

Godlike Alternate Combat Rules

By Tom Miskey

This concept started with a discussion about a review of *Godlike* on RPG.net. The reviewer asked, "Why doesn't combat work exactly the same as regular skill rolls? Width as speed and height as quality, with quality in this case meaning damage." He also pointed out several strange anomalies in the rules as they are written. This got the Hamster-wheel in my mind turning, and led to the creation of these alternate rules for *Godlike*.

I would also like to thank Dennis Detwiller, Greg Stolze, and Mike Mearls for a great game that stokes the fires of the imagination.

Height = Damage

Simply put, combat now works the same as every other skill roll: Width determines speed, Height determines quality, in this case damage. (Height represented "quality" before, in a way, by determining hit location, but damage is a more direct indication of the quality of a hit.)

- Height, not Width, determines damage.
- If an attack does both Shock and Wounds, the Height is always divided in half between the two types of damage (Height 8 = 4 Shock, 4 Wounds).
- If the Height is an odd number, always round in favor of Shock (Height 5 = 3 Shock, 2 Wounds).
- Some weapons only inflict 1 type of damage, not both. You still divide the Height between them, but you ignore the unused half. (A fist attack with Height 7 does 4 Shock and no Wounds.)

Hit Location

Under the original rules, the Height of your attack determined the hit location. In this version, pick one die in your die pool that is a different color or size than the rest. Whatever it rolls is the hit location. It does not matter whether this die is part of the set that hits or not – whatever that die comes up is the location. This way, everything is still resolved by 1 roll. (If you don't have a die of a different color or size, just roll 1d10 after you hit to find out where.)

Example: Rolling for an attack, you use 1 red die as the Hit Location die. Although it was not part of the matching set of 3x5, its value of 9 means you hit the torso.

Called Shots: Because Height now determines damage, not hit location, we must slightly alter called shots. To make a Called Shot, just drop 1 normal die from your pool and roll the rest. You do **not** set 1 die to the number you are aiming for, or need to match it with your other dice, such as 10 for the head (because doing so would affect the damage of the attack).

Instead, if the attack hits, you may bump the number showing on the Hit Location die either up or down, by an amount equal to the roll's Width. So, if you hit the Torso with a roll of 3x7, you could bump it up to the head (location 10) or down to either arm (locations 4-6), but you could not hit the legs.

Health

This system provides for much finer granularity in damage. A typical roll may result in anything from 1 Shock to 5 Shock and 5 Wounds. While the average hit, with a Height of 5, causes 3 Shock and 2 Wounds, the broader range of values results in increased lethality for characters. As the game is already quite deadly, I suggest increasing the base Health points for characters. An increase of about 60% (for a total of 6 points in the Head, 16 in the Torso, and 8 in each limb) maintains the deadly atmosphere of the game while still providing for increased survival.

Natural Healing: Natural Healing from Shock is similar to the original rules. Half the Shock on each body location is recovered after a combat. After a good night's rest, you may recover more. Roll Body+Health and if successful, you recover Shock points equal to $\frac{1}{2}$ the Height of the roll, round up. Surgery and healing from Wounds are unchanged from the *Godlike* rules (pg. 15).

Armor

After the roll has been divided into Shock and Wounds, apply any armor the target is wearing.

Light armor: Light armor subtracts its value (LAR) from Wounds first, and then Shock if there are any points left.

Example: A bullet hits your torso with a Height of 5, but luckily you are wearing a flak jacket. The bullet would normally do 3 Shock and 2 Wounds, but your 3 points of LAR reduces the Wounds to 0, and the remaining point cancels 1 Shock. Final result: You suffer 2 Shock points.

Heavy armor: Heavy armor subtracts its value (HAR) from both Shock and Wounds.

Example: Another bullet with a Height of 5 hits you in the head, but this time you are behind a 1" concrete wall with a value of 2 HAR. The 3 Shock and 2 Wounds are each reduced by 2 points, resulting in a mere 1 Shock point of damage to you. Good thing you kept your head down!

Penetration values: The penetration value reduces any armor by the listed amount. Penetration is only half as effective at long range, and the width of the attack roll does not add to penetration. If the target has no Armor, ignore any penetration value.

Example: A Panzerfaust 30 is fired at a Josef Stalin Heavy Tank. The tank's normal HAR of 9 is reduced to 2 by the penetration value of 7, and damage is figured normally from there.

Weapons and Damage

The chart below replaces the *Godlike* Standard Weapons Table (pg. 20) and the Base Damage Rating table (pg. 264). Remember, the Height of the attack ordinarily includes both the Shock and Wounds damage. Half the Height is Shock damage and half is Wound damage, with any odd point going toward Shock. Not all weapons or attacks do both types of damage, however, so only record the appropriate types of damage and ignore the other half.

Spray, Area, and Burn: Spray, Area dice, burning, drowning, falling, etc., all remain unchanged from the original rules.

Everything Else: Use these suggestions to extrapolate anything that is not covered below. For example, a high Body now adds to the Height of a melee blow, not the Width. Specific cartridges also add/subtract to the Height rolled for guns. Electrocutation only does Shock damage, so it would do ½ the Height, round up.

Attack	Damage
Fists and feet	Only Shock damage is done. (½ Height, rd up)
Truncheon, bottle, brass knuckles	Only Shock damage. (½ Height, rd up) + 1
Club, flat side of shovel	Only Shock damage. (½ Height, rd up) + 2
Piano wire	Strangling (see pg. 17). (2 Shock/round)
Small knife, broken bottle	Only Wound damage. (½ Height, rd down)
Large knife, shovel, unfixed bayonet	Only Wound damage. (½ Height, rd down) + 1
Fixed Bayonet, Axe, Spear, Saber	Only Wound damage. (½ Height, rd down) + 2
Pistol, submachine gun	Does both Shock and Wound damage.
Carbine	Does both Shock and Wound damage. Height + 2
Long rifle, machine gun	Does both Shock and Wound damage. Height + 4
Grenade	Does both Shock and Wound damage. Full damage to target, + 2 Shock to all locations and + 1 Wound to each location rolled on the Area dice to all within 10 yards. Reroll hit locations for each.
Mortar, bazooka, rocket	Does both Shock and Wound damage. Height + 2. Full damage to target, + Blast damage: + 2 Shock to all locations and + 1 Wound to each location rolled on the Area dice to all within 10 yards. Reroll hit locations for each.
Cannon, artillery	Does both Shock and Wound damage. +4 Height. Full damage to target, plus Blast damage: +2 Shock to all locations and +1 Wound to each location rolled on the Area dice to all targets within 10 yards. Reroll locations for each.
Flamethrower	1 Wound to the location of the main attack, +1 Shock & burning to it and each location rolled on the Area dice. (Only rolled locations are set on fire.)

Hard Dice

This alteration in the rules also requires a change in Hard Dice. Buying 2d of Hard Dice in Harm, for example, would now be far more effective than it was previously. Therefore, Hard dice now provide a set value of 5, not 10.

A quick example to explain why this is needed: In the original rules, getting a high width is the most important thing. This makes Wiggle Dice, which can match any number or set rolled on normal dice very valuable. This new system makes the height far more important. If Hard Dice always match and always do maximum damage, they are an exceptional deal. In cost, 5 normal dice = 2 HD + 1 normal die = 1 WD and 1 normal die. The 5 normal dice have a 70% chance of getting a match, and a decent chance at getting multiple matches or 3 of a kind. They can suffer several penalties and still have a chance of hitting. The 2 HD will always get a match, and the extra normal die gives a chance for a 3 of a kind or offsetting a single penalty. The Wiggle die will also get a match every time, but the Height will

vary. Each of these is pretty evenly balanced when damage is based on Width. When you use Height instead, the HD always inflicts 10 damage, while the normal dice and the WD vary from 1-10. This makes HD extremely powerful. To even things out, HD need to do average damage, not maximum damage, so they always roll 5 instead of 10. The fact that they always match is powerful enough without the bonus of maximum damage.

This makes sense logically, as well. Several Hard Dice in a skill or ability represent the use of willpower to always succeed in using that ability. That success tends to be only average in quality, however. Someone with a high number of normal dice may succeed brilliantly, barely make it, or fail completely, while someone with Wiggle Dice has the versatility to combine their innate power with their training (normal dice) in order to succeed every time. Given time or multiple Wiggle Dice, these people can always succeed flawlessly.

Talents

Some Talent powers are affected by this rules alteration as well. In general, Attack powers follow all the modified damage rules stated above.

Control: Similar to Create, this power typically does $\frac{1}{2}$ Height in either Shock or Wounds, depending upon player's choice and how the power is used.

Create: Attacks with this power do $\frac{1}{2}$ Height in either Wound or Shock damage, player's choice (or based upon how the power is manifested).

Extra Tough: The increased number of Health boxes for characters means that each additional one should cost less. Reduce the base cost of the power Extra Tough from 4 to 3.

Healing: Healing works exactly like damage in reverse. The Height determines the amount of damage healed, with half going towards Shock and half towards Wounds. Any extra points in Wounds crosses over and heals Shock, but the reverse is not true!

Example: You heal your friend's torso, which has 1 Wound and 5 Shock. You roll 2x5, which heals 2 Wounds and 3 Shock. Since he is only suffering from 1 Wound, the extra point of Wound healing removes an additional point of Shock. If his friend had instead suffered 5 Wounds and 1 Shock, the roll of 2x5 would cure 2 Wounds and the single point of Shock, but the remaining points of Shock healing are wasted against the more serious Wounds.

Harm: As stated, it is resolved like a Pistol shot. That means Height divided into Shock and Wounds, with any odd number going toward Shock.

Heavy Armor: Reducing the Shocks and Wounds of an attack under this system is far less powerful than reducing the Width. The base cost of Heavy Armor is now 5 points per level, instead of 7. Also, *Light Armor* may be bought at a base cost of 3 points per level.

Immunity: This power remains unchanged, but only Kinetic Attacks are broad and common enough to cost 4/8/16 per level. Fire, Water, Cold, Earth, and specific kinetic attacks, such as bullets or sharp objects, are regular and cost 2/4/8. Starvation, Thirst, Disease, Acid, Poison, Radiation, and even more specialized kinetic attacks (swords, pistols, etc.) cost only 1/2/4 per level.

Instant Death: This power is usually bought in levels, not dice, though if the flaw "Must Beat the Target's Body Score" is taken, each level counts as a Hard die. Each level automatically inflicts 1 Wound on the target to a location of your choice. Typically, that is the head, if you are trying to kill them quickly, though you may choose any location you wish.

Insubstantiality: Using this power to attack causes ($\frac{1}{2}$ Height) +1 in Wound damage.

Multiple Actions: As stated in this power's description, it is bought in levels, not dice, similar to Heavy Armor and Instant Death. Use the cost given for Hard Dice. (Just an observation, not related to Height = damage.)

Regeneration: For 1 Will Point, you may regenerate the Height of your roll divided between Shock and Wounds. These points may be spread around the body locations as desired, and, as in the Healing power, any excess Wound healing may be converted to Shock healing instead, but not vice versa. Example: You spend 1 Will and roll 2x9. You regain a total of 5 Shock and 4 Wounds. Because you had lost 7 Shock and only 1 Wound, you are fully healed. If instead you had lost 7 Wounds and 1 Shock, you would still have 3 Wounds remaining.

Stun: Attacks using the Stun power cause the **full** Height in Shock damage. This breaks the rule of dividing Height into Shock and Wounds, but because the original rules say that it does double damage in Shock only, this is the easiest way to make the transition.

Squishy Rolls

Because Height is now used for damage instead of Width, getting a large matching set is no longer nearly as important. This tends to make 3 or more Hard Dice and 2 or more Wiggle Dice fairly useless. Therefore, using the optional rule for Squishy dice on pg. 305 of the *Godlike* rulebook is highly recommended.

This rule allows you to exchange points between the Height and the Width of the roll. Thus, 3 Hard Dice may count as 3x5, 2x6, or even 7x1. While this would have allowed a HUGE increase in the possible damage for attacks under the original rules, things are far more balanced under these alternate rules. In order to increase damage, a player now needs to reduce the Width and increase the Height.

Note that by trading Width for Height, you go later in the round: Your attack may be dodged or you may suffer an injury if you wait too long to aim.

Note also that you can squish in the other direction to make called shots (see above) more effective. By trading Height for Width, you increase your odds of hitting the right location, but reduce the chances of a really precise, high-damage hit.

Final Word

I was quite surprised at the long list of ramifications that resulted from this 1 change, especially since *Godlike* is commonly referred to as a Rules-Lite system. Still, many of the changes listed simply involved spelling out how the altered rules would be applied in various situations and conditions. I feel that this change is keeping in spirit with the *Godlike* rules, and in fact is quite intuitive in function. I have tried to cover all of the major aspects of this change, but anything I have missed should be easily figured out using the rules above.

If you have any questions or comments, please send them to me at tommiskey@hotmail.com.