

GURPS[®]

Fourth Edition

DUNGEON FANTASY MONSTERS[™] 4

DRAGONS



Written by **SEAN PUNCH**

Illustrated by
ALEX FERNANDEZ

GURPS System Design ■ **STEVE JACKSON**

GURPS Line Editor ■ **SEAN PUNCH**

GURPS Project Manager ■ **STEVEN MARSH**

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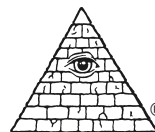
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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3	Spark	8	Specialized Resistance and Immunity	11
Publication History	3	Steam	8	<i>Everything Else</i>	11
About the Author	3	Vacuum	8	Deadlier Weapons	12
<i>Reading Dragon Stats</i>	3	Cones	9	Even Stronger!	12
1. YER BASIC DRAGONS	4	Cold	9	Bad Breath	12
Small Dragon	4	Disintegration	9	<i>The Exception Proves the Rule</i>	12
Medium Dragon	4	<i>Cones of Power</i>	10	Venom	13
Large Dragon	5	<i>Adjusting Damage</i>	10	Dragon Magic	13
<i>Even Bigger?</i>	6	<i>Affecting More Targets</i>	10	<i>Dragon Temperament</i>	13
Gargantuan Dragon	6	<i>Say Hello to My Little Friends</i>	10	Cool Abilities	13
2. DRAGON'S BREATH	7	Fire	10	4. DRAGONS IN ACTION . . .	15
Clouds	7	Heat	10	Tactics	15
Acid	7	Ice	10	Size	15
Frost	7	Lightning	10	<i>How Many Weapons?</i>	16
<i>Intrinsic Defenses</i>	7	Mana	10	Flight	16
Incendiary	8	Sonic	10	Weaknesses	16
Poison (Gas)	8	3. DISTINGUISHING		Encounter Design	17
<i>Clouding the Issue</i>	8	YOUR DRAGON	11	<i>The Parry Problem</i>	17
<i>Less-Lethal Clouds</i>	8	Keen Senses	11	APPENDIX: NOT YOUR	
<i>More-Lethal Clouds</i>	8	Formidable Defenses	11	AVERAGE DRAGONS . . .	18
Poison (Mist)	8	Damage Reduction	11	Brother Jonas	18

But it is one thing to read about dragons and another to meet them.

– Ursula K. Le Guin, A Wizard of Earthsea

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Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the **GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition**. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

INTRODUCTION

Boss monsters, like dragons, are meant to challenge the entire party all on their own. They can be superlative in every category!

– *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2: Dungeons*

Dragons feature so prominently in myth, legend, literature, and games that they don't need an introduction. While not necessarily the ultimate combatants – the source material is full of victorious dragon-slayers, too – they're challenging opponents with a legitimate claim to the epithet “king of the monsters,” at least among flesh-and-blood creatures (all bets are off if you include beings from other dimensions and Things From Beyond Time And Space). Yet *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* has had no “official” stats for them . . . until now.

What *does* need an introduction is *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 4: Dragons*. This isn't a cyclopedia of mythical dragons from myriad cultures; for that, get *GURPS Dragons*. Rather, it's a guide to the great wyrms found in fantasy settings where rogues, warriors, and wizards hack and slash their way to wealth and power. Challenging delvers takes a special kind of dragon – as violent and varied as the adventurers themselves – and *that* is the focus of this work.

*One dragon put down,
one bag of gold.*

– Bowen,
in DragonHeart (1996)

PUBLICATION HISTORY

This is the first edition of *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 4: Dragons*. It starts with the dragon stats found in the *Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game*, adapts them to *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*, and adds new abilities and options. No text comes from *GURPS Dragons*, despite the similarity in subject matter.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sean Punch set out to become a particle physicist in 1985 and ended up as *GURPS* Line Editor in 1995. In that capacity, he has written, edited, or contributed to some 150 *GURPS* releases, revised the game into its fourth edition (2004), and been a regular contributor to *Pyramid* magazine. From 2008, he has served as the lead creator of the *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* series, which led to his design of the *Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game*, released in 2017. Sean has been a gamer since 1979, but devotes most of his spare time to Argentine tango (and occasionally tending bar). He lives in Montréal, Québec.

READING DRAGON STATS

The dragons in *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 4: Dragons* use the stats format established on p. 21 of *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2: Dungeons* and in earlier *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Monsters* volumes. Character-point values are absent because this isn't a handbook of Allies or Alternate Forms, and because building complicated abilities using advantages would fill space better used to describe monsters.

ST, DX, IQ, HT, HP, Will, Per, FP, Speed, and Move: Basic attributes and secondary characteristics mean exactly what they do for heroes and every other creature in *GURPS*. Dragons often have impressively high scores, but need no special exceptions.

SM: Affects all rolls to hit the dragon. Dragon magic permits a dragon to pay the energy cost for an SM 0 subject when casting spells *on itself*; other casters multiply costs for Regular spells by (1 + SM), as usual. The stats *already* reflect further effects, such as increased reach.

Dodge and Parry: Active defenses are prefigured from Basic Speed and combat skills.

DR: Total DR from natural and supernatural sources. Dragons could in theory wear heavy, costly armor, but in practice almost never do. Many are spellcasters with lots of energy, though, and can cast the Armor spell at no extra cost . . .

Attacks: Listed by attack name. For bites, claws, and other strikes – and for breath attacks – the number in parentheses is effective skill. Damage scores are *final*, and already consider bonuses for Brawling skill, natural weapons (Claws, Striker, Teeth, etc.), and so on.

Traits: Advantages or disadvantages important in *dungeon fantasy*. For brevity's sake, DR and attacks aren't listed a second time, and “color” traits don't appear at all. Dragons vary widely, and the GM is free to add abilities, additional Languages, and minor color as the encounter requires.

Skills: Minimum skills for a dragon of this type. Dragons live forever and can learn *any* skill at *any* level; the GM is welcome to add anything the scenario calls for.

Class: Dragons are *Mundane* – they are living and free-willed, and have vital areas. Despite their extensive magical powers, they aren't considered “magical” or “extradimensional” creatures for the purposes of being repelled, summoned, banished, etc. They're too intelligent to manipulate with Animal spells; use Mind Control, at the usual energy multiplier for SM. They can be as good or as evil as anybody else, but unlike demons, evil ones aren't intrinsically “truly evil,” where that influences what affects them.

Notes: Anything else of importance – including exceptions to listed stats or these guidelines.

CHAPTER TWO

DRAGON'S BREATH

While dragons traditionally breathe flame, there's no shortage of tavern tales telling of wyrms that exhale other harmful effects. Most dragons have just one such weapon, but there are exceptions. Being able to blast enemies with multiple substances is well within the realm of special dragon abilities, and downright common among dragons with Extra Head, who often breathe different stuff from each mouth.

What keeps dragons from destroying the world with their breath weapons is the effort required: Each use costs 2 FP. The GM may reduce or eliminate this as a special dragon ability, but that will make the dragon *much* more powerful. A compromise might be to give dragons Energy Reserve (Breath) for their breath, or to let dragons with Energy Reserve (Magical) spend that.

Dragon's breath comes in two basic forms: *clouds* and *cones*. In all cases, it inflicts *Large-Area Injury* (p. B400) – although some substances don't interact with DR at all, making this moot.

*Out of his mouth go burning
lamps, and sparks of fire leap out.*

– Job 41:19

CLOUDS

Some breath weapons are roughly circular clouds that appear directly in front of the dragon's head. Handle them as *Area-Effect Attacks* (p. B413) with a radius equal to the dragon's (SM - 1) in yards – i.e., radius is two yards for a small dragon (SM +3), three yards for a medium dragon (SM +4), four yards for a large dragon (SM +5), five yards for a gargantuan dragon (SM +6).

If height matters, treat the cloud as a cylinder with height equal to *twice* radius if, as is common when fighting foes who can't fly, it's breathed at the ground. If the dragon exhales the stuff in the air, read radius as describing a sphere. For instance, a four-yard cloud forms a cylinder four yards in radius and eight yards high if bounced off a floor, but a four-yard-radius sphere if puffed at a flying foe.

Cloud damage *doesn't* normally increase with a dragon's SM. It remains fixed while the area of effect gets bigger, letting the dragon do the same damage

to more foes. The GM is free to make exceptions; see *Clouding the Issue* (p. 8).

In all cases, the effect persists for one second and then dissipates. Nobody is affected more than once by a given cloud. But if the dragon breathes again, that's a *new* cloud – apply the effects another time!

Acid

Everyone within an acid cloud is considered immersed in acid for one second, taking 1d-1 corrosion damage. As this is large-area injury (p. B400), *all* armor risks losing DR (*Corrosion*, p. B379) and the *face* is considered immersed, requiring a HT roll to avoid eye damage (*Acid*, p. B428).

Even if the GM is fond of increasing damage for clouds in general, the special effects can make that overpowered here! In any case, Essential Acid (*GURPS Magic*, p. 192) or alkahest (*Magic*, p. 220) is as strong as acid can be, limiting damage to 2d-1 corrosion.

Intrinsic Defense: Double the dragon's DR vs. acid.

Frost

A swirling cloud of ice motes. Everyone caught within it takes 2d-2 burning damage as large-area injury (p. B400). This is due to extreme cold, and won't set fires – but roll vs. HT at -1 per 2 points of penetrating damage or be paralyzed (encased in ice) for (20 - HT) minutes, minimum 1 minute, unless thawed with magic before then.

Intrinsic Defense: Double the dragon's DR vs. cold/ice and shift the dragon's temperature comfort zone to -25°F to 120°F.

Intrinsic Defenses

A dragon is perforce resistant or immune to the stuff it exhales – after all, the effect emanates from its *mouth*, right in front of its snout and eyes, and is liable to engulf it in close quarters! To reflect this, each breath weapon comes with DR or other protective traits against that substance. The GM who invents new kinds of dragon's breath should complement each with protection of this kind. All such "intrinsic defenses" are cumulative with the dragon's baseline stats and – in the case of multiple breath weapons – each other.

HOW MANY WEAPONS?

A typical dragon has 10 natural weapons:

- one bite
- one set* of horns
- one breath weapon†
- one tail
- two sets* of front claws
- two sets* of hind claws
- two wings

* Treat each “set” of horns or claws as a unit, regardless of how many pointy bits it includes.

† Dragons with several breath weapons may use only one per head per turn.

Extra Head adds a bite, a set of horns, and a breath weapon per head; e.g., Extra Head 2 gives 16 natural weapons.

No dragon can attack with all these weapons just because it has them! It may attack once, plus once per level of Extra Attack, plus any additional attacks from Rapid Strike or All-Out Attack (Double). It can use any combination of weapons for these attacks, but it can use each weapon only once per turn.

A dragon’s size also puts its head – and hence its eyes, every swashbuckler’s favorite target – out of easy reach of melee weapons. After any turn on which the dragon doesn’t lower its head to bite, assume that its head towers half its length (see above), rounded up, above floor level: three or four yards at SM +3, four or five at SM +4, six to eight at SM +5 (large), eight to 10 at SM +6. A delver on the ground needs a weapon of reach two yards less than this to target any part of the head: reach 1 or 2 if small, 2 or 3 if medium, 4 to 6 if large, 6 to 8 if gargantuan.

Also don’t forget that a dragon’s size makes Regular spells *expensive* except when it casts on itself. Combatants casting such offensive magic pay 4× (small), 5× (medium), 6× (large), or 7× (gargantuan) the energy. See *Regular Spells* (p. B239).

FLIGHT

Most dragons can – and, if they have the space, *will* – fly. Why face puny groundlings on their own terms?

A dragon that deigns to hover low enough to make melee attacks almost always uses its longer-reach attacks, forcing foes to engage it at the same reach. A small dragon with reach 2-3 is in range of many common melee weapons – but a medium one with reach 3-4 is menaced only by polearms and long spears, a large one with reach 5-6 necessitates pikes, and a gargantuan one with reach 7-8 simply doesn’t have to worry. In all cases, *Combat at Different Levels* (pp. B402-403) applies, meaning among other things that the dragon gets +1 to +3 to defend, depending on relative height, while victims defend at -1 to -3.

Ranged combat is a better bet for adventurers facing airborne dragons (or who want to attack the head of a

grounded one), but warriors on the ground have to shoot upward. This adds to effective range, as explained in *Firing Upward and Downward* (p. B551). Ranged attackers should be wary of spellcasting dragons, who all too often know Missiles Shield – or worse, Reverse Missiles. And speaking of magic, magic-wielders will find Regular spells challenging to cast on high-flying dragons, as they’re at -1 per yard (see p. B239).

Dragons that breathe cones are extra-nasty. They can fly 10 yards overhead and blast the ground while staying out of reach of melee weapons and at an effective 20 yards (-6 to hit) for ranged weapons. And they will, too!

The GM should push *Flying Combat* (p. B398) to the limit. In particular, dragons on the wing can retreat *upward*, which adds +1 over and above the normal retreating bonus. This is cumulative with any bonus to defenses for relative height.

WEAKNESSES

A dragon has no weaknesses the GM doesn’t add. Standard disadvantages like Bad Grip and Horizontal are *inconvenient* for the dragon but not exploitable in the same way as traits such as Divine Curse, Dread, Fragile, Revulsion, Susceptible, Uncontrollable Appetite, Vulnerability, or Weakness. Dragons have only the “normal” flaws of living beings, namely the need to eat, drink, and breathe, plus vital areas – and even then, while the skull is obvious, the vitals require a **Physiology** roll to locate.



INDEX

- Acid cloud, 7.
Advantages, *adjusting damage*, 12-13; *adjusting defenses*, 11-12; *adjusting senses*, 11; *exceptions*, 12; *magic*, 13; *other common*, 13-14; *Unfazeable*, 12, 13, 15; *see also Breath Weapons*.
Adventures, *encounter design*, 17.
All-Out Attack (Cone) maneuver, 10.
Alternate Form advantage, 13-14.
Amphibious advantage, 14.
Annihilator, 20-21.
Body-parts value, 4, 6.
Breath weapons, 7-10; *FP cost*, 7, 12; *intrinsic defense*, 7; *variable*, 12; *see also Cloud Weapons, Cone Weapons*.
Brother Jonas, 18-19.
Class, 3.
Cloud weapons, 7-9; *adjusting*, 8, 12-13; *FP cost*, 7, 12; *general effects*, 7; *less-lethal*, 8; *more-lethal*, 8; *size*, 7; *see also Breath Weapons*.
Cold cone, 9.
Combat, *adventurer range*, 16; *encounter design*, 17; *Extra Attack*, 6, 14, 16; *flight and*, 16; *free slams*, 15; *number of attacks*, 16; *number of weapons*, 16; *parrying*, 17; *size and*, 15-16; *tactics*, 15; *see also Advantages, Breath Weapons*.
Compartmentalized Mind advantage, 14, 15, 17.
Cone weapons, 9-10; *adjusting damage*, 10; *adjusting effects*, 10, 12-13; *affecting more targets*, 10; *flight and*, 16; *FP cost*, 7, 12; *general effects*, 9; *size*, 9; *see also Breath Weapons*.
Damage, *adjusting breath weapons*, 8, 10, 12; *adjusting thrust*, 12.
Damage Reduction advantage, 11.
Defenses, *adjusting*, 11-12; *intrinsic*, 7.
Disadvantages, *adjusting*, 13.
Disintegration cone, 9.
Doesn't Breathe advantage, 14.
Dragons, *adjusting disadvantages*, 13; *adjusting senses*, 11; *adjusting traits*, 11-14; *basic*, 4-6; *body-parts value*, 4, 6; *class*, 3; *example*, 18-21; *gargantuan*, 6; *general trait notes*, 3; *large*, 5; *medium*, 4; *reading stats*, 3; *small*, 4; *temperament*, 13; *trait effects of larger size*, 6; *trait exceptions*, 12; *weaknesses*, 16-17; *see also Advantages, Breath Weapons, Combat, Defenses, Extra Heads, Flight, Magic, Size, Weapons*.
Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game, 3.
Encounter design, 17.
Extra Attack advantage, 6, 14, 16.
Extra heads, 14, 16; *example dragon*, 19-20; *variable breath weapons*, 12.
Fire cone, 10.
Flight, *combat and*, 16; *encounter design*, 17; *lacking*, 11; *spell attacks*, 16; *wingless*, 14.
Frost cloud, 7.
GURPS, 3; **Dragons**, 3; **Dungeon Fantasy**, 3, 4; **Dungeon Fantasy 1: Adventurers**, 8, 11; **Dungeon Fantasy 2: Dungeons**, 3, 15, 17; **Dungeon Fantasy 7: Clerics**, 19; **Dungeon Fantasy 11: Power-Ups**, 10, 11; **Dungeon Fantasy Adventure 2: Tomb of the Dragon King**, 18; **Dungeon Fantasy Monsters**, 3; **Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 1**, 11; **Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 2: Icky Goo**, 10, 19; **Magic**, 7, 8, 10.
Heat cone, 10.
Ice cone, 10.
Immunity advantage, 11-12.
Incendiary cloud, 8.
Influence resistance, 12.
Lightning cone, 10.
Magebane cloud, 8.
Magic, 13; *cloud weapon*, 8; *cone weapon*, 10; *Damage Reduction*, 11; *organs*, 4; *Resistance*, 12; *size and*, 3, 13, 16; *spells cast on*, 3, 13, 16; *Strength and*, 12.
Mana cone, 10.
Parrying, *problem*, 17.
Poison cloud, *gas*, 8; *mist*, 8.
Pressure Support advantage, 14.
Resistance traits, 11-12.
Sample dragons, 18-21.
Senses, *adjusting*, 11.
Size, 3, 4, 6; *age and*, 4; *breath weapons and*, 7, 9; *combat and*, 3, 15-16; *effects of larger*, 6; *magic and*, 3, 13, 16.
Size Modifier (SM), *see Size*.
Slams, *free*, 15.
Sleep cloud, 8.
Sonic cone, 10.
Spark cloud, 8.
Ssythox the Venomous, 19.
Steam cloud, 8.
Strength (ST) attribute, *adjusting*, 12.
Striking ST advantage, 12.



- Tactics, 15.
Temperament disadvantages, 13.
Terror advantage, 14, 17.
Thrice, 19-20.
Unfazeable advantage, 12, 13, 15.
Universal Digestion advantage, 14.
Vacuum cloud, 8-9.
Venom cone, 13.
Vermin cone, 10.
Weakness cloud, 8.
Weaknesses, 16-17.
Weapons, *number of natural*, 16; *typical natural*, 16; *see also Combat, Breath Weapons*.

Sleeping on a dragon's hoard with greedy, dragonish thoughts in his heart, he had become a dragon himself.
– C.S. Lewis, ***The Voyage of the Dawn Treader***

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