



GURPS Combat Tactics: The Basics

by Peter V. Dell'Orto

The **GURPS** Advanced Combat System can be very complicated. A big part of the complication is the number of choices available to each and every combatant. Yet experience has shown that most people fail to take advantage of the options the ACS makes available. The aim of this article, then, is to provide some basic tactics for making the most of those options offered in the ACS.

Most of this advice is aimed directly at people using the Advanced Combat System. People using the Basic combat system can use the same advice -- just ignore references to Step . . . the advice remains the same. This article does not cover Close Combat, cinematic rules, and the maneuvers from **GURPS Martial Arts** -- those topics would require their own article to cover adequately.

The tactics discussed presume a predominantly melee combat environment; once you add guns the combat climate changes. However, this advice applies equally well to any hand-to-hand combat from TL0 to TL16. You use the same Step and Attack with a Force Sword as you do with a Hand Axe.

GURPS Basic offers about ten significant maneuvers: Change Position, Aim, Step and Ready, Step and Attack, All-Out Attack, Step and Feint, Step and Concentrate, Step and Wait, All-Out Defense, and Move. **GURPS Compendium II** adds All-Out Charge.

Step and . . .

(p. B104)

First, a look at Step. A "Step" maneuver allows you to step one hex in any direction and end with any facing. Only Move, All Out Attack, and Wait restrict your facing when you move (see sidebar p. B103). This is important -- you can step backwards and turn 180 degrees and strike with no penalty. This gives you great flexibility when choosing a maneuver, but must be used wisely.

A few general rules with Step are: never step into a worse position than the one you left, and never take a step until you have to. The first rule is simple; do not, by taking a step, put yourself in a bad position. Be aware of the positions of all of the combatants -- All-Out Attack, long reach or ranged weapons, and Move maneuvers can bring an attack home quickly. Keep a watchful eye on your facing; three of the six hexes you are adjacent to are considered flank or rear hexes. Also keep aware of the positions of your comrades. Perhaps a Step may be helpful to you, but put a comrade into a bad situation. The reverse is also true; you and your comrades can maneuver as a team to force an opponent to expose a flank or a back hex to attack. And once in a great while, it can be useful to put yourself in a poor position, in order to put an opponent in an even worse predicament.

The second rule is also simple -- if you do not need to take the Step and . . . portion of your maneuver first, either to put yourself into or out of range, do not take it first. Having the Step reserved to follow up on a Retreating foe, or to step away and turn to face a second foe after finishing the first one, or to back up to keep an opponent at a distance are all very useful. Remember that you must step *on your own turn* -- you cannot Step during an opponent's turn except as part of a Wait maneuver -- see below. Do not be afraid to take your Step first when you need to, but there are tactical advantages to doing so after you see how the rest of your turn went.

Now, on to the maneuvers. They are addressed in the same order they appear in *GURPS Basic* to make this article useful as a side-by-side reference.

Of the maneuvers, Change Position (p. B103), Aim (pp. B103-104), and Step and Concentrate (p. B106) are fairly self-explanatory. Change Position is useful to get up after a fall or to take a kneeling or crouching stance, but you usually want to do your fighting standing up. Aim is useful but easily disrupted by attackers when you are in a melee. Step and Concentrate is only really useful with supernatural powers that are beyond the scope of this article.

Ready

(p. B104)

Ready is pretty straightforward -- one second to ready a weapon, two seconds to put it away. One second per PD of a shield to take it out or put it away, one second to drop a shield.

If you are wielding a weapon with a ready time -- such as an Axe, Pick, or Halberd -- nothing says you cannot hold onto it unready. While you cannot parry or attack with an unready weapon, you can hold it. Sometimes keeping up the momentum of attack is more important than re-readying your weapon. You may wish to follow up a blow with a Shield Bash (Shields do not become unready), Slam, a kick or punch, an attack with a weapon in your off-hand, or take some other action -- like casting a spell or using a Psi power, or simply Moving away. Interrupting a two-turn ready maneuver for a Polearm (or any other multiple-turn-to-ready weapon) will force you to start over, however, so be careful.

Another thing to remember with Ready is that you can Fast-Draw any time during your turn; not only can you Fast-Draw a sword and swing it immediately, but you can throw a knife and immediately Fast-Draw a replacement. For example, you can start with a ready Throwing Axe, hurl it, and Fast Draw your sword immediately. The only down point is that if you fail the Fast-Draw roll, you *must* spend the next turn taking a Ready action (sidebar p. B105). Since presumably you wanted to draw the weapon anyway, this is not usually a problem. This does mean you cannot do more than take a Step on your next turn, which could be a problem if you suddenly need to run. Another trick is that dropping a weapon is a zero-time free action -- shields take a full second, but weapons do not. You could swing a Pick, making it unready (either due to having less than a 16 ST or it being stuck), drop it, and Fast-Draw a sword to parry with. Obviously, this is not a viable strategy for many turns -- you'll be dropping weapons constantly -- but it is useful in circumstances where you need to replace a weapon or cannot afford to take time to re-ready the one you've been using.

Attack

(pp. B104-105)

Attack is simple and straightforward. You Step, you Attack, or vice-versa. Still, there are some considerations to using this.

"Rain of blows" -- a common tactic is a continuous stream of blows aimed simply at forcing Active Defense rolls until the defender misses one and takes damage. The Rain of Blows should not be the be-all, end-all of tactics; it has some serious shortcomings. The most serious is that by doing this you are essentially betting that you will critically hit, or your opponent will fail to defend or critically fail to defend, before either you critically miss or your opponent scores on you. Fights between evenly matched foes can drag on into contests of failure. Worse, if you are facing multiple opponents, superior numbers will force you to make twice or more as many defense rolls to stay alive -- making your odds of survival that much worse.

Despite these issues, this tactic is not without merit and in fact has some very useful applications. The Rain of Blows is excellent against a flanked (-2 to defenses) or Stunned foe (-4 to defenses), a defenseless foe (from behind, or against a Berserk foe), or a foe with poor defenses (an unarmed

defender with Brawling or Boxing against a swinging attack, or wielding a Whip). If you have a flail and are strong enough to have a zero ready time all of your foes are effectively at a disadvantage, making this tactic more productive. Fantasy warriors facing mages with magical defenses can use this method to burn through the fatigue pool of the mage by forcing casting after casting and multiple Will rolls to maintain concentration.

The Rain of Blows is also useful if your weapon outweighs that of your opponent by 3x or more -- each successful parry forces a check for weapon breakage (sidebar p. B111). Note that this tactic is useless if your opponent's weapon is Very Fine (or better) quality since those weapons will never break on a parry. Finally, if you are using the Damage to Shield rule (sidebar p. B120) -- which is highly recommended -- this tactic is good for wearing down the shield of a Block-dependent foe.

Not all attacks are created equal, though. There are a few special attacks to consider:

Disarms

(p. B110)

Most effective for fencers, but certainly not limited to them. Specialized disarming weapons -- using Jitte/Sai skill -- are also available. Disarms, like Feint (see below), virtually require that you are more skilled than your opponent. If you are not, you are probably wasting your time. Disarm attempts are a Quick Contest of Skill, but with a penalty of -3 to -5 to the attacker's roll, depending on the size of the defender's weapon (see B110). Unless you have a fencing weapon, you are at a further -2. The defender also gets a bonus for having a heavier weapon. In other words, unless you are more skilled and are using a fencing weapon as heavy or heavier than the defender, you are at a penalty of -5 at a minimum.

Breaking Weapons

(pp. B109-110)

Remember that a character's weapons extend to the hex in front of them. This means a foe just out of reach still has his weapon within striking distance of your weapon. If you are properly prepared, you can take advantage and break it. Better yet, the defender's PD is irrelevant. You can take further advantage by using a Feint or striking the weapon first as part of a two-attack All-Out Attack to draw a parry. Weapons can be hard to hit, however -- even the largest weapons are -3 to hit (see B110).

If you intend to break weapons, you will want a Fine quality or Very Fine quality weapon. A superior quality weapon requires half the normal damage to break a lower-quality weapon. Superior quality weapons in the hands of your foes will reduce your chance of success.

Perhaps the most abusive example of weapon breakage is known best as the Fine Small Mace Guy. A ST 11 fighter with a Fine Small Mace (cost only \$90) does 1d+3 crush. The minimum damage, 4, is exactly the amount needed to break a Good or Cheap Broadsword. He can also break a Fine Broadsword on a 5 or 6 on a damage roll.

However, many GMs and players will find this breakpoint-hunting a little uncomfortable. The same setup with ST 12 does 1d+4, which converts to 2d if you use dice conversion. Suddenly, his automatic break goes away as his damage increases. The solution is to use the Modifying Dice + Adds rules on B114, with the addendum that +3 converts to 1d-1. The Fine Small Mace guy now does 2d-1, removing the automatic breakage.

Breaking Shields

Believe it or not, *GURPS* currently does not have any rules that allow you to directly target an opponent's shield. The following is an *Optional Rule*, and is *not* official. It is playtested and balanced with the weapon breaking rules.

Breaking Shields: You may strike at a foe's shield. A shield is considered to be in the same hex as the defender, and the shield can only be attacked from the front or shield side hex. The penalty to hit the shield is (-5+PD): -1 for a large shield, -2 for a medium shield, -3 for a small shield, -4 for a buckler. Damage is resolved normally for damage to a shield -- see sidebar p. B120.

You may Dodge or Block an attack on your shield -- Blocking represents turning the shield so the foe's blow misses or slides off it harmlessly. You may *not* Parry an attack on your shield. Your passive defense, including that of the shield, does not count into this defense!

This type of attack is very useful against foes who rely on the PD of their shield to defend. It is especially useful against those foes who have little or no Shield or Buckler skill but who carry a shield for the PD. Shield breaking attacks are an excellent choice for attackers with high enough strength to destroy a shield in a single blow. The best defense against this kind of attack is to use an Iron or Bronze shield (see p. LT117).

Wild Swings

(sidebar p. B105)

Wild Swings are a very dangerous -- but occasionally useful -- technique. They are dangerous because in addition to a -5 to hit and a maximum skill of 9, they are *always* randomly aimed. While a -5/max 9 may not sound so bad when you are aiming at the body (total -5) or legs (-7), it is terrible when you end up aiming at the hands or feet (-9) or even the brain (-12). Plus, penalties for Bad Footing, shock, etc. can drop the skill further. Even a highly skill fighter usually ends up with a pretty low chance of success, and medium- or low-skill attackers can draw themselves into an increased risk of a critical miss. They are sometimes useful as part of a **Move** maneuver, but unless you absolutely cannot change facing, you are better off with a normal Step and Attack.

Shield Bashes

(p. B123)

Shield Bashes are often overlooked, but are an important tool in any fighter's arsenal. This is especially true if you have a weapon that needs to be readied between uses; sometimes, you just need an immediate follow-up. The damage on a shield bash is fairly low, but it is better than a punch and has fewer repercussions than a punch or kick if your foe parries.

Shields weigh a lot; even a Small Shield is 8 pounds. Add in a spike and you've made it heavy enough to force a broadsword to check for breakage. The common Medium Shield is 15 pounds, and an Iron Medium Shield (see p. LT117) weighs in at 30 pounds-- enough to force a Poleaxe to check for breakage. Allowing shields bashes to break parrying weapons like this is within the rules, but many GMs find it potentially abusive.

Because of the penalty to parry, and because of the risk of breakage, few people will parry. Against shieldless foes, this can be very effective. Shield Bashes are excellent for targeting weapons for breakage; parrying is at a penalty, and they usually have a chance to break even if they do parry. A Feint/Shield Bash combination aimed at a light weapon can spell disaster for the defender.

Thrown Weapons

(pp. B116-119)

A quick look at the Speed/Range Chart on B201 shows that 1 yard of range gives a +2 to hit. You can take advantage of this by throwing a weapon at point-blank. Fighters using most axes, spears, and knives can throw the weapon; it does not take a Ready action to heft the weapon to throw it if you already have it ready to fight with. Thrown weapons are also more difficult to parry (-1 or more, see B99), and in some cases do more damage thrown than they do wielded one-handed. Naturally, this is not a foolproof tactic; you will leave yourself without a weapon unless you can Fast-Draw something to replace it or have a weapon in your other hand. This tactic is especially useful for two-weapon fighters who use a throwable secondary (or even primary) weapon -- you

always have this option ready but do not leave yourself defenseless after you use it. Throwing like this after a Feint will give you a better chance to hit and further reduce the defenses of the target above and beyond the benefit of the feint.

All-Out Attack

(p. B105)

The All-Out Attack is a potentially powerful tool -- but deadly to both the attacker and his target. One of the chief advantages of the All-Out Attack is that it allows for greater reach on the battle map. An All-Out Attack allows you to take extra steps *forward* that can enable you to reach a foe otherwise out of reach. AOAs also ignore bad footing -- on a slippery, muddy battlefield, or one strewn with corpses, you can nimbly avoid the -2 or greater penalty to skill Bad Footing gives.

Be careful using All-Out Attack against a Waiting foe; even if you have a longer weapon and win the Contest of Skill, the Waiting foe will get both his attack for his Wait and his normal turn before you get your defenses back.

When should you use All-Out Attack? For some, it will never be worthwhile -- fencers and karatekas who depend on their parries and not their DR may never wish to trade it away. For others, especially those with On the Edge or Berserk, choosing something else is not an option. Each of AOA's four options are also useful in different ways, which will affect the choice to use an All-Out Attack or not.

1. *Two Attacks*: This is especially useful after a feint. It allows you to try and swamp you opponent's defenses. One Defense foes -- especially two-handed weapon wielders -- are vulnerable to swamping. One especially useful option is to attack the shield or weapon first, if you believe you have a good chance of breaking your target. If you do, you deprive your foe of a defense just as he needs it to stop your next attack. This option is extremely popular for those facing *GURPS Magic* blocking spells like Iron Arm; only one Blocking spell per turn can be cast, so two successful strikes will ensure that at least one attack cannot be stopped cold by magic. Fighters using a weapon that needs re-readying cannot take advantage of this option; however, a Shield Bash or a strike from a weapon in the other hand can be used as the second attack.
2. *Feint and Attack*: This allows you to trade your defenses for a compressed rhythm in the Step and Feint, Step and Attack, Repeat sequence. This is risky, but if you need to attack *right now* this option is very useful. Like all Feints, you need a superior skill to make this option worthwhile.
3. *+4 to hit*: This option makes a difficult shot possible and a moderately risky shot a sure thing. A +4 to hit effectively makes the Brain only a -3 to hit and the Vitals a +1. This option is great for weapons that will become unready after a strike (or swing/impale weapons that have to be pulled out on the following turn). A +4 to hit is best used when you are sure your opponent cannot defend successfully. Target a location that will incapacitate your foe. Low skill attackers can use this option to offset their low skill.
4. *+2 damage*: This is excellent for finishing strikes when hitting is a sure thing. It is especially useful for low-damage attacks, such as thrusting attacks. A +2 can ensure armor penetration for a poisoned weapon or a strike on a high-multiplier location like Brain; that +2 damage nicely negates the 2 DR of the human skull.

Consider using an All-Out Attack after a Feint, or on a turn following a successful Wait maneuver. A foe who that is wounded, Stunned, or knocked down can be especially vulnerable to an AOA. If your foe suffered Shock penalties as a result of your Wait, you can immediately follow up with a AOA Feint and Attack in order to lock in the penalty from the injury and finish your foe on the same turn.

Step and Feint

(p. B105-106)

"[Feint] can be a lifesaver -- or a total waste of time. Use it wisely." -- **GURPS Basic**, p. 96.

A frequent complaint in **GURPS** is that a highly skilled warrior has the same chance as a rank amateur to defeat the defenses of a foe. Regardless of the skill of the attacker, the defender's active defenses are just as effective against either. Feint is the maneuver that allows a skilled attacker to use his skill to defeat a foe -- a highly- skilled attacker using Feint can cut through lower-skilled defenders with comparative ease. Simply Feint, then Attack, each foe in turn. One reason people prefer to just Attack is that using Feint followed by an Attack will cost you two turns instead of one . . . automatically halving the potential number of foes you can disable. With a sufficient skill, you can definitely penetrate the defenses of one foe every other turn instead of potentially penetrating those of two foes in two turns (or just as likely, fail to penetrate the defenses of either).

Important things to remember with Feint are that

- a. Feints do not make unbalanced weapons unready;
- b. Feints only affect your next turn's attack (or attacks, if you All Out Attack);
- c. Feints are basically useless against defenders much more skilled than you.

Feint is without any real risk; you can't Critically Miss and drop your weapon, your weapon does not become unready, and your defenses are not reduced by trying it.

The "tempo" of Feint is Feint, Attack, Feint, Attack. You Feint to lower the opponent's defenses and attack to take advantage. Assuming the blow wasn't telling and didn't create an opportunity to press, you go for another Feint. However, there are two common exceptions to this rhythm. First, you can fail to Feint successfully. Or you can win by a margin you consider small enough to be as good as a failure (which can be as low as only a -1 to defend or as much as 5+ points against an exceptionally skilled foe). In this case, a useful tactic is to immediately Feint again, hoping for a better result.

One especially vicious use of Feint is as a follow up to a successful attack, while your foe is still penalized from Shock. Because Shock lowers DX, his ability to resist a Feint is lowered. This allows you to potentially "lock in" his Shock penalty as a defense penalty -- which Shock otherwise does not penalize.

GMs commonly run Feint openly -- that is, you know exactly how the contest turned out, even if you don't know what the GM was rolling against. This gives you the advantage of knowing just how well you have succeed. However, if the GM conceals the results, the only thing you know is how well you rolled. The best way to handle these situations is to use the standard Feint tempo: Feint, Attack, Feint, Attack. You will have to gauge for yourself how well you are doing against a given foe.

Attackers with weapons that require a ready time should lean heavily on Feints. Since Feints do not make unbalanced weapons unready, you can Feint until you have inflicted a steep penalty on your foe. Because your weapon needs to be readied (or even yanked back out of a foe and *then* readied if swing/impale) you need to ensure your blows tell. Polearm wielders should take advantage of the fact that polearms do not become unready if used to parry -- defend and Feint until you have the opening you need.

Step -- Feinting and Stepping Back is a useful maneuver, but you will often be stepping out of range. If you have a weapon with reach (1,2) you can use this when you are adjacent to your foe; even if the foe Steps back on his turn, your step will bring you back into range. This "Feint and Step Back" move is also useful if you are being pressed closely, or if you want to keep a foe at range. It can also fake out a foe who you want to put some space between -- if you Feint and Step back, your foe may step away on his turn to prevent you from following up, playing into your hands. On your next turn you can step back and Wait, preventing him from reaching you without a Move or All Out Attack. If he just steps, his *weapon* may be in range -- and your feint will reduce

his chance of avoiding a direct attack on his weapon.

Step and Wait

(p. B106)

Wait is one of the most misunderstood maneuvers. If the chance to interrupt does not come up, many people regard the Wait as "wasted." This is untrue; it is often better to wait for a better opportunity than to attack furiously, leaving yourself unable to seize those opportunities that arise.

Wait can effectively give you two shots at a foe on one of his turns; your Wait interrupts his turn, and you will get your next turn before his next turn rolls around again. This means Wait is especially effective if your foe only has one or two effective defenses; you can try to swamp his defenses. Wait is also useful because if you Stun your foe during his turn, he cannot roll to become unstunned until the beginning of his next turn. This can allow you to follow up against a foe with lowered defenses.

Wait creates a "zone of attack," similar to the "zone of control" that wargamers will be familiar with. Your Zone of Attack consists of those hexes that someone is threatened with direct attack if they enter. The Zone of Attack consists of your front hexes -- see sidebar p. B102 for a chart of Front hexes. A person with a 1 hex weapon has a 3-hex Zone (straight ahead, ahead-right and ahead-left). A person with a weapon with reach (1,2) has an *eight* hex Zone -- the three adjacent front hexes, and the five hexes 1 yard past them. A person with a weapon with reach (1,2*) has either a three or five hexes, depending on how the weapon is being held. Don't forget your hands and feet -- a person taking a Wait while holding a Spear at reach 2 can threaten the 5 hexes at reach 2 with the spear and the three hexes with a kick.

A Waiting combatant can often force a foe to detour or take a Wait himself to avoid the potential double strike of the Waiting combatant. If everyone detours, your Wait will not be sprung, but you will have restricted the use of the area of your Zone, which can be just as useful if you need to delay your foes.

Wait is more strongly affected by your choice to Step before or Step after than other maneuvers. If you Step before you Wait, you give yourself the option to step backwards. Wait restricts you to stepping forwards after interrupting, but does not restrict you at all when you first take the maneuver. If you Wait and reserve your step, you essentially extend your Zone of Attack -- if you threatened everyone at reach 1 before, now you threaten them at both reach 1 and 2, since you can step into any of your reach 1 hexes.

All-Out Defense

(pp. B106, CII56-57)

There isn't much in the way of tactics here; you use All-Out Defense when you do not want to get hurt. However, you are completely without offensive actions. Because Shock does not lower defenses, All-Out Defense is extremely useful if you have become injured. If you are suffering from Stunning or Shock, you can take an All-Out Defense to frustrate attempts by your opponents to follow up and finish you off.

All-Out Defense also gives you twice your normal complement of active defenses -- and Fencing gets unlimited parries. *GURPS Compendium II* also added an option to All-Out Defense: taking a +2 to one defense instead of taking two defenses.

1. *Two Defenses per attack:* Knowing which defense to use can be tricky. In general, choose the best defense you have against an attack and your next-best defense if that fails to stop the attack. However, if you have only Dodge and another defense, roll Dodge first. If the Dodge succeeds, you will not used up one of your limited number of Parries or Blocks. The only time to choose Dodge second in this case is if your Dodge score is low enough to make a

critical failure likely.

2. *+2 to one defense*: This option is very useful if you only have a single defense to rely on -- such as Dodge, or Parry if you have Fencing -- or if a +2 is all the margin you need to push your defenses from a potential success into a sure thing. This option is also useful to partly counteract the -4 to Active Defense from Stunning or the penalty from a Feint.

A character taking an All-Out Defense can also be a useful anchor for a line of combatants, or hold off multiple lesser skilled opponents while awaiting reinforcement. However, an All-Out Defense is primarily defensive and will not directly help you eliminate opponents. It can prevent them from eliminating *you*.

Move

(*pp. B102-103, 107*)

Move, simply put, is best used to get around. It does have a very directly offensive action included in it: Slam. While Slams are technically Close Combat, which is outside the scope of this discussion, Slams are most commonly used when the attacker wishes to avoid grappling.

Slams are most effective with a big shield and a running start, but strong attackers can Slam successfully from a dead start. Slams are useful for putting low-ST foes prone to open them up for finishing attacks, or to just get them out of the way. If possible, Slam from the side or back, or Slam a wounded opponent still suffering from shock; the DX penalty from shock will help prevent your foe from avoiding your attack. Be careful when using Slam because a failure can put you behind your foe (facing away, and vulnerable to a 180-degree turn on a Step and Attack or even an All-Out Attack) or put you on the ground. Slam not only requires a high ST to be effective, but also a good DX to hit your target.

One possibility for the desperate -- but not desperate enough for an All-Out Charge -- is to execute a Slam immediately preceded by or followed by a Wild Swing. The Wild Swing can be used either to distract, and possibly injure the defender to soften him up for a Slam, or be used to follow-up on a hopefully prone foe.

One note: Feints do not help in the Contest of DX for Slams. If you need to Feint before a Slam to ensure you hit your foe, use All-Out Charge (see below).

All-Out Charge

(*p. CII56*)

An All-Out Charge is essentially a Move with an All-Out Wild Swing tacked on. The first two options are identical to the last two options of All-Out Attack, and should be used in the same manner.

Option c, an attack at -5 skill followed by a Slam, is functionally identical to a Move and Wild Swing followed by a Slam, except that All-Out Charge removes the random location and skill cap. If this option is chosen, the best bet is to choose a target that will help your Slam succeed. A limb hit, especially a leg hit, is ideal. A crippling blow to any limb will stun your foe; a leg cripple will drop him prone. A Stunned foe is less able to avoid your Slam; a fallen foe doesn't even need to be Slammed. Since injury will lower the DX of a foe (unless he has High Pain Threshold), any injury will help you successfully Slam your foe.

Option d, a feint at -5 skill followed by a Slam, is best used when a weapon attack would be futile. Against a foe with high defenses or high DR, or when you are armed with an inferior weapon or no weapon at all, an attack might not be worth the risk. Remember also that your foe must see the feint to fall for it; this option is less than useful when running a foe down.

And yes, as CII says, All-Out Charge is very useful to chase down fleeing foes. Remember,

though, that foe can go from a Move with a Sprint bonus to a Step and Attack instantly; if you run up to and fail to disable your foe, he can change facing on his turn and attack.

Active Defenses

The rules with Active Defenses are simple: Don't let your opponents swamp you, choose the best one you have, and roll low. Besides those simple rules, there is one additional tactic to consider: Retreat.

Retreat gives you a +3 to your defenses and allows you to take a step (in any direction away from your attacker) on someone else's turn. The +3 can turn a moderate defense into a high defense, and combined with All-Out Defense can make it nearly impossible for an attacker to penetrate your defenses for one attack. You have placed a hex between yourself and the attacker. If your attacker took his Step first, you have opened a gap you can use to flee, consolidate your retreat on your turn, or keep your distance if you have a longer weapon.

A common mistake with Retreat is to rely on it too heavily. Do not depend on Retreat. If you can only defend yourself successfully with the +3 from Retreat, you are vulnerable to being hemmed in, driven against a wall, cliff, or occupied hexes, and so on. By retreating, you are allowing a foe to drive you backwards, possibly into a worse position than you started in. You also will be less reliable as a comrade, since your friends will potentially have their flanks exposed as you need to retreat away from attacks. A clever attacker may also deliberately attack you in the hopes of forcing you away from a comrade to allow your friend to be surrounded by the attacker's friends. Turnabout is fair play, however -- as an attacker, try to maneuver to channel a Retreat-using foe into a bad position or divide him from his buddies.

Good luck, happy fighting, and may your Feints always work.

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References: **GURPS Basic**, **GURPS Compendium II**, and the Krommnotes at <http://www.krommnotes.org/>

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