Chapter Two: Schools

“Poison Clan rocks the world!”
—Five Deadly Venoms

When martial arts originated, they were closely kept secrets. Now you can find martial arts schools by looking in the telephone directory. As a result, new styles and new schools begin almost constantly. While some die out, others flourish. As the Introduction explains, heroes who dedicate themselves to a particular style of unarmed fighting are assumed to have joined a school that teaches that style.

Achieving Mastery

Martial arts schools are neither feats nor prestige classes. When heroes meet the prerequisites for a school, they gain the school’s benefit and may use it within the restrictions of the rules. Schools have several degrees of mastery, with more benefits for more dedicated students. Heroes may master as many schools as they wish, provided they meet all the prerequisites for each school.

Unless otherwise specified, the abilities granted by mastery of a school are extraordinary abilities.

Note: Prerequisites marked with an asterisk (*) are new feats that appear in Chapter Three of this book.

See Chapter Four: Secret Techniques for descriptions of secret techniques.

Ballistic Fist

“The Gun Kata treats the gun as a total weapon. Each new position representing a maximum kill zone, inflicting maximum damage on the maximum number of opponents, while keeping the defendant clear of the statistically traditional trajectories of return fire.”
—Equilibrium

Ballistic Fist is an entirely fictional martial arts style that focuses on firearms similar to the way other styles focus on swords. Students of this school learn to anticipate the movement of opponents and calculate their fields of fire from moment to moment, ensuring that the Ballistic Fist practitioner can emerge from a firefight virtually unscathed.

Note: When a hero takes a level in Gunslinger, she may choose not to take a class ability and instead take a feat that is a prerequisite for mastery of Ballistic Fist, or a Ballistic Fist secret technique.

1st Degree Mastery—Ballistic Fist

Prerequisites: Dex 13, Int 13, Wis 13, base attack bonus +1, Advanced Firearms Proficiency, Burst Fire, Combat Expertise, Combat Martial Arts, Dodge, Double Tap, Improved Initiative, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Point Blank Shot, Quick Draw, Knowledge (tactics) 6 ranks, Sleight of Hand 6 ranks, Tumble 6 ranks, Close Combat Shot class ability, Evasion class ability, Uncanny Dodge class ability, Weapon Focus class ability.

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus to Initiative, but you must draw the firearm with which you have Weapon Focus and attack an opponent with it in the first round of combat. Otherwise, you move to the end of the initiative order for the rest of the encounter. (You can, as always, change your place in the initiative order by delaying or readying.) This bonus stacks with the bonus from Improved Initiative.

When you use the firearm you selected for your Weapon Focus ability, the threat range for that weapon increases by one. For example, a Colt M1911 normally threatens a critical only on a natural 20. In the hands of a 1st Degree Master of Ballistic Fist who selected the M1911 for his Weapon Focus ability, the threat range increases to 19–20.

You gain a +2 bonus on all attack rolls and a +2 bonus on all damage rolls when either pistol whipping or using a rifle butt in melee.

2nd Degree Mastery—Ballistic Fist

Prerequisites: 1st Degree Mastery of Ballistic Fist, Dex 13, Int 13, Wis 13, base attack bonus +1, Advanced Firearms Proficiency, Burst Fire, Combat Expertise, Combat Martial Arts, Dodge, Double Tap, Improved Combat Expertise*, Improved Dodge*, Improved Initiative, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Point Blank Shot, Quick Draw, Knowledge (tactics) 8 ranks, Sleight of Hand 6 ranks, Tumble 6 ranks, Close Combat Shot class ability, Evasion class ability, Uncanny Dodge class ability, Weapon Focus class ability.

Benefit: If you draw the firearm with which you have Weapon Focus and attack with it in combat, treat the opponent you attack as if he or she was flat-footed, regardless of whether or not that opponent has acted already in this combat encounter.
If either pistol whipping or using a rifle butt in melee, you gain the benefits of any unarmed combat feats and you add the weapon damage to your unarmed strike. For example, a hero with Combat Martial Arts and 2nd Degree Mastery of Ballistic Fist who pistol whips an opponent does 2d4 points of damage plus Strength modifier, and chooses whether that damage is lethal or nonlethal. A hero with Advanced Combat Martial Arts, Combat Martial Arts, Improved Combat Martial Arts, and 2nd Degree Mastery of Ballistic Fist who uses a rifle butt does 2d4 points of damage plus Strength modifier, chooses whether the damage is lethal or nonlethal, threatens a critical on a 19–20, and has a critical multiplier of ×3.

**Available Secret Technique:** Tactical Training.

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**3rd Degree Mastery—Ballistic Fist**

**Prerequisites:** 2nd Degree Mastery of Ballistic Fist, Dex 13, Int 13, Wis 13, base attack bonus +1, Advanced Firearms Proficiency, Burst Fire, Combat Expertise, Combat Martial Arts, Dodge, Double Tap, Greater Dodge*, Improved Combat Expertise*, Improved Dodge*, Improved Initiative, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Point Blank Shot, Quick Draw, Knowledge (tactics) 10 ranks, Sleight of Hand 6 ranks, Tumble 6 ranks, Close Combat Shot class ability, Evasion class ability, Uncanny Dodge class ability, Weapon Focus class ability.

**Benefit:** You gain the benefit of Supreme Dodge (see Chapter Three: Feats in this book).

You gain a +2 bonus on attack rolls and damage rolls with the firearm selected for your Weapon Focus ability. This bonus stacks with the previous bonus from Weapon Focus and with the bonus from Greater Weapon Focus (also a class feature of the Gunslinger advanced class) if the hero also possesses that ability.

When you use the firearm you selected for your Weapon Focus ability, the threat range for that weapon increases by one. This increases stacks with the increase from 1st Degree Mastery. For example, a Colt M1911 normally threatens a critical only on a natural 20. In the hands of a 3rd Degree Master of Ballistic Fist who selected the M1911 for his Weapon Focus ability, the threat range increases to 18–20.

**Available Secret Technique:** Combat Analysis.

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**Bare-Knuckle Brawling**

While bare-knuckle brawling is not a formal school of fighting, there are certainly people who practice it in unsanctioned boxing matches, prisons, bar rooms, and hockey rinks the world over. The bare-knuckle brawler may not spend a lot of time in training, but he makes up for that by fighting every chance he gets.

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**1st Degree Mastery—Bare-Knuckle Brawling**

**Prerequisites:** Str 13, base attack bonus +3, Brawl, Improved Brawl, Improved Damage Threshold, Improved Grab*, Improved Grapple*, Power Attack, Streetfighting.

**Benefit:** You may use the +1d4 damage granted by Streetfighting a number of times per round equal to your Strength bonus.

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**2nd Degree Mastery—Bare-Knuckle Brawling**
passed down generation by generation, gradually developing into more than just a difficult way to hunt deer. Bows and arrows are famous weapons in films and books. Legolas was a great archer, as was Robin Hood. Tales of blind Zen archers are popular in genre literature. The great actor Toshiro Mifune practiced yabusamé, a style of kisha (Japanese horseback archery).

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_Benefit:_ You gain Dodge and Stealthy as a bonus feat. You must meet the prerequisites for Dodge in order to use that feat.

#### 2nd Degree Mastery—Cloudy Night

**Prerequisites:** 1st Degree Mastery of Cloudy Night, base attack bonus +1, Acrobatic, Archaic Weapons Proficiency, Athletic, Combat Martial Arts, Deceptive, Defensive Martial Arts, Martial Weapons Proficiency* (see Chapter Five: Weapons for a list of appropriate choices), Climb 7 ranks, Hide 7 ranks, Move Silently 7 ranks, Tumble 7 ranks, Evasion class ability.

**Benefit:** You gain Mobility as a bonus feat. You must meet all prerequisites in order to use this feat.

You also gain Improved Evasion. If you are exposed to any effect that normally allows a character to attempt a Reflex saving throw for half damage (such as getting caught in a grenade blast), you suffer no damage if you make a successful saving throw and only half damage on a failed save. Improved Evasion can only be used when wearing light or no armor.

**Available Secret Technique:** Spirit Needles.

#### 3rd Degree Mastery—Cloudy Night

**Prerequisites:** 2nd Degree Mastery of Cloudy Night, base attack bonus +4, Acrobatic, Archaic Weapons Proficiency, Athletic, Combat Martial Arts, Deceptive, Defensive Martial Arts, Focused, Improved Combat Martial Arts, Martial Weapons Proficiency* (see Chapter Five: Weapons for a list of appropriate choices), Bluff 4 ranks, Climb 7 ranks, Disguise 4 ranks, Hide 7 ranks, Move Silently 7 ranks, Tumble 7 ranks, Evasion class ability.

**Benefit:** You gain Spring Attack as a bonus feat. You must meet all prerequisites in order to use this feat.

In addition, if you make a successful Bluff check as a standard action you may immediately make a normal Hide check as a free action provided there is sufficient terrain or furnishings to conceal you. Your hiding place must be within 1 foot for every rank you have in Hide (so if you have 10 ranks in Hide, your hiding place can be as much as 10 feet away).

**Normal:** If you make a Bluff check to create a diversion before hiding, you suffer a —10 penalty to the Hide check.

**Available Secret Technique:** Hypnotic Gaze.

#### The Deft Touch School

The Deft Touch School developed in countries with detailed medical systems, such as the Vedic knowledge of India and the Taoist medicine of China. Many of the masters of this and similar schools are doctors of traditional medicine. They expect their students to learn their traditional medical knowledge and techniques in order to treat the training injuries of junior students.

Deft Touch combat techniques use precise fingertip strikes to specific pressure points and nerve clusters. It is a gentle-looking art that relies on education and accuracy rather than brute strength.

#### 1st Degree Mastery—Deft Touch

**Prerequisites:** Dex 13, Wis 13, base attack bonus +4, Defensive Martial Arts, Stunning Fist*, Medical Expert, Craft...