
At Close Quarters

"Reality rules" for combat in the TOP SECRET/S.I.™ game

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While the combat rules in the TOP SECRET/S.I.™ game are more than adequate for most situations, some Administrators and players might like a little more realism in their encounters. Presented here for your consideration are a handful of "reality rules" you can incorporate into your campaign.

Gun-drawing speeds

Normally, a gun may be drawn during a turn in which no other action is taken by that character. However, the character may also make a combined action of Draw/Attack, which results in the attack being made at ½ skill level. It stands to reason that, all other things being equal, a gun holstered at the hip (a la the Old West) will be drawn and fired more quickly than one bolstered at the ankle or shoulder.

The Initiative Modifiers table herein is suggested to account for drawing speeds associated with various holster positions. "Location" indicates the location of the holster, and "Penalty" refers to the penalty applied to the initiative roll for the round in which the Draw/Attack action occurs. For unusual gun placements, extrapolate from the table. If you use this table, you should also use the "Modifying Initiative Rolls" reality rule in the boxed set's Player's Guide, pages 63-64. In addition, agents should exercise forethought in stowing weapons; while the front waistband is a fast-draw location, it is also very visible. The Administrator should take exception (and rightly so) if everyone keeps their weapons in plain sight.

Example A: Nick Li (Orion) bumps into the infamous Tom Dobson (Web) during a routine infiltration mission. Both agents go for their guns in Draw/Attack actions. Nick has his gun bolstered at the shoulder (-1). Tom, on the other hand, is well known for keeping a .45 with dum-dum slugs in his rear waistband (-2). Nick rolls a 6, adds 4 (his DEX bonus), then subtracts 1 (the initiative modifier) to get 9. Tom also rolls 6, adds 4 (he's just as quick as Nick!), but subtracts 2 from his initiative due to his gun

location. He gets an 8, so Nick shoots first. Getting the jump on Tom may just have saved Nick's life! Tom, should he survive this encounter, might rethink his gun placement.

Ranged weapons

Those of us whose characters are highly skilled in the use of ranged weapons, but whose characters' hand-to-hand combat skill checks are embarrassingly low, have woefully regretted the ruling that states no ranged weapons can be used in close combat. The following is a reality rule that allows such actions. Only one-handed ranged weapons can be thus used, and only until they need to be reloaded. A weapon cannot be reloaded while a character is engaged in close combat. Note that the use of guns and other ranged weapons in close combat is a dangerous proposition. In hand-to-hand combat, your opponent can make a grab for your possessions. If the enemy you've been trying to plug succeeds in wrestling your gun from you, you've got problems!

Reality Rule 1: A character may use any one-handed ranged weapon (pistol, dart gun, etc.) while engaged in close combat with other characters. Due to the harried nature of close combat, all attacks made with the weapon at close quarters are at ¼ skill level (plus the point-blank bonus of +30). It is assumed that the opponent is either actively seeking to control or avoid the firer's gun arm. In addition, on a Bad Break, the ranged-weapon user has accidentally shot himself (the opponent jammed the gun into the firer's stomach at the last possible moment, for example). On a roll of 96-98, the wound is superficial, causing only one point of wound damage to a randomly rolled body area. On a 99, however, a normal damage roll is taken.

In this situation, agents cannot bump or call shots. Prepared and braced shot bonuses do not apply, and scopes cannot be used. This is purely a "take it as it comes" technique. When the gun is empty, the firer must choose a close-combat option (no reloading allowed).

Example B: Randall Scott (Orion, Pistol 2, total skill of 76) encounters martial artist Xiao Mi (Web). Mi rushes forward as Randall draws his gun. In the first turn, Randall gets his only shot (Players Guide, page 76). Normally, on the next turn, Mi would force him into close combat, but since Randall has a measly 25 in Basic Melee, he decides to stick to his gun. In turn two, Randall needs a 49 to hit Mi $[(76/4) + 30 = 49]$ at point-blank range. But Randall rolls a 96 - a light wound to himself! He rolls a 3 for wound location, and takes one wound to his abdomen (Mi wrestled his gun hand into a bad position). In turn three he rolls a 35, a hit to Mi's left arm. Normally, Randall could bump this hit two areas, but since he's in close combat, he must take what he gets.

The combat continues until one of the combatants is neutralized or the gun is emptied. In the latter case, Randall must then select a close-combat technique.

Multiple actions

The game system allows for multiple actions to be chosen in a single turn of combat (e.g., Move/Attack). It is occasionally very important to know exactly when in a turn each of the two actions occurs.

Example C: John Calhoun (Orion) is running for his life from the gun-toting assassin Mel "Whitey" Whiteford (Web). John's movement allows him to run 50' in a turn, and he is 25' from a cliff from which he plans to jump. Mel is hot on his trail, 25' away. Mel chooses Move/Attack, and John chooses Move. Mel wins initiative. According to the standard rules, he would close with John and shoot before John could move. What can be done?

Reality Rule 2: In a situation in which a character performs more than one action in a turn, the character must list the specific order in which he will perform the actions (e.g., Move/Attack, Attack/Move, etc.). The first action occurs at the point indicated by the initiative roll, including the optional modifiers for such things as DEX and injuries. Each subsequent action occurs at a point equally spaced between the rolled initiative point and 0 (the end of the turn).

Example D: Mel (as above) rolls 8 for his initiative, and John rolls a 5. Mel makes his first action (Movement) at 8, and his second at 4 ($8/2 = 4$, $8 - 4 = 4$). Since John moves at 5, he has a chance to escape. If Mel had rolled a 12 initiative or higher, both of his actions would

have occurred before John's, and the point would have been moot ($12/2 = 6$).

Expanded luck-point use

In the standard TOP SECRET/S.I. rules, Luck Points can only be used to keep a character from being killed or disabled. The following reality rule allows for an expanded role of luck points in a campaign. *[This idea was discussed during the creation of the TOP SECRET/S.I. game but was discarded because of the potential for abuse by players. Administrators who use this concept should be aware of this potential problem.]*

Reality Rule 3: In addition to their normal uses, Luck Points may be used to ensure that a character's actions succeed. The player must state before an action roll is made if a Luck Point will be used to aid the success of that action. The result of using a Luck Point is that the action will fail only on a roll of 99. Such a failure is not a Bad Break; the action only failed. Only one action may be so modified.

Thus, a character may ensure that a lock is picked, a message is decoded, a jump is successful, a prisoner is successfully interrogated, etc. In combat, the player may ensure only that his character's attack hits. However, using other Luck Points after the attack hits allows the player to determine the amount of damage done (within normal limits) and where the attack hit (one Luck Point each). Critical hits cannot be inflicted on an opponent in this manner. This rule may not be used to explicitly kill a PC or NPC (although the result of the action might be the death of said person).

Example E: Roy "Ug" Lee (Orion) runs into the nefarious Doctor Fremdliebe (Web) in Holland. The evil doctor usually carries a customized rifle cane; indeed, Roy notices, the doctor swings his cane up as if he's about to fire. Roy slips his own .22 Beretta autoloader from his rear waistband and grimaces as the doctor fires; the bullet whizzes past Roy's ear.

"I'd better use a Luck Point to kill him," Bill says. He knows that Fremdliebe is dangerous, and he doesn't need or want a drawn-out battle.

"Sorry, it doesn't work that way," the Administrator tells Bill, "but you can use a Luck Point to hit him and another to do maximum damage."

Bill elects to shoot without using a Luck Point in hopes of hitting the doctor, but if he hits he plans to use Luck Points to guarantee hit location and maximum damage. Roy does hit -

and six points of damage are done to the doctor's chest.

The Administrator looks at his records. The doctor has seven damage boxes. "Well, you hit him pretty good, but he's still up. In fact, it looks like he's getting ready to shoot again."

Bill groans. Sometimes even the best of luck is not enough.

Initiative Modifiers for Draw/Attack Actions

Location	Penalty
Ankle	-3
Back (rifle only)	-4
Coat pocket	-1
Hip	0
Pants pocket	-2
Shoulder	-1
Waistband (front)	0
Waistband (rear)	-2