
A Swing and a Hit

Additional combat techniques for the TOP SECRET/S.I.™ game

By Gary Van Binsbergen

The hand-to-hand fighting styles in the TOP SECRET/S.I.™ game allow for both realism and variety. Agents are able to learn Boxing, Oriental Martial Arts, or Wrestling talents. Each of these fighting styles has several special techniques for agents to use. The Combat Techniques Chart found on page 78 of the Player's Guide lists 14 different techniques that will cover most situations in the game.

This list, however, is not complete. Secret agents always find themselves in predicaments that are not covered by the rules. It is then up to the Administrator to resolve the situation at hand. One way to do this is to design additional combat techniques that are well balanced and add excitement to your game.

This article offers several new techniques to add to your campaign, each dealing with a variety of situations not dealt with in the Player's Guide. For example, what if an agent is defending himself against the wielder of a spear and decides to break the spear in half? What if an agent psyches herself up for a battle to the death? What if an agent wants to fake out his opponent in the middle of a fight? Some sort of bonus should be given toward each agent's attacks.

These situations can be dealt with by adding new techniques to your campaign. The format used in this article is taken from Bruce Onder's article, "Up Close and Personal," found in DRAGON® issue #135. Unlike the presentation of combat techniques in the Player's Guide, both Bruce's article and this one have inclusions for Lucky and Bad Breaks. In order to determine which fighting style each technique falls under, the Combat Techniques Chart on page 78 of the Player's Guide has been reproduced here for your convenience. The new techniques are listed with those from the earlier article, "Up Close and Personal."

Choke hold: This technique enables the agent to render an opponent unconscious, and eventually dead, by grasping the person around the throat and applying pressure. The opponent

must be on the ground in order to use this technique.

The choke hold is attempted at a -30% penalty to the attacker's chance of success. Once grasped, the victim suffers 1d6 points of CON damage. Each turn the hold is applied, a successful skill check at full ability must be made in order to inflict another 1d6 points of damage. If the skill check is failed, 1-3 points of damage are inflicted that turn.

When enough damage has been inflicted to reduce the victim's CON score to half normal, the victim must make a CON check at his CON's current total. If this check is failed, the victim falls unconscious; if not, the struggle continues. When the character's CON reaches one quarter normal, another CON check at that level is made. If the roll fails, the opponent finally falls unconscious. If the CON check is successful, the victim continues trying to break the hold. Should the victim's CON reach zero, he dies. In order to break the hold, the victim is allowed a one-quarter skill check every turn, using either Basic Melee, Boxing, Oriental Martial Arts, or Wrestling. The results follow:

Success: The escape is successful, and 1d6 points of CON damage are inflicted on the attacker.

Lucky Break: The victim escapes and inflicts 2d6 points of damage on the attacker.

Failure: The escape attempt fails completely, or 1-3 additional points of damage are inflicted by the attacker.

Bad Break: The escape fails, and the victim loses his orientation, taking a turn to recover.

Crushing Blow: This technique is used to break materials such as wood and brick. For every 1" of wood, or every ¼" of brick through which the agent must strike, the agent suffers a -10% penalty to his attack roll. When striking such materials, the agent suffers one point of bruise damage to either his hand or foot, whichever the agent used. For every 1" of wood or every ¼" of brick beyond the initial amount, another point of bruise damage is taken.

Success: The agent breaks the desired material.

Lucky Break: The agent breaks the material and suffers no bruise damage.

Failure: The agent fails to break the material.

Bad Break: The agent suffers twice the amount of bruise damage and fails to break the material.

Disarm: This technique allows the agent to disarm another person by knocking a weapon out of his opponent's hands. The agent might be using a weapon himself.

If the agent uses a weapon to disarm an opponent, the skill check is calculated differently. Because the agent is using both his weapon and a close-combat fighting style, inclusion for both skills must be made. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ his weapon skill and $\frac{1}{2}$ his close-combat fighting style together. A penalty of -20 % is then subtracted from this total (this penalty is the usual inclusion for using a special technique). An agent cannot disarm an opponent if the agent is not skilled with the weapon he is using. The agent cannot use the weapon at default or use the Basic Melee skill with this technique.

If the agent does not use a weapon to disarm his opponent, a successful skill check at a -20% penalty must be made. If successful, the agent must use either his hands or feet to knock the opponent's weapon away.

Success: The agent disarms the opponent, and the weapon lands 2d6 feet away from its wielder.

Lucky Break: The agent disarms the opponent as per "Success." The opponent is so surprised that he may take no action on the following turn.

Failure: The disarm attempt fails, and the opponent retains his weapon.

Bad Break: The grip on the agent's own weapon, if any, is lost, and that weapon lands 1d6 feet away. If the agent wasn't using a weapon, the agent throws himself off balance and must take a turn to recover.

Feint: An agent using this technique is attempting to fake out his opponent on the first turn, then follow up the next turn by striking with total surprise. The feint technique itself does no damage, but the attack made on the following turn receives a bonus.

The feint technique is attempted at a -20% penalty to the agent's chance of success. If successful, the agent follows it up on the next turn by using another special technique. This second

technique does not suffer its normal penalty, but instead is performed at a +10% bonus. The player must announce that this special technique will follow the feint prior to using the feint technique. The feint is not useful until the agent has mastered 2nd level in his melee style.

Success: The feint works, and the agent may use the upcoming technique at a +10% bonus.

Lucky Break: The feint works so well that the upcoming technique may be attempted at a +20% bonus.

Failure: The feint technique fails, and the agent must attack the following turn using the technique previously announced. This technique is attempted at its full penalty listed within its description.

Bad Break: The feint fails so badly that the agent loses the next turn and must spend the time getting repositioned.

Incapacitate: The agent using this technique weakens his opponent's joints, such as the knees, elbows, and shoulders, by delivering smashing blows to those areas. A successful attack causes the opponent to make all further attacks and defenses at a -10% penalty. Using this technique several times in a row has cumulative effects. The effects of each use of this technique last one to two turns, plus additional turns equal to the agent's level. The technique is applied at a -20% penalty.

Success: The attack succeeds, and the opponent must attack and defend with the above penalty.

Lucky Break: The attack succeeds as per "Success." The duration of the penalty is doubled.

Failure: The agent fails to make a successful attack.

Bad Break: The attack misses, and the agent's next initiative is made at a -5 penalty.

Meditation: This technique may be used before and after a fight by those agents with Oriental Martial Arts skill. If used before a fight, the agent must spend at least one hour in a meditative state. At the end of the meditation, the agent must make an Oriental Martial Arts skill check at a -30% penalty. If successful, the agent may make all subsequent Oriental Martial Arts attacks in the next hour at a +10% bonus. If any special techniques are used, they are performed at half their normal penalty. The duration of a fight is at the Administrator's discretion. It may be a single fight or a series of brief encounters in one extended battle.

When this technique is used after a fight, it allows the agent to heal damage taken. If the agent must make a successful skill check at a -30% penalty, he is able to heal 1d6 points of bruise damage or 1d3 points of wound damage to any area desired. The player may decide whether wound or bruise damage is healed. This healing may only be used once per fight and will never heal more damage than was taken in that particular fight. This technique may only be used to restore the agent's hit points, not another person's.

Success: The meditation works and has the aforementioned effects.

Lucky Break: The agent's attacks are made at a +15% bonus, as opposed to the usual +10% bonus, or all special techniques are attempted at a -5% penalty. If the special technique being used has a normal penalty of -10%, the technique is attempted without penalty. If the Lucky Break is rolled when restoring damage, the agent heals an extra two points of damage.

Failure: The meditation fails and provides no bonuses to the Oriental Martial Arts skill checks, or the agent fails to heal any damage sustained in the fight.

Bad Break: The agent is preoccupied during the fight and makes all Oriental Martial Arts skill checks at a -10% penalty. If the agent attempts any special techniques, an additional -10% penalty is applied. Agents who try to heal themselves fail. Bruise damage of 1d6 points requires an extra hour to heal, or wound damage of 1-3 points requires an extra day to heal.

Weapon: The technique allows the agent to use a weapon against an opponent while employing the Oriental Martial Arts skill. The agent is able to attack twice in one turn, once with the weapon and once with the Oriental Martial Arts skill.

Because he is using both a weapon and an Oriental Martial Arts, inclusion for both skills must be made. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ his weapon skill to $\frac{1}{2}$ his Oriental Martial Arts skill; the result is the agent's chance of success.

The player must announce prior to initiative which attack will come first and which will be second. The first attack is made at a -20% penalty, and the second attack is made at a -30% penalty. When the Oriental Martial Arts attack is made, no special techniques are allowed; only normal punches and kicks are performed.

The agent must be skilled with the weapon he employs; he may not use a weapon at default or with the Basic Melee skill. The Administrator must

determine which weapons are usable with Oriental Martial Arts. No ranged weapons are allowed because the agent is in hand-to-hand combat.

Success: The attack is successful.

Lucky Break: If the Lucky Break occurs on the first attack, the second attack is made at a -20% penalty instead of -30%. If the Lucky Break is rolled on the second attack, the opponent suffers a -5 penalty to the next initiative roll.

Failure: The attack misses, and the second attack is still allowed at its normal penalty.

Bad Break: If the Bad Break occurs on the first attack, the agent has overextended and loses his second attack. If the Bad Break is rolled on the second attack, the agent suffers a -5 penalty to his next initiative roll.

Weapon display: An agent using this technique is able to twirl his weapon in circles, over his head, under his arms, and behind his back in an attempt to impress or intimidate their enemy. The agent must be skilled with the weapon being used. Weapon Display cannot be used at default or with the Basic Melee skill. In order to determine the agent's chance of success, add $\frac{1}{2}$ his Oriental Martial Arts skill to $\frac{1}{2}$ his weapon skill.

This technique is attempted at a -20% penalty. If the agent's skill check is successful, the opponent must make a WIL check to resist watching the weapon display. If the WIL check fails, the opponent must watch the entire display, which takes 2d4 turns. If the WIL check succeeds, the opponent may ignore the weapon display and attack the agent without pause. The agent may then discontinue the display, and initiative is determined normally.

In the event that the WIL check fails, the agent proceeds with the weapon display. Once the display is over, the opponent must then make a $\frac{1}{2}$ WIL check in order to enter the fight right away. If this $\frac{1}{2}$ WIL check is failed, the enemy is not able to attack or defend for another turn, enabling the agent to attack or perform some other action during that time. If the $\frac{1}{2}$ WIL check is successful, the opponent may enter the fight immediately.

Success: The agent has either intimidated or impressed the enemy and delayed that person's actions as above. A successful roll also allows the agent a free attack or other action if the enemy's $\frac{1}{2}$ WIL check is failed.

Lucky Break: The opponent is so intimidated that not only is the entire display watched, but the person will not take action against the agent until a successful $\frac{1}{2}$ WIL check is made. The opponent

is allowed a ½ WIL check every turn. Once the check is made, the individual may react normally.

Failure: The agent fails to impress or intimidate the opponent. The individual ignores the agent's efforts and attacks immediately.

Bad Break: The opponent attacks, and the agent must spend a turn repositioning the weapon. A skill check at full ability must be made. If failed, the agent drops the displayed weapon, and it lands 2d4 feet away.

Withstand blow: This technique allows the agent to be mentally prepared for a blow, thereby taking less damage. This technique is most useful for agents who have no other alternative and are unable to defend themselves, such as during interrogation when the agent is tied up. The agent is not able to take any other action during this turn.

The technique is attempted at a -20% penalty. If successful, the agent suffers half damage from the blow (all fractions are rounded downward). If multiple attacks are made against the agent within the same turn, the player is able to choose which attack the agent attempts to withstand. When this technique is used against another technique, damage is halved as above, as is any duration of the effects from that technique.

Success: The agent suffers half damage from the opponent's blow.

Lucky Break: The agent makes one quarter damage from the attack.

Failure: The agent takes the damage rolled on the die.

Bad Break: The blow was not prepared for, and the agent was struck for an additional two points of damage.

TOP SECRET/S.I. Revised Combat Techniques Chart

Technique	Boxing	Wrestling	Martial arts
Attack/Defend	X		
Blind fighting	X	X	X
Choke hold		X	
Crushing blow			X
Disarm		X	X
Drop		X	X
Feint	X	X	X
Hold		X	X
Incapacitate	X	X	X
Instant defense			X
Instant stand		X	X
Knock down	X	X	X
Leap		X	X
Meditation			X
Multi-attacks	X		X
Multi-defense	X	X	X
Stun	X		X
Surprise action			X
Throw		X	X
Vital areas	X		X
Weapon			X
Weapon display			X
Withstand blow	X	X	X