

I have mixed feelings about justified columns. If done well, they look great, but if done poorly, they look terrible. But unjustified columns looked bad with the table I have this issue, so I thought I would give justification a try. Let me know what you think.

SSΩ: Super System Omega

Scaling Problems

I had been hoping to avoid this issue, but Simon brought it up, so I might as well discuss it. There are three scales that are useful to the typical superhero campaign: strength, speed, and damage. These help answer the questions, "can I lift a car?" "can I outrun a locomotive?" and "can I stop a bullet?" (or, alternatively, how much damage can I do compared to an anti-tank shell?).

The use of a fixed, concrete scale for these things is not always advantageous. One of my design goals is to keep things abstract, but anything concrete, like a strength table, is counterproductive to this goal. Besides, the scale does not always help you when you really need it. The table says you can lift 7.5 tons, but is that strong enough to stop that loaded school bus from going over the cliff? The answer to that question is perhaps best answered by the needs of the story rather than the strength scale.

The scales demonstrated by superheros is typically well beyond our everyday experience. How fast is a speeding bullet, anyway? How do you scale velocity to include both normal people and supers who can outrun an electrical signal? Most commonly, you find some exponential scale, such as each +5 in strength doubles your lifting capacity. Even D&D turns exponential for scores over 30. However, the in-game effect is almost always linear. In Hero, doubling your strength does not double your damage dice; instead, you only get one extra die.

This linearizing of the exponential scale causes a potential problem when you tie them to dice-based systems. If I can run twice as fast as you, there should be no way you can beat me in a race. If your force field has twice the stopping power that my energy bolts can deliver, then I should never be able to hurt you. And yet, the dice can allow such things to happen regularly in traditional superhero rpgs.

This makes a diceless system attractive for superhuman scales. Everway has been successfully used as a supers system, for example. The only time you would really need dice to decide the outcome are when two opponents are at the same rank (or perhaps only a single rank apart). Unfortunately, I am

not up to making a diceless system right now. If I were to do so, it would probably just be a freeform system without a scale—just go by the character descriptions rather than power ranks.

I find it difficult to ignore this issue, and yet I will try. When doing direct comparisons of strength or speed, I am tempted to not use dice, but I still want to use them when making other comparisons, especially attack and defensive powers. When using extra effort (what Hero and MEGS calls pushing) in M&M, for example, carrying capacity and movement are handled differently than for other powers, so I am not the only one to recognize a difference.

Making the Scale

The scale you need also has a lot to do with the setting. Do you expect the heroes to fly around at Mach 2 or 0.8c? Do the villains throw cars or mountains? It might be better to leave the scale up to the GM, but I'll take a stab at a generic scale.

I like round numbers. My preferred exponential progressions are to add an order of magnitude per 3 or 6 ranks as follows:

- 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, ...¹
- 1, 1.5, 2, 3, 5, 7.5, 10, 15, 20, 30, 50, 75, 100, ...

The table below is an example of the first, faster scale using strength. The use of examples is critical and I think more important than the actual weight values.

Rank	Lift	Examples
0	100 kg	Adult Human
1	200 kg	Tiger, Gorilla, Sea Lion, Motorcycle
2	500 kg	Bison, Moose, Walrus
3	1 ton	Car, Light Truck, Hippopotamus
4	2 tons	Truck/SUV, Cubic-Meter of Concrete
5	5 tons	Bus, Helicopter, Elephant
6	10 tons	Tracked Bulldozer, Loaded School Bus
7	20 tons	Large Loader, Fighter, Tractor Trailer
8	50 tons	Tank, Boxcar, Airliner
9	100 tons	Blue Whale, Locomotive
10	200 tons	Loaded Bomber or Jumbo Jet
+3	x10	

For speed, one might want to use the second, slower scale. If rank 1 represents 10 meters per second (a world class sprinter), you can run at 100 mps at rank 7 or 300 mps (around the speed of sound at cruising altitudes) at rank 10. While this may be convenient for some campaigns, the speed of light (300,000,000 mps) is still up at rank 46 (which puts the speed of an electrons on a wire at about rank 45).

¹ This is also the same progression that the Euro uses.

Multiple

An important point of the questionnaire was to guide me in selecting powers that were appropriate and interesting for the character. Not all the questions were directly relevant to the campaign or characters, but I thought they would be fun to answer and keep the players guessing about what kind of powers they would end up getting.

Lee Gold

I do not understand people and what makes them tick, but if you will allow me to play psychologist for a paragraph or two, I will ramble about the questions you ask.

I think most people want to be special and they want to be recognized for their distinctness. They want to be someone no one else is or they want to do something no one else can do. One way to express the latter is to be the best at something, such as kicking ass. However, their desire to belong is equally as strong. Being distinct without a peer group is to be an outcast, so groups of outcasts collect like dust bunnies. To be part of a group but distinct within it is the ultimate goal. This is the essence of *cool*—being distinct from the mainstream but accepted within the cool set.

And then you have gamers. Standard PC options are not distinct enough to be cool. What makes your dwarf fighter any different than the thousands of other dwarf fighters in the gaming world, especially if you lack the roleplaying chops to distinguish yourself?

Paul Mason

Knowing that I would only have 1 session to get the players into their characters, the questionnaire was designed to speed up the process. With a campaign of 4 sessions, I simply did not have time for lackadaisical roleplaying. Over the course of a campaign, character development (or perhaps more correctly, discovery) is mostly a matter of stimulus and response—how they react to specific situations and people. The questionnaire is simply a more direct means to accomplish the same. The idea is not to have players create a character out of whole cloth and then to answer the questions, but to use the questions to guide character development and to think about those things that might take many sessions (if at all) to come to light in a campaign. I also do not see how the questionnaire is any different than having a long back history, something you admit to providing with pregenerated characters.

Does the *player* have to feel a loss of control in order for the *character* to feel it? Where should we leave immersion in favor of plain acting? Which physical and emotional states need to be modeled

(and force-fed) by the rules and which can we leave for the player to provide?

Brian Christopher Misiaszek

I suggest Savage Worlds as a D&D alternative for your group. I know you like it and I have read several success stories about moving from D&D/d20 to SW.

Lisa Padol

Your questions regarding the percentage of superheros and lethal cases of zeta radiation will not be answered until the campaign restart, assuming it does. The answers to these and many more questions (like popular and political reaction to superheros) must come from the players, just as it was their decision to be the first superhumans ever.

Question 10's "How so?" was simply a call to back up the answer with an example or explanation.

Simon Reeve

Devon is comic book reality alternate history and therefore I do not worry about the implausibility of the city's origins. The LA Clippers are a notoriously awful basketball team. When I was looking for an appropriate franchise for Devon, I had them move from San Diego to Devon instead instead of Los Angeles.

The Scourge are all telepathic, at least with other telepaths, like themselves. The PCs encountered three distinct castes of Scourge. The foot soldiers had 4 arms. The higher-ranked fliers had two arms and a set of wings. Lastly, the commanders (with two arms and small, vestigial wings) had advanced telepathy, including mental blasts and shields. They all had superhuman physical and mental resistance. Whether or not these abilities were a side-effect of zeta radiation was not investigated and thus not determined (by the players or myself).

It was made clear to the PCs when they were captured that the Scourge had never seen the presence of superhuman powers in humans as exhibited by the PCs. This was a result of the magnitude, duration, and method of their exposure. I suspect that the first super humans to evolve on Earth would be weaker than the PCs were (Power Level 6-8 rather than 10), at least at first.

Brian Rogers

If you build a station from an asteroid, you need to find one with the proper angular momentum and orientation. Even if you dig into the asteroid, you would still need to provide materials for the walls as you would in an artificial station. And all the computers, life support, and other systems have to be brought in both cases, I just do not see the asteroid as being any more convenient or cost effective than a wheel and spoke design.