

Howdy, Folks! Here are some initial thoughts on **Darknet**, the GURPS Cyberpunk setting we'll be traipsing around in. (Thanks for the title, Bill.) Nothing is remotely set in stone, I just wanted to throw out a few basics we could start from so y'all can start thinking about characters within some kind of shared context.

Don't worry in the least about making the GURPS part of your character yet – that's easy enough to do later. At this point, I'm just hoping for a hint of the overall character concepts so I know which GURPS rules to be up on.

These are only broad strokes, there will be plenty of gaps to fill once we really start winding up. It's a pretty generic cyberpunk setting. In no particular order, subject to substantial changes:

- Set in Los Angeles in the year 2052, population 25 million (think Megacity One from Judge Dredd). In the 34 years between now and then, corporations have grown in wealth and influence to the point that they are very much the new world powers: nearly all government functions have been privatized, and no political candidate truly stands a chance of being “elected” without corporate support. The corps write and enforce the laws, direct national policies amongst themselves to maximize profit and limit individual freedoms, and basically ensure the status quo continues unabated.
- At the highest echelons of society are the Suits, the corporate managers and board members who reap massive profits off the backs of the populace. They enjoy lives of absolute power and luxury, with access to the most cutting edge technology and benefits (sprawling estates, top-of-the-line cyber-enhancements, miraculous healthcare, self-driving hover cars, freedom from constant surveillance). It is unlikely the PCs have ever so much as met one of these people.
- Then there are the Drones, the “middle class” workers lucky enough to claw their way to a megacorp job where they can be overworked and constantly monitored, but at least be safe from the chaos and danger of the streets. In exchange for these fairly comfortable lives (guarded arcology apartments and homes, functional cyber-enhancements and healthcare), they are expected to do their jobs, not make trouble, vote for the corporate candidate, and buy the brand of cereal they're told to. The PCs would probably cross paths with these people now and then, but it would be rare for them to be friends.
- Finally, there's everyone else, the Street Rats, the Unwashed Masses, the desperate citizens just trying to make it to the next day and trying to hold on to what little they have (crumbling tenements, subpar cyber-enhancements and healthcare). On the streets -- outside the arcologies, the gated communities, the corporate safe zones and estates -- the daily struggle for food, water, any kind of valuable resource quickly devolves into survival of the fittest.

- To keep the population docile and driven to consume, the megacorps eventually transformed and consolidated all forms of online interaction into the Zone, a ubiquitous shared virtual space at the heart of every aspect of daily life. Each citizen is assigned a single basic avatar at birth, uniquely identifiable, that will represent them in the Zone for their entire life (though of course the avatar can be customized and updated with Zone Bux). It would be hard to overstate the appeal of such a virtual place to people whose meat world lives are so empty and hopeless, and it's not uncommon for people to spend most of their entire waking life zoned in. Zone Bux and other in-Zone perks are routinely used to reward obedience and punish anti-corporate sentiment.
- Technology-wise, I'm picturing something like this... though it may not be "classic cyberpunk" enough?
 - **Access to the Zone:** Prototype full neural interfaces all the way down to visors and haptic gloves/suits.
 - **Weapons/Defenses:** Mostly just more powerful versions of technology we already have, so... slug throwers and physical armor (not lasers and energy shields).
 - **Cybernetics:** The maturation of a staggering array of cyberware, both clean (indistinguishable, cosmetically, from biological parts) and dirty (obviously artificial; the "chrome"), makes cyberpunk... cyberpunk!
 - **Surveillance:** Drones, cameras, facial recognition, DNA identification and more, both overt and covert, are *everywhere*.
 - **Vehicles:** Electric/solar powered, self-driving (rarer outside the arcologies), mostly terrestrial but for those who can afford them, flying hover cars do exist.
 - **Robots:** Apart from occasional prototypes made to look/ behave more human-like, robots are common servants lacking any advanced AI.
 - **Space:** There are seven megacorps-owned space stations orbiting the planet, and the two largest megacorps even jointly control a moon colony of a few thousand people.
- For the PCs, basically just pitch whatever you want and we'll try to construct a somewhat logical story around them. Starting off with the PCs already part of an established criminal crew would be fastest, but we can certainly do the traditional "Avengers assemble!" thing instead. I assume they are all from the streets, taking odd jobs together to keep themselves fed and in a comfy hovel somewhere. I feel like around 200 points (with a -25 point disadvantage cap) for the PCs is a good starting point – this would include a basic avatar for interacting in the Zone; any upgrades beyond that would cost points as normal. (Again, if you're not following the points discussion, that's cool – if you've played no/little GURPS, there's no reason you should). At some point in the first few sessions, it's likely the PCs will be given even more points specifically to upgrade their Zone avatars. Mechanically, this will be a distinct character, so each player will have two PCs (one meat world, one virtual).

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Making a GURPS Character for Darknet

GURPS is a point-buy system. Each player starts with **200** Character Points (CP) to be spent creating the character in whatever fashion you like (with advice and assistance from the GM as needed, of course). Most abilities and traits cost points, though Disadvantages cost negative points and can be used to effectively get “more” CP to spend on other things (up to -25 CP).

Like most RPGs, the basic process starts from a broad overview and fills in detail as you go. (For more beyond the below, I recommend [this blog post](#)).

General Concept

The usual initial stage of simply deciding what kind of character you want to play, a goal to keep in mind as you spend points for specific traits and abilities. The default assumption for the PCs is that they are of the lower class with the basic, generic Zone Avatar. You can absolutely be a ‘middle class’ corporate worker and/or have a tricked out kick-ass avatar, but it will cost you Character Points to get those benefits.

So far, we have *possible* PCs of:

- A wheelchair-confined hacker who uses his computer skills as a virtual infiltrator and swordsman
- A corporate programmer by day, virtual gadgeteer by night
- A pre-school teacher whose Zone Avatar is an armored “tank” defender

As mentioned in the prior version of this doc, I’m assuming the PCs have all done at least a few criminal runs together as a team. Whether some or all have ever met in the real world is entirely up to you guys. Once the PCs are settled, it will be easier to figure out the dynamics.

Attributes

There are four attributes in GURPS:

- **ST** (strength: melee damage, amount of encumbrance, and Hit Points), 10 points/level
- **DX** (dexterity: determines level for most physical skills), 20 points/level
- **IQ** (intelligence: determines level for most mental skills), 20 points/level
- **HT** (health: remaining conscious/alive, and Fatigue Points), 10 points/level

Taken together, these attributes paint the overall picture of the character.

The default (“free”) level for each is 10, modified by how many points you spend. The levels *roughly* equate to:

6 or less	Crippling (literally; can't live a normal life)
7	Poor (can live a normal life, with care)
8-9	Below Average (low side of able-bodied)
10	Average (most scores for most people)
11-12	Above Average (high side of able-bodied)
13-14	Exceptional (highest you'll likely meet)
15-16	Amazing (highest you'll likely see/hear of)
17-18	Legendary (historical "bests")
19-20	Mythic (astounding even among heroes)
21+	Superhuman (demi-gods and above)

Advantages/Disadvantages

Attributes in hand, you can then start fine-tuning the PC with advantages and disadvantages, i.e., things that describe what their unique gifts and flaws are.

A few of particular note:

Luck

This may be the most useful advantage in the game, and in fact I may just assume all PCs have it for free as part of being “a cut above” as heroes (I usually do this for convention one-shots). Though expensive, it allows you to sometimes (once an hour) take the best of three rolls if you Stork it, or convert a single damaging attack to a 1-point “graze.” Helpful for *any* character.

Combat Reflexes

The second most useful advantage for characters who expect to find themselves in combat, virtually or otherwise. The main bonus is to defenses, making it easier to avoid damage.

Other than that, rest assured that no matter what abilities you want to have, GURPS has a way to do it (though you may not be able to pay the CPs at our starting power level).

Skills

Next, the real meat of the system – **skills**.

Nearly *everything* in GURPS is driven by skills (or their defaults, if you have no training). The higher your underlying attribute (DX for physical skills, IQ for mental), the higher your skill level will start.

In-game, almost every use of a skill will have some kind of bonus or penalty based on what’s going on (range, hit location, hurrying, on bad footing, using cheap equipment, whatever).

The skill levels *roughly* equate to:

7 or less	Unskilled (default users)
8-9	Feeble (beginners, bumbler)
10-11	Average (non-job skills for ordinary folks)
12-13	Competent (job skills for ordinary folks)
14-16	Exceptional (most seasoned of ordinary)
17-19	Heroic (extraordinary world-class experts)
20-21	Larger-than-Life (top experts from history)
22-23	Legendary ("typical" mythic figures)
24-26	Superhuman (outstanding mythic figures)
27+	Godlike (greatest mythic figures, gods)

Gear/Cyberware

As the final step in character creation, you get to go on the usual shopping spree for guns, knives, fire trucks, armor, cyberware, cool leather jackets, etc. Starting wealth for new PCs is **\$6,000** (adjusted up or down if they spend CP to be above/below average wealthy).

Note that cybernetics cost Character Points if purchased prior to gameplay, as part of character creation. Once the game begins, cybernetics cost money instead (and require recuperation time as part of the surgery).

The society of Darknet has a Control Rating of 4, meaning "Controlled. Many laws exist, and are mostly for the convenience of the corporations/state. Broadcast communications are regulated; private broadcasts (like CB) and printing may be restricted if their content is deemed dangerous. Taxation is heavy and unfair. Access to items of Legality Class (LC) 0 to 3 is controlled."

Armor: LC 3 reflex armor is the most common for those outside the arcologies, though possession without a permit is illegal. LC 2 armor like the reflex tactical vest or rigid clamshells can occasionally be found on the streets, but possession of such nearly guarantees frequent interactions with the Corporate Peacekeepers.

Ranged Weapons: Ranged weapons on the streets are either LC 3 conventional smallarms or gyrocs.

Melee Weapons: Any cutting or impaling weapon can be made using superfine materials, granting +2 to damage and an armor divisor of (2). Cost is 6x, LC is 4. A cutting weapon can instead be edged with monowire, granting +2 to damage and an armor divisor of (10). Cost is 10x, LC is 3.

Hope this helps answer a few more questions! If not, you know where to find me. 😊