

d20 Dipping

Tips and Tactics

[Owen K.C. Stephens](#)

Looking for new ideas to jazz up your *Star Wars* game? You're in luck. With the flood of d20 roleplaying products, ideas are everywhere -- you just need to know what concepts to borrow and how to make them work in your game. In the nineteenth installment of "Tips and Tactics," designer Owen K.C. Stephens shows you how.



One of the constant problems with creating official material for the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* is figuring out what part of the galaxy to describe. The vast scale of the setting makes it literally impossible to cover everything. There's no way you could describe all the flora and fauna on one inhabited planet, never mind a whole galaxy. If a published roleplaying product is too planet-specific, it gives the GM no help with the rest of the setting, but if it's too general, the GM could run out of material for a popular world after just a few games. While the team at Wizards of the Coast has done a great job with this balancing act, GMs inevitably must make up supplemental information about a person, place, or thing.

Luckily, since the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* uses the d20 system, a lot of material is available that, with a little effort and ingenuity, can be converted for a galaxy long ago and far, far away. Converting material from one game to another is an art, and we'll take a look at some of the most important considerations in this installment of "Tips and Tactics." The first thing to keep in mind is that nothing designed for a game other than the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* is going to mesh perfectly without some work.

Keep it Simple

Don't do anything that requires a lot of rules conversions until you've had a chance to get a feel for how elements from different d20 games interact. You could conceivably port a good number of prestige classes, equipment, combat rules, and creatures over to your game, but if you take the wrong ones, or if you convert them badly, you could seriously damage the enjoyment your players get from your game.

Start slow, and begin with the easy stuff. The things you'll most likely need are plants and creatures to populate the worlds your heroes explore. While banthas do find their way onto an amazing number of worlds, your players will grow bored and suspicious if they keep running into rancors and nexu everywhere they go. Many *D&D* monsters translate easily into a *Star Wars* game. It's not hard to envision a purple worm moving through the sands of Tatooine or a remorhaz stalking the ice caves of Hoth.

At first, borrow only creatures that have few special abilities. Animals and beasts work well, as do some aberrations and humanoids. Avoid outlandish things (such as elementals and outsiders) and fantasy stereotypes (such as dragons and giants). You may find a special use for such creatures in a specific adventure -- using fire elementals as pure energy predators, for example, describing them as clouds of pulsing light rather than as having bodies of flame -- but for the most part, they have no place in your game.

As you become more comfortable converting creatures, you can select the ones with more unusual abilities. Stay away from things that are clearly magical; use only creatures whose powers could conceivably have a scientific or psychic explanation. On the other hand, don't be afraid to make a few really alien foes for your players. Certainly, native *Star Wars* creatures like the acklay and wampa seem monstrous, and there's no telling what kind of oddities the Yuuzhan Vong can breed.

Quick Guidelines

When converting d20 material to *Star Wars*, most changes are pretty intuitive. Armor class becomes defense, Leadership becomes the Fame or Infamy feats, and a measurement of 6 feet is close enough to 2 meters. But sometimes the changes are more complex and require a bit more thought. Here are some examples:

- If you're converting something that uses hit points, you'll have to convert to wound points and vitality points. Use the creature's Con score for wounds, and convert its hit points directly to vitality. If the creature is Huge or bigger, double its wound points.
- If you allow healing rules from another d20 source (which you really should think twice about), all healing restores vitality damage first. If healing is used to restore wounds, the target can receive the benefit only once a day, and the process restores the minimum amount (or half, for things with no random number). For example, if you decide to use a *D&D* scroll of *cure light wounds* to represent a special, high-tech medpac, it can either restore 1d8+1 vitality, or 2 wounds once per day.
- Critical hits are much more deadly in the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* than in most d20 games, so you should change weapon threat ranges to half their value (minimum of 20) and ignore crit multiples (as criticals go straight to wounds).
- Armor should give DR instead of defense bonuses. High-tech armor grants DR equal to one-half the defense bonus it would grant, and low-tech armor grants DR equal to one-quarter its defense bonus. For creatures, you can leave natural armor bonuses granting extra defense, or you can convert them to DR (in which case, the creature always gets half its natural armor as DR).
- Equipment might need to be repriced and renamed. For pricing, compare new equipment to existing items, and set a similar value. If in doubt, assume that 1 gp equals 10 credits, and that an item's purchase DC x 100 equals its price in credits. Regarding names, unless you specifically want to present something as an archaic item, you should change its name and description to match the feel of the *Star Wars* universe.

Don't Go Too Far

While there's nothing wrong with deciding you want to play a game with illithid Sith, dragon Jedi, and +1 *keen blasters*, that's not really a *Star Wars* game. So make sure you don't take too many elements or add things that change the tone of your game in ways you don't expect. Also, be sure to gauge the reaction of your players to each new element you introduce. If the evil psychic you built using the *D&D Psionics Handbook* doesn't go over well, don't use anything else from the book, and definitely don't start borrowing magic spells to represent new Force powers.

On the other hand, if your players love running across a broad selection of strange and wondrous elements introduced from other d20 games, don't be afraid to experiment further. Ultimately, the purpose of any roleplaying game is for the participants to have fun, and there's no right or wrong way to do that.

*Discuss this month's "Tips and Tactics" and share your ideas about putting the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* rules to best use in the *Star Wars* [message boards](#)!*