

# Combat Handbook

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## The Review:

*Reviewed By Gordon Feiner*

### The Upside:

The Hero System Combat Handbook (HCH) takes all the combat rules and options that are spread across seven books and puts them into one package, under 200 pages long. Easy to transport and easy to find the rules.

This is a big boon, especially for veteran Hero players. Once you get to actual game play most of the rules consultations, in my experience at least, lie in the many and varied Optional Combat Rules: martial maneuvers, bleeding, hit locations, environmental effects.

The HCH is also neatly organized. Starting with Before Combat in Chapter 1 we get all the mechanical information that gets us from Story to Combat. A full explanation of combat terms and movement can be found here.

Chapter 2 goes into basic combat and general combat modifiers.

Chapter 3 covers martial maneuvers, including all the new maneuvers introduced in The Ultimate Martial Artist (UMA).

Chapter 4 handles the effects of damage, divided into standard and all the optional rules in the Hero System: Bleeding, Death, Hit Locations, Critical Hits and other options to make combat more or less realistic depending on the tone of the game.

Chapter 5 is all the other combat effects that don't fit neatly into the previous chapters. As well as Recovering, Presence Attacks and an example of Combat at the end of the combat.

Chapter 6 has specific environmental effects, covering two important aspects: Underwater Combat and optional rules for Gun fighting.

### The Downside:

The major drawback to this book for many is that it contains no new information, it's a complete reprint of rules from other books. Of course that can make it an easy purchase choice: either you want the information condensed to one book, or you don't.

There was also a bit of controversy over the cover art - it's dirt simple, a Big Red Fist on a blank black cover. From where I sit it's an excellent cover that gets the point across. But on a shelf of RPG books

designed to get your attention with eye candy one might decide this cover is too bland. Personally I love it.

There are a few elements that the book doesn't contain that I would have liked to see: Martial Maneuver creation rules (found in UMA), Mass Combat rules (Fantasy Hero), and Vehicle combat (The Ultimate Vehicle). Adding these elements in would have made it nearly the perfect book to have at the gaming table.

The Otherside:

This book, being entirely about the mechanics of hero system combat, has no (or almost no) appeal outside the Hero System. Thus limiting both its sales and appeal to Hero Fans. Or anyone interested in how Hero handles combat.

I highly recommend this book, for several reasons. It has replaced my copy of the main rule book (which I use almost completely for character creation only) as The Book to take to games. The small size and amount of raw information for the slowest point of just about any RPG (Combat) makes it worth the price.

For those Hero Gamers that use Sidekick instead of the main rule book for their games but want more options for combat this book may also serve well. At half the price of Fifth Edition, Revised you get all the meat of the combat system including the myriad of optional rules not covered in Sidekick. A good choice for the Gamer On A Budget.

Speaking of budgets, there is a big advantage to this information reprint: if all you need are various expanded combat options the price of this book is excellent.

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