performance. This is because heavy propellant rounds have a larger propellant charge, and they are usually designed for longer weapons.

Design Note . . .

While it's a normally "no-no" to provide a flat damage bonus to weapons that is not related to special attributes, like enchantment, these rules apply a bonus for barrel length. The reasoning behind this is that the more efficient use of propellant is similar a big, muscular person's ability to generate more force (and damage) with a muscle-powered weapon.

In this system, there are six general categories of barrel length: Short Pistol, Pistol, Long Pistol, Short Rifle, Rifle, and Long Rifle.

Barrel Length determines the range increment of a firearm. It also alters the damage of the weapon, as well as its Penetration and Recoil.

Table BL-1 provides the statistics for barrel length with light propellant ammunition. Table BL-2 provides information for heavy propellant.

Short Pistol

This category is for pistols with shorter-than-normal barrels, usually under 4" in length. Derringers fit in this group, as do snub-nosed pistols, like the "Saturday

Night Special." It is not possible to build a short pistol that accepts heavy propellant ammunition.

Short pistols can be used with one hand. They are tiny sized weapons.

Pistol

This is a normal length pistol. Some of the smallest submachineguns fit into this category.

Pistols can be wielded in one hand. They are small weapons.

Long Pistol

Pistols with extremely long barrels (usually over 8") belong to this category. Most submachineguns are treated as long pistols in regards to barrel length.

A long pistol can be used with one hand. They are small sized weapons.

Short Rifle

Short rifles have barrels of 18" length or less. Carbines and the larger submachineguns fit into this category.

A Short Rifle is a medium-sized weapon. It must be wielded with two hands.

Rifle

This is a normal-sized rifle. Assault rifles belong to this category.

Rifles are medium-sized weapons. Two hands must be used to handle the weapon properly.

Long Rifle

These are rifles with extremely long barrels, like many sniper rifles.

A Long Rifle is a large weapon. It requires the use of two hands.

Table BL-1: Barrel Length Effects for Light Propellant Rounds

Barrel Length	Range Increment	Dmg	Pen	Rcl
Short Pistol	10'	+0	-2	+1
Pistol	30'	+0	+0	+0
Long Pistol	50'	+1	+1	+0
Short Rifle	100'	+2	+1	-1
Rifle	200'	+3	+2	-1
Long Rifle	300'	+4	+2	-2

Table BL-2: Barrel Length Effects for Heavy Propellant Rounds

Barrel Length	Range Increment	Dmg	Pen	Rcl
Short Pistol	NA	NA	NA	NA
Pistol	30'	+0	-2	+2
Long Pistol	50'	+0	+0	+1
Short Rifle	100'	+2	+1	+0
Rifle	200'	+4	+2	-1
Long Rifle	300'	+6	+3	-2

4. Choose Receiver

The receiver is the part of the firearm that “receives” a cartridge from the weapon’s ammunition magazine, places it in the firing chamber, holds it in place, and ignites the propellant, firing the round. Some receivers are operated manually, the operator pulls a lever, pumps a slider, or opens and closes a bolt. Other receivers automatically load ammunition into the weapon, such as those on a submachinegun or assault rifle.

Receivers determine your firearm’s rate of fire.

Individually Loading

This type of receiver holds only one round of ammunition. Each time you wish to fire, you must manually load a new round into the firearm.

Individually Loading receivers are capable of Single Fire.

Individually Loading receivers may only have a Breech-Loaded Feed System.

The “Sharps” Old Reliable” is an individually loading rifle, while the Uberti Rolling Block is an individually loading pistol.

Single-action Revolver

A Single-action Revolver uses a manually operated receiver and cylindrical ammunition feed. You must manually cock the hammer of the weapon. This causes the ammunition cylinder to turn, placing a round in firing position, and it puts the trigger into a “ready to fire” position. When you pull the trigger, the hammer crashes down, driving the firing pin into the cartridge and exploding the round’s propellant.

Single-action Revolver are capable of Single Fire and Double Fire. They may only have a Cylindrical Feed System.

The Colt .45 Peacemaker is a single-action revolver.

Double-action Revolver

A technological improvement over the Single-action Revolver, the Double-action revolver automatically cocks the firing hammer and rotates the ammunition cylinder whenever you pull the trigger.

Double-action Revolvers may only have a Cylindrical Feed System. They are capable of Single Fire, Double Fire, and Triple Fire.

The Ruger Super Blackhawk, .44 Magnum, is a Double-action revolver.

Bolt-action

With this type of receiver, you manually operate a lever to open and close the “bolt” of the weapon (the part with the firing pin and chambers and extracts cartridges).

Bolt-action weapons are capable of Single Fire.

Bolt-action reduces a weapon’s Recoil by –1.

The Wichita Classic Silhouette is a Bolt-action pistol. The M/89 Belgian Mauser, M1903 Springfield, and Lee-Enfield Mark III are bolt-action rifles.

Lever-action

You manually operate a lever on the handle of the weapon to load a round and cock the firing pin.

Lever-action weapons are capable of Single and Double Fire.

The 1873 Winchester Carbine and 1860 Henry Rifle are both Lever-action weapons.

Pump-action

You manually pump the fore-end of the weapon to load and cock it.

Pump-action firearms are capable of Single and Double Fire.

Many shotguns, like the Benelli 121 M1 and Remington 870 P, use a pump-action receiver.

Self-loading: Semi-automatic

Also known as “autoloaders,” self-loading weapons automatically fire and load a cartridge whenever you pull the trigger. A Semi-automatic Self-loader fires one shot for every pull of the trigger, automatically cocking and loading itself each time.

Semi-automatic weapons can perform Single, Double, and Triple Fire. Increase the weapon’s Recoil by +1.

The Colt .45 ACP is a semi-automatic Pistol. The Barrett Light Fifty is a semi-automatic, .50 caliber sniper rifle.

Self-loading: Fully automatic

A Fully Automatic weapon fires continuously as long as the trigger is depressed and ammunition is available.

Fully Automatic weapons may only perform 10-round Bursts. Increase Recoil by +1.

Machineguns, like the M60 and Browning .50, are fully automatic weapons. The Mac Ingram M10 and IMI Uzi are fully automatic submachineguns.

Self-loading: Selective Fire

Selective Fire weapons allow the user to choose between semi-automatic or fully automatic fire. In some cases, the weapon will also have three or five round burst as a choice. In other cases, Selective Fire weapons may only have semi-automatic and three or five round bursts as an option.

Reality Check . . .

In the “real world,” self-loading weapons use a variety of mechanisms to load and fire cartridges: blowback operation, gas operation, recoil operation, and the like. Each of these impacts the performance of the weapon, its accuracy, recoil, and other attributes. For the purposes of these rules, these highly technical firearm components will be ignored. This is to make these rules relatively easy to use.

If you feel the mechanism of a weapon warrants lower recoil, then – by all means – lower the weapon’s Recoil statistic by one point.

Selective Fire weapons can perform Single, Double, or Triple Fire if set to semi-automatic. They can fire 10-round bursts on fully automatic. If they have short burst options, they may also perform three or five round bursts. Increase Recoil by +1.

The M16A2 is a selective fire assault rifle with semi-automatic and three-round burst options. The AK47 is a selective fire assault rifle with semi-automatic and fully automatic (10-round burst) options. The Heckler and Koch MP5A5 is a selective fire submachinegun with semi-automatic, 3-round burst, and fully automatic fire options.

Self-loading: Multi-barreled Autocannon

This type of firearm is an electrically feed, rotating gatling gun capable of spewing out hundreds of rounds in a matter of seconds.

Multi-barreled autocannons can perform 50-round Bursts. Increase Recoil by +2.

Multi-barreled autocannons may only have Rifle or Long Rifle barrels.

5. Choose Feed

A firearm's Feed is the mechanism by which ammunition is stored in the weapon and provided for the receiver. There are several different types of Feed. They have no impact on the firearm's performance, other than determining the amount ammunition available for the weapon and how quickly it can be reloaded.

Ammunition feeds are not interchangeable. For example, you cannot stick the box magazine of a rifle into the grip magazine of a pistol.

Breech-loaded

A breech-loaded weapon holds but one round of ammunition, and the ammunition is manually loaded into and extracted from an opening in the rear end of the weapon's barrel.

Loading a breech-loaded weapon is no more difficult that loading and drawing a bow, so a character can automatically reload with each attack.

The "Sharp's Old Reliable" is a breech-loaded rifle.

Cylindrical

The magazine of a revolver is a cylindrical feed system. Normally, these are only made for light-propellant ammunition. Up to twelve rounds of small caliber ammo and up to six rounds of medium or large caliber ammo can fit in the cylinder.

With a move equivalent action, you can load two rounds of ammunition into the cylinder.

Tubular Magazine

A tubular magazine is long, hollow tube, mounted parallel to the barrel of a firearm. Individual rounds are

loaded into the hollow tube. A spring in the tube pushes the rounds into the receiver.

Tubular magazines are normally used for rifles. From 10 to 13 light propellant or up to 7 heavy propellant rounds may be held in a tubular magazine.

With a move equivalent action, you can load two rounds of ammunition into the tube.

Both the Henry and Winchester lever action rifles use tubular magazines.

Clip

A clip is a thin piece of metal that holds several (usually 8 to 10) rounds together. The clip is pushed into the receiver of the firearm and stored in an internal magazine space. When the clip is emptied, it is automatically ejected from the weapon and discarded.

With a move equivalent action, you can load a clip into a weapon.

The M1 Garand uses an 8-round clip.

Box Magazine

This is a spring-loaded metallic or plastic box attached to the receiver of the weapon, like the banana-magazine of an AK47 or H&K MP5A5. Box magazines can hold a large amount of ammunition. (For example, some "snail drum" magazines hold up to 200 rounds.) Typically, they hold between 30 to 50 rounds.

With a move equivalent action, you can load a box magazine.

Grip Magazine

A grip magazine is a small, spring-loaded box that is inserted into the hollow grip of a self-loading pistol. Grip magazines usually hold between 7 to 15 rounds. They may not be used for heavy propellant ammunition.

With a move equivalent action, you can load a grip magazine into a pistol.

The 1911A1 Colt .45 ACP uses a grip magazine.

Belt

Belts are long "belts" of ammunition linked by metal or plastic connectors and fed into self-loading firearms, usually machineguns. Belts often hold 100 or more rounds.

With a move equivalent action, a belt can be loaded into a weapon.

The M60 machinegun uses belt feed.

Cassette

Big and heavy, this type of ammunition feed is normally reserved for modern-day Gatling guns and autocannons. It uses pre-packaged ammunition attached to an electrically powered link feed system. Cassettes hold *thousands* of rounds.

Replacing a cassette is a complex task and takes a few minutes.

6. Model Special Attributes

Sometimes, a firearm is chunky and hard to hold, like the Desert Eagle. Some firearms are designed for superior three-round bursts, like the H&K G11. Other firearms have exceptional recoil reducing mechanisms.

These are attributes that must be modeled on a firearm-by-firearm basis. Because each of these is unique, they require a judgment call on your part as to how they will affect the weapon's d20 statistics.

For example, the Desert Eagle's large grip and bulk imposes a -1 penalty to its accuracy. When the G11 is fired on 3-round Burst, all of the bullets automatically strike the target on a successful Attack roll. Firearms with excellent recoil reducing mechanisms can lower their Recoil score by one or two points.

Finishing Touches

Once you've followed all of these steps, you wrap them up into a weapon's statistic block for your firearm, like the one below.

<p>Weapon Type: Firearm – [size] Cost: [invented by you or a “real world” figure] Accuracy: [+2, less any modifiers for recoil] Damage: [dice of damage, plus any modifiers; always <i>piercing</i>] Critical: 18-20, x2 Range Increment: [based on barrel length] Penetration: [derived from several factors] Recoil: [derived from several factors] Rate of Fire: [determined by the receiver and feed] Ammunition: [number of rounds, type of feed, “real world” caliber (to prevent interchangeable ammunition)] Weight: [a “real world” figure – pistols usually weigh a couple of pounds, while rifles weigh six to ten pounds]</p>
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At the end of this document, there are several examples of how firearms were modeled with this system.

Alternate Technologies

The rules presented in “Modeling a Firearm” (above) assume that you want to create a modern-day firearm that uses cartridge-based, gunpowder ammunition. This section deals with how you should modify the modeling rules for alternative firearm technologies, such as shotguns, muzzle-loaders, and gauss weapons.

Shotguns

Shotguns fire a cluster of small pellets, instead of a single bullet. The cluster spreads as it exits the barrel of the gun, making it easy to hit targets.

The pellets fired from a shotgun have a much lower velocity than bullets fired from a normal cartridge weapon, so they have poor penetration. However, the sheer multitude of pellets striking a target can inflict a great deal of damage, especially to unarmored targets.

Modeling a Shotgun

Ammunition: Shotguns use shells made of paper or plastic packed with metal balls and a load of propellant. Instead of choosing propellant sizes and caliber, you just choose between small gauge (20-gauge or less) or large gauge (12-gauge or more) ammunition. Table SG-1 shows the base damage values for shotgun ammunition.

Table SG-1: Base Characteristics of Shotgun Shells

Gauge	Base Damage	Penetration	Recoil
Small	d4	0	4
Large	d6	0	5

Barrel Length: Unlike other weapons, barrel length does not increase the damage inflicted by a shotgun. The length of the barrel determines the range increment of the weapon and affects its Recoil. See table SG-2.

Table SG-2: Barrel Length Effects for Shotguns

Barrel Length	Range Increment	Dmg	Pen	Rcl
Short Pistol	NA	NA	NA	NA
Pistol	NA	NA	NA	NA
Long Pistol	10'	+0	+0	+1
Short Rifle	20'	+0	+0	+0
Rifle	30'	+0	+0	-1
Long Rifle	40'	+0	+0	-2

Receiver and Feed: Shotguns can use any of the standard receivers and feed systems.

Resolving a Shotgun Attack

Shotguns are handled as area-effect weapons. They affect a 5' wide path in a straight line out to five range increments. Anything in that path is hit by the shotgun blast and suffers damage depending on how close they are to the shooter. At one range increment, the damage is 3d. At two range increments, a shotgun inflicts 2d. At three or more range increments, 1d.

Anyone within the path of a shotgun blast gets a Reflex saving throw for half damage. (At four or more range increments, a successful save means no damage is inflicted.) The DC of the saving throw equals 10 + the shooter's current Attack bonus – the shotgun's recoil.

Shotgun Example...

A large gauge shotgun with a rifle length barrel inflicts 3d6 damage up to 30' distant, 2d6 from 31' to 60', and 1d6 from 61' to 150'. Beyond 91' feet, a successful Reflex save indicates no damage.

If the person shooting the shotgun had an Attack bonus of +6 and the shotgun had Recoil 4, the DC of the Reflex save would be 12.

$$10 \text{ (base)} + 6 \text{ (Attack)} - 4 \text{ (Recoil)} = 12$$

Shotguns and Burst Fire

A shotgun fired in fully automatic mode becomes a truly fearsome weapon, able to clean an entire room of enemies in a single sweep.

3-round Burst: A shotgun fired in 3-round burst mode affects a 5' wide path in a straight line out to five range increments. At one range increment, it inflicts 4d damage. At two range increments, 3d; at three, 2d; and four and beyond, 1d. The DC of the Reflex saving throw is 15 + the shooter's current attack bonus – the shotgun's recoil. At five range increments, a successful save means no damage.

5-round Burst: This mode is similar to a 3-round burst, but it affects a 10' wide path, and a successful Reflex save indicates half damage regardless of range.

10-round Burst: In 10-round burst mode, a shotgun affects a *cone* five range increments in length. At one range increment, it inflicts 5d damage; at two, 4d; at three, 3d; at four, 2d; and 1d at five range increments. The DC of the Reflex saving throw is 15 + the shooter's current attack bonus – the shotgun's recoil. A successful save indicates half damage regardless of range.

Not a Precision Weapon

Shotguns are not precision weapons. You may not apply damage modifiers for specialization, sneak attacks, and similar skill-related bonuses.

Reality Check . . .

Handling shotguns as area-effect weapons is not the most realistic means of depicting their effects, but it is the most play-effective means. Also, the role of the shotgun in the “real world” is that of non-precise, “room sweeping” weapon that inflicts tremendous damage to soft targets at close range and requires little effort to aim properly. Making them area-effect weapons maintains that role in the d20 system and distinguishes them from standard firearms.

Muzzle-loaders

Early, black powder, muzzle-loading firearms – generally speaking – lack the same punch as modern, cartridge firearms. The powder tends to burn inefficiently, with a great deal of lost gas pressure. Also, muzzle-loaders have a much slower rate of fire than cartridge arms.

Modeling a Muzzle-loader

Ammunition: The black powder for a muzzle-loader is hand measured and roughly equivalent to light propellant, though less “hot.” Muzzle-loaders normally have very large ball ammunition. Most of their rounds are over .40 inches in diameter and should be large caliber.

The table ML-1 determines the muzzle-loader’s base statistics.

Table ML-1: Base Muzzle-loader Statistics

Caliber	Base Damage	Penetration	Recoil
Small	1d8	2	3
Medium	1d10	2	4
Large	1d12	2	5

Barrel Length: Muzzle-loaders use the same table for the effects of barrel length as Light Propellant rounds (Table BL-1). No Short Pistol barrel length is available.

Receiver: Muzzle-loaders may *only* have Individually Loading receivers.

Feed: Muzzle-loaders have a special feed type, aptly named *Muzzle-loaded*. The weapon holds only one round of ammunition. A full round action is necessary to reload the weapon after it has been fired.

With a feat (*Fast Muzzle-loader*, Prerequisites: Dexterity 13+, Firearm Proficiency, and Base Attack Bonus 4+), you can reload a muzzle-loader in a standard action.

Muskets

Muskets are muzzle-loading firearms that have no rifling in the barrel. This makes them less accurate than rifles. When creating a musket, halve all range increments and reduce base Accuracy to +0.

Firearm-related Skills

Gunslinging [Dex; Trained Only; Armor Penalty]

You can ready a firearm quickly.

Check: The Gunslinging skill has two uses.

First, if you are engaged in a Showdown, you may substitute a Gunslinging skill check for your Dexterity check to determine who wins the Showdown.

Second, because you have highly trained reflexes, you can more quickly respond to surprise situations and attack with a gun. If you are armed with an easily accessible firearm (such as a holstered pistol, a slung rifle, or readied submachinegun) and you are surprised, make a Gunslinging skill check against DC 20. If the check is successful, you may act normally in the surprise round.

Note: Gunslinging does not permit you to draw a firearm as a free action. To do this, you must have the Quick Draw feat.

Firearm-related Combat Rules

Showdown

In a setting that uses firearms, it is almost inevitable that players will want to take part in a one-on-one quick draw gun duel – just like in the cowboy movies. The rules for this are as follows.

Participants

Two or more characters can engage in a Showdown.

All participants must be wielding a medium-sized firearm. The firearm must be *holstered* or in a not ready position.

All participants must be aware of one another.

All participants must *agree* – at least tacitly – to take part in the duel and not draw prematurely.

Resolution

At a predetermined moment, such as when a clock chimes, a ten count ends, or one participant twitches, every character involved in the Showdown makes an opposed Dexterity check. The winner (and only the winner) can perform a partial action, and the loser(s) are flat-footed. After this, initiative is rolled and combat resolved normally.

Special

If you have the Gunslinging skill, you may substitute a Gunslinger skill check for your Dexterity check in a Showdown.

The Quick Draw feat is important to a character that routinely engages in duels of this sort. It permits you to draw your firearm as a free action, rather than having to waste your partial action to ready the weapon.

Showdown Example...

Jack (Dexterity modifier +3), Jeb (+2), and Sue (+4) face off for a three-way Showdown. At the chime of the town clock, they will draw and fire.

The clock chimes.

The three perform an opposed Dexterity check.

Jack rolls 16. Jeb rolls 9. Sue rolls 23.

Sue wins.

Since Sue has the Quick Draw feat, she draws her pistol as a free action. For her partial action, she fires at Jack.

Jack, because he lost the roll, is flat-footed. He rolls the Defense dice and hopes for the best...

Sample Firearms

IMI Desert Eagle .50

The Israeli Military Industries Desert Eagle .50 automatic pistol is a manly man's gun — or at least the pistol for men who feel . . . well . . . inadequate in certain areas. It is big, bulky, and shoots one of the largest pistol rounds in existence. Even massive fellows have difficulty wrapping their hands around the pistol's grip.

Step 1 – Choose Propellant Size

The Desert Eagle uses short, straight cartridges. This means it has *light* propellant.

Step 2 – Choose Bullet Caliber

.50 caliber ammunition is considered *large* caliber in this system.

Large caliber, light propellant gives the following base characteristics for the weapon: Damage 1d12, Penetration 4, Recoil 4.

Step 3 – Choose Barrel Length

The Desert Eagle is a pistol.

This gives us the following statistics: Damage 1d12, Range Increment 30', Penetration 4, Recoil 4.

Step 4 – Choose Receiver

The Desert Eagle is a semi-automatic, self-loading pistol.

A semi-automatic receiver increases Recoil by +1.

The statistics of the weapon are now: Damage 1d12; Range Increment 30'; Penetration 4; Recoil 5; Rate of Fire: SF, DF, TF.

Step 5 – Choose Feed

The Desert Eagle .50 uses an 8 round grip magazine.

Step 6 – Model Special Attributes

Desert Eagles are well balanced, despite their large size. They use a gas-powered, recoil absorbing mechanism. To model this, we are going to reduce the Recoil by –1. This gives the pistol Recoil of 4, imposing a –1 penalty to Accuracy.

Also, because the pistol is so chunky, we are increasing its size to Medium and reducing its accuracy by another –1.

The final Accuracy of the pistol is 0.

Final Statistics

These are the d20 statistics for the Desert Eagle.

Weapon Type: Firearm – Medium

Cost: \$1000

Accuracy: +0

Damage: 1d12 (piercing)

Critical: 18-20, x2

Range Increment: 30'

Penetration: 4

Recoil: 4

Rate of Fire: SF, DF, TF

Ammunition: 8 (grip, .50 pistol)

Weight: 4 lb.

M16A2 Assault Rifle

The M16A2 is the standard rifle of the United States military. It uses 5.56mm (.223 in.) ammunition, with a 30 round box magazine. It can fire semi-automatic or three round bursts. It is just over a yard in length and weighs about seven pounds. Here is how we would model it in d20 with this system . . .

Step 1 – Choose Propellant Size

The M16A2 uses long, necked cartridges. This means it has *heavy* propellant.

Step 2 – Choose Bullet Caliber

5.56 (.223 in.) ammunition is considered *small* caliber in this system.

Small caliber, heavy propellant gives us the following base characteristics for the weapon: Damage 2d6, Penetration 6, Recoil 3.

Step 3 – Choose Barrel Length

The M16A2 is an assault rifle. It fits in the Rifle category.

Now, we derive the following statistics: Damage 2d6+4, Range Increment 200', Penetration 7, Recoil 2.

Step 4 – Choose Receiver

The M16A2 can alternate between semi-automatic and three-round burst fire. This means it has a Self-Loading; Selective Fire receiver. This type of receiver increases its Recoil by +1.

The statistics of the weapon are now: Damage 2d6+4; Range Increment 200'; Penetration 7; Recoil 3; Rate of Fire: SF, DF, TF, B3.

Step 5 – Choose Feed

The M16A2 uses a 30 round box magazine.

Step 6 – Model Special Attributes

The M16A2 has no special attributes.

Final Statistics

These are the d20 statistics for the M16A2.

Weapon Type: Firearm – Medium

Cost: \$1000

Accuracy: +2

Damage: 2d6+4 (piercing)

Critical: 18-20, x2

Range Increment: 200'

Penetration: 7

Recoil: 3

Rate of Fire: SF, DF, TF, B3

Ammunition: 30 (box, 5.56mm NATO)

Weight: 7 lb.

Versions

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Beta (08-10-01) – Reformatted document. Cleaned up a few spelling errors.

Beta (09-06-01) – Added double-outlines to text boxes that are Open Game Content.

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