

GURPS: JAZZ AGE MYTHOS

CREATING A GURPS: JAZZ AGE CHARACTER



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CREATING A CONCEPT

The first stage for any character is coming up with a concept. This should be a sketchy idea, something that can be explained in a single sentence. Ideas might be; 'nerdy academic', 'tough brawler', 'steel-eyed detective', 'alcoholic party-going rich guy', 'cynical doctor'. Anything that helps you start building the character. This concept is open to change so don't feel constrained by it as you progress along the character building.

The GM will tell you how many points your character is to be built on and this will determine the levels of their skills and abilities. A 60-point character is highly competent compared to most people in the world, but is not likely to be a superman or the most expert in any field at the start of the game.

ATTRIBUTES & SECONDARY CHARACTERISTICS

ATTRIBUTES

This is where the points begin to be spent. A character's statistics determine the base level for all skills, as well as determining base levels for secondary characteristics such as Move speed, Hit Points and Perception. It can be cheaper to raise the ability rather than the skills if there are more than a handful of skills in question. For one or two skills it is cheaper to raise the skills instead. Straight rolls based on the ability (e.g. ST roll or HT roll) are sometimes called for. Statistics in GURPS usually run from 7 to 16, they may go below or above these levels but it would be exceptionally rare. The various levels are described as follows:

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Attribute	Description	Notes
6 or less	<i>Crippling</i>	Any attribute this low has a significant impact on the character's life and will restrict them on a day-to-day basis.
7	<i>Poor</i>	The character's limitations are immediately obvious to anyone around them. This is the lowest score that qualifies the character as 'able-bodied'.
8 or 9	<i>Below average</i>	This is as low as most characters will take their abilities.
10	<i>Average</i>	This is what all characters start out with and is the human average.
11 or 12	<i>Above average</i>	These are superior ability scores and denote someone who stands out amongst their peers.
13 or 14	<i>Exceptional</i>	This high level is immediately obvious to those around the character.
15 or more	<i>Amazing</i>	The character is probably newsworthy for this level of ability. It will draw constant comment and shape how people think of you.

ST is strength. It determines your lifting ability and the basic damage of melee or hand-to-hand attacks. It is of most importance to anyone in particularly physical occupations or who wants to deal out a lot of physical damage. It is of far less importance in the 1920s than in a pseudo-medieval game. Costs 10 points/+1.

DX is dexterity. This determines your agility but is also the basis of the vast majority of physical skills, such as Dancing, Driving or the use of weapons (including firearms). If you want to run a character who excels in combat or who has a lot of diverse physical skills, consider raising DX by a point or two. Costs 20 points/+1.

IQ is intelligence. As DX determines physical skills, so IQ determines mentally-based skills. Raising IQ is a good idea if you want to play an academic. IQ also improves your Will saves, which are important in a horror game. Costs 20 points/+1.

HT is health. HT determines hit points and fatigue points, and is also important to resist disease and poisons. Increase HT if you want your character to be physically resilient. Costs 10 points/+1.

SECONDARY CHARACTERISTICS

Secondary characteristics such as Basic Lift, Hit Points and Speed are derived directly from the Attributes. They may be reduced or improved independently by spending character points. In particular, it is worth raising or maintaining the Will roll because Fright Checks (using Will) are a staple of the genre.

WHO THE CHARACTER IS

This is where you determine the parts of the character that make him or her different. Advantages cost points and are positive traits and innate abilities. Disadvantages are negative, but give points back for spending elsewhere.

ADVANTAGES

Advantages are special abilities or personality traits that give the character an edge. This might be physical attractiveness, an innate charisma, additional wealth, or ranks in an organisation. In *GURPS: Jazz Age Mythos*, most Advantages are liable to be social rather than physical as characters in the 1920s are not superhuman or aliens. Increased wealth and improved social position are examples of social Advantages. Anything that gives your character a continuing bonus in the game but is not a skill is likely to be represented by an Advantage somewhere. The GM is likely to veto most of the 'supernatural' Advantages listed in the rulebook, so ask first. Conversely, ask if you know what you want to model but can't find the exact Advantage listed.

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DISADVANTAGES

Disadvantages limit the character in some way, often influencing their behaviour or the behaviour of NPCs towards the character in certain situations. This should ideally be part character concept personality and Disadvantages are not always 'negative'. Disadvantages such as *Charitable*, and *Truthfulness*, for example, are positive but will occasionally limit how the character acts. Many social Disadvantages are tied to the gender or ethnicity/race of the character in the 1920s. Physical disadvantages are also available, so your character might be particularly ugly, need glasses or walk with a limp.

WHAT THE CHARACTER IS

GURPS does not use character classes and any character has access to any skill that is genre-appropriate. Your librarian or university professor might also be a crack shot with pistol, and your bare-knuckle boxer might be an expert in medieval literature. However, most players will 'hang' their skills around a profession. Choose a job that fits your concept, social standing and wealth level. This is simply a way to justify earning your wealth within the game, but there are generally also a handful of skills that are expected of someone in that job.

Skills use a normal skill level from 3-18 (although they can go higher) and skill checks are rolled on 3d6 (success = roll under the effective skill level). There will often be situational bonuses and penalties to skill rolls. The base probability of success for each skill level equates to:

Skill Level	Probability of Success
3	0.5%
4	1.9%
5	4.6%
6	9.3%
7	16.2%
8	25.9%
9	37.5%

Skill Level	Probability of Success
10	50.0%
11	62.5%
12	74.1%
13	83.8%
14	90.7%
15	95.4%
16+	98.1%

If you have a skill level of 12- you can usually make a living with that skill. Skill levels of 14- denote an expert in that field. A skill level of 20- is a world-renowned master and is exceptionally rare – most player Investigators will not achieve those levels in *GURPS: Jazz Age Mythos*.

Once your minimum skills are sorted out, buy those additional skills that you want your character to have. Have fun, but also keep one eye on what might be useful in the game.

FLESHING OUT

Look at your character and make adjustments if required (remember to keep track of the points). If you have contacts or other NPCs, now is the time to give them names and thumbnail backgrounds (the GM probably has a supply of NPCs to peruse). Your character needs a place to live, a place to work, and some family or friends. Depending on your wealth level, you might have a car (can you drive?). A proportion of your starting wealth is available to spend on 'adventuring' gear such as weapons (you get around \$100 for average wealth), but GURPS doesn't track wealth by the dollar and instead uses 'what is reasonable' for your wealth level.

It is highly recommended that you now create at least one other character to act as a 'back-up' for when the other is hospitalised or institutionalised. There is no instant healing in 1920s USA and characters can

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sometimes take months to recover. Additional characters also give you the opportunity to choose the appropriate one to take on a given adventure.

Finally, tie your character in to the rest of the group. Your character knows at least two other characters, each run by two different other players. This creates a believable reason for a group of disparate characters to group together to pursue an investigation.