

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3	<i>How to Be French</i>	43	HISTORICAL PIRATES	71	Sharks	101
About GURPS	3	PARISIAN ADVENTURERS	44	Blackbeard	71	Maneuverability	102
Page References	3	Musketeers	44	Mary Read	72	Pilots	102
I. CHARACTERS	4	The Cardinal's Guards	45	Long John Silver	72	Getting Out of Trouble	102
CHARACTER TYPES	5	The Hôtel	45	Francois L'Ollonois	73	Tonnage	103
Swashbuckling	5	Social Life of a	46	Sir Henry Morgan	73	Firepower	103
Women	9	Musketeer or Guard	46	Bartholomew Roberts	73	Crew	104
ADVANTAGES	10	Major Personalities of the Era	46	Captain Peter Blood	73	Heaving the Lead	104
New Advantages	12	Status	46	Times and Distances by Ship	74	Hurricanes	104
DISADVANTAGES	12	Lackeys	47	The Order of the	74	Cross Section of	
SKILLS	14	Sample NPCs	48	Holy Trinity and the	74	an 18th-Century Frigate	105
New Skill	14	Commedia Dell'Arte	48	Redemption of Prisoners	74	Layout of Ships	106
LANGUAGES	15	The Paris Opera	50	Trade Routes	75	The Ill-Fated Voyage of 1622	106
WEALTH AND STATUS	15	Combat as Entertainment	50	Distances and Average	75	SHIPBOARD LIFE	107
Jobs and Income	15	Prostitution	52	Sailing Times	75	Food	107
Job Table	16	Taverns	53	5. BACKGROUND	76	Scurvy	107
Money	17	DUELLING	54	HISTORICAL OVERVIEW		Passing the Time	108
2. COMBAT	18	The Gentleman's Code	54	OF THE ERA: 1559-1815	77	THE ABSTRACT NAVAL	
MANEUVERS	19	Severity of Duels	54	European Powers: 1559-1620	77	COMBAT SYSTEM	108
Fencing Skills	19	Duel au Mouchoir	54	History and Fiction	77	Fever	108
Realistic Maneuvers	20	Duelling and Reputation	54	Jesuits	78	Detection and Engagement	109
Optional Rule: Weapon	20	The Particulars of the Duel	55	Swashbucklers' Europe	78	Factors Affecting the Battle	109
Weight and Speed	20	MASS COMBAT	56	Highwaymen	80	Nautical Terms	109
How Long Is My Sword?	22	Army Organization	56	European Powers: 1620-1650	81	Player Character Glory	111
Optional Rule:		Weapons of the Duel	56	Captain James Hind,	81	Individual Cannon Shots	111
Primacy of the Point	23	Troop Strengths	57	Highwayman	81	Resolving the	
Optional Rule:		Distances within Europe	57	European Powers: 1650-1725	82	Contest of Tactics	112
Closing the Gap	23	4. THE PIRATE		Poland	82	Intensity of the Battle	112
Raygun and Cutlass	24	CAMPAIGN	58	The Ottoman Empire	83	Assessing Damage	112
Il Botte Segrette	24	THE GOLDEN AGE OF PIRACY:		The Holy Roman Empire	84	Nautical Commands	112
Cinematic Maneuvers	26	A BRIEF HISTORY	59	Italy	85	Ship Damage Tables	
Fast and Furious	26	The Caribbean	59	Chartered	85	for Round Shot	113
Cinematic Athletics?	26	Letters of Marque	59	Merchant Companies	86	The Weather Gage,	
Unarmed Techniques	27	Pirates, Privateers,	60	The Thirty Years' War	87	the Lee Gage	113
STYLES	28	and Buccaneers	60	(1618-1648)	87	Boats	114
Styles of Europe	28	The Brethren of the Coast	61	The Celtic Lands	88	Ship Damage Tables	
Academic Fencing	28	The Pirates' Caribbean	61	Clans and Social Standing	88	for Chain Shot	115
Basket Hilt	29	The Red Sea and	62	Rebels	89	Action on Board	115
When a Saber Isn't a Saber	29	the Indian Ocean	62	Sweden	90	Ending the Round/Breaking	
Basic Set Weapons	30	The Pirates' Africa	62	Religion	92	Off Engagement	116
Additional Styles	31	The Barbary Pirates	63	Reformation	92	Starting a New Round	116
MASTERS	31	PIRATE SOCIETY	63	Russia	92	GURPS Vehicles	
Improved Armor and Shields	31	An Excerpt from		Counter-Reformation	93	Conversions	116
Locating a Master	31	Blackbeard's Journal	63	Alliances	93	Rigging	116
BEYOND THE SWORD	32	Sample Articles of Agreement	63	Witch Hunts	93	PLAYER CHARACTER SURVIVAL	117
WEAPONS	35	Leadership	64	Non-Christians	93	Mutiny!	117
Melee Weapons Table	35	Bartholomew Roberts'	64	EVERYDAY LIFE	94	Deck Plan of a	
Thrown Weapons Table	36	Articles of Agreement	65	Colonial Life	94	Spanish Galleon	118
Firearms Table	37	In Port	65	Men's Fashion (1550-1600)	94	BOARDING	119
EQUIPMENT	39	The Pirates' Duelling Code	65	Fashion	95	Boarding a Ship from a Boat	119
3. THE PARIS		Pirate Cruelty	66	Women's Fashion (1550-1600)	95	Boarding Action	120
CAMPAIGN	40	Pirates and Religion	66	CHRONOLOGIES	96	Firing from Ships	120
PARISIAN DISTRICTS	41	Centers of Piracy	67	Social History, 1559-1720	96	Repelling Boarders	120
The Paris Underground	41	Pirates in the		Rulers, 1559-1815	97	7. ADVENTURES	121
Bygone Paris	41	American Colonies	67	Major Personalities	97	CAMPAIGN STYLES	122
Paris, 1630	42	Sample Seafarers	68	6. SAILING SHIPS	98	Realistic	122
THE THREE MUSKETEERS	43	Marooning	69	CREATING SHIPS	99	Cinematic	122
Summary of Dumas' Novel	43	Places in the Caribbean	69	Function	99	Silly	122
		Pirate Glossary	70	How Many Masts	99	ADVENTURES	122
				Does It Have?	99	The King's Secret	122
				The Battle of	99	Fantasy and Swashbucklers	122
				Cape St. Vincent	99	Space Swashbucklers	122
				Size	100	Caribbean Caper	123
				Careening, Maintenance,	100	The Masked Avenger	123
				and Repairs	100	Campaign Crossovers	124
				Draft and Freeboard	101	The Smuggler Campaign	125
				Speed and Cost	101	BIBLIOGRAPHY	126
						INDEX	128

INTRODUCTION

Swashbuckler. There's no other word in the English language that describes a certain type of character so concisely. Errol Flynn, Douglas Fairbanks (Senior or Junior), Basil Rathbone, D'Artagnan, Sir Francis Drake, Zorro – all these names and more come to mind.

The great era of the swashbuckler is the 17th century. It began earlier, in the Renaissance, and may never end – isn't Luke Skywalker a swashbuckler? But the 17th century saw the height of the deeds of derring-do that have come to define the word.

GURPS Swashbucklers is an attempt to recreate the 17th century, as it should have been, for gaming. Some new rules are introduced, some new situations are provided, and adventure ideas are included. But the heart of the book is background: the social, cultural, and political environment of a swashbuckler – both historical and fictional!

This book, coupled with the *GURPS Basic Set* and *Compendium I*, contains all you need to game in the 17th century. A bibliography is provided for those who want to do more historical research, or sample some of the enjoyable swashbuckling novels and movies available.

And so, friends, let us be off! The action awaits us!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steffan O'Sullivan is a storyteller, clown, *Commedia Dell'Arte* actor, performing arts teacher, and *GURPS* author. He has degrees in European history and Physical Theater, and lived in Europe for over two years. Gaming is his foremost hobby, not surprisingly, and has been since 1961. When not gaming, his hobbies include hiking, cross-country skiing, and reading. Steffan's favorite baseball player of all time is a Pirate, which he thinks qualifies him to write this book. He is also the author of *GURPS Bestiary*, *GURPS Bunnies & Burrows*, and *GURPS Fantasy Bestiary*.

ABOUT THE REVISORS

Russell Godwin is the Print Buyer and Production Manager for SJ Games and lives in Austin, TX. His wife Vikki and their two cats live in Indiana, while she finishes her Ph.D. program. Revising *Swashbucklers* is his first cover-worthy credit in the industry, but his name can be found on the title pages of over a dozen *GURPS* and *In Nomine* books. His other noteworthy credit is as one of the developers of the card game *Chez Geek*. While he loves pirate movies and can often be found buckling swashes in a roleplaying game, Russell has never (to our knowledge) plundered booty on the high seas.

Bryan J. Maloney began life in the capital of the world: Lafayette, Indiana. During those rare times he wasn't playing *GURPS*, he acquired a formal education in biology. Likewise, he studied Aikijutsu and Shorinji Kempo under Soke-Dai Thomas Burdine. This was also when he began his interest in 18th-century and Renaissance living history. After moving to New York, he encountered *Maitre d'Armes* Adam A. Crown – a Lakotah fencing master – who taught him the difference between a fencing foil and a rapier.

He currently lives as an ordinary Irish-American in Ithaca, with his wife Kirsten, his two sons Eoin and Bryan, two cats, two gerbils, and four fish. Were it not for the tireless aid of the aforementioned wife, Bryan would have accidentally done himself in long ago. He has only had fleas once.

ABOUT GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the *GURPS* system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources now available include:

Pyramid (www.sjgames.com/pyramid). Our online magazine includes new rules and articles for *GURPS*. It also covers the hobby's top games – *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*, *Traveller*, *World of Darkness*, *Call of Cthulhu*, *Shadowrun*, and many more – and other Steve Jackson Games releases like *In Nomine*, *INWO*, *Car Wars*, *Toon*, *Ogre Miniatures*, and more. And *Pyramid* subscribers also have access to playtest files online, to see (and comment on) new books before they're released.

New supplements and adventures. *GURPS* continues to grow, and we'll be happy to let you know what's new. A current catalog is available for an SASE. Or check out our Web site (below).

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are always available from SJ Games; be sure to include an SASE with your request. Or download them from the Web – see below.

Q&A. We do our best to answer any game question accompanied by an SASE.

Gamer input. We value your comments. We will consider them, not only for new products, but also when we update this book on later printings!

Internet. Visit us on the World Wide Web at www.sjgames.com for an online catalog, errata, updates, and hundreds of pages of information. We also have conferences on CompuServe and AOL. *GURPS* has its own Usenet group, too: rec.games.frp.gurps.

GURPSnet. Much of the online discussion of *GURPS* happens on this e-mail list. To join, send mail to majordomo@io.com with "subscribe GURPSnet-L" in the body, or point your World Wide Web browser to <http://gurpsnet.sjgames.com/>.

The *GURPS Swashbucklers* web page has updates, resources, errata, and links at www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/swashbucklers.

PAGE REFERENCES

Any page reference that begins with a B refers to *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition Revised*; e.g., p. B144 refers to page 144 of *Basic Set*. CI refers to *Compendium I*, CII to *Compendium II*, and MA to *Martial Arts*. See *GURPS Compendium I*, p. 181, for a full list of abbreviations for *GURPS* titles. Or find an up-to-date list online at www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html.



STATUS

Status and Rank are not simple things in 17th-century France. This is a time of flux; there are different levels of society that effectively share the same Status, but are not at all the same.

The nobility includes all gentlemen. Even impoverished gentlemen are still of *some* status – and this is an era when many of the nobility are impoverished. D'Artagnan comes from a noble family; that is, he is a gentleman. He can read – that's a given – and he has the Gentleman's Code of Honor – also a given. But he has little money; in fact, he has the Struggling disadvantage. Any impoverished noble in **GURPS Swashbucklers** may have Status 1 or 2, but no higher or lower. The loss of wealth results in a loss of some status, though never all of it. The family may have been Status 4 or 5 a century earlier, but if the noble cannot support the lifestyle, his Status is less.

Any gentleman is expected to have a servant, or lackey as he is called in *The Three Musketeers*. It doesn't matter that he can't afford one; he *must* have a lackey. So we see the comic results of this in the book, in which the *very* down and out serve the merely down and out. Lackeys could be of Status 0 or -1, and are usually chastised if they presume to act like gentlemen.

The bourgeoisie have taken over the wealth that some of the nobles have lost. They are not "well-born," but they can afford all of the symbols of status: large houses, fine horses, lots of servants, carriages, libraries (even if they can't read!), fancy clothes, etc. They can never manage the noble manner, though. The older bourgeois families (Status 2) come close; the *nouveau riche* (Status 1) are comic in their attempts. Any character with 20 points of wealth *may* buy Status 1 or Status 2 at the normal cost. Status 2 is *required* with 30+ points of wealth.

Status 1 or higher is a prerequisite to being a Musketeer, but a Status 1 *nouveau riche* character does not qualify. If the character's background is bourgeois, then Status 2, the Old Money, is required. Any Noble Status is sufficient, with or without money.

See p. 11 for a discussion of a Musketeer's rank.

SOCIAL LIFE OF A MUSKETEER OR GUARD

These men have time on their hands. Their duties are actually fairly light – guarding the king's palace (the Louvre) every third day. They assemble at the captain's *hôtel* and gamble, drink, boast, practice their swordsmanship, and generally behave as adolescently as the king wishes he could (even the Cardinal's Guards do this, somewhat to Richelieu's chagrin). Their salaries are insufficient for their expenditures. They are expected to have outside sources of income; these range from inheritances to mistresses to gambling winnings to performing ser-



VICES for the wealthy bourgeoisie. These services often are no more than showing up at social dinners! The bourgeoisie have their own status symbols, one of which is the number of nobles and well-known people they are able to count as friends – or at least invite to dinner.

A mistress is almost required for a Musketeer. Only a very self-possessed man such as Athos could keep face without a mistress. French morality at that time is a little hypocritical. Married women are expected to take a lover; husbands are expected to have a mistress, though one must be discreet. Nonetheless, it is a fact of French life, and when Porthos was introduced to his mistress' husband as her cousin, no one was deceived. Jealousy is a common disadvantage; however, it is usually a matter of reputation, not feeling. As long as discretion is maintained, all is well.

There are many gambling houses in Paris at this time. They are all illegal. However, the city watch is either very inefficient or very bribable, for there are few instances of raids and thousands

of records of gambling. Gaming is a national pastime, whether for coppers or gold. Members of every stratum of society spend hours each night at the gaming tables. Fortunes are often lost, but rarely won that way. Most Musketeers gamble – even Athos, though he always loses.

MAJOR PERSONALITIES OF THE ERA

Here are some of the major figures likely to be encountered or at least gossiped about in a Parisian campaign. Complete stats are given only for the people of action. Fictional characters are marked with an asterisk (*). While the Musketeer saga is technically set before the beginning of the Transitional era, characters from these novels are given the skills of the Transitional French School (p. 30) since it fits the flavor of the books better than the more rough-and-tumble Italian rapier school that actually dominated France until the 1640s.



PIRATES IN THE AMERICAN COLONIES

Pirates in the 17th and 18th centuries have often been associated with the British colonies in North America. There is a good reason for this – they were encouraged by the colonials for many years. England passed the Navigation Act in 1662, which allowed only English ships to transport goods to or from England or its colonies. English ship-owners promptly jacked up their cargo rates and the colonials complained – to no end.

So when pirates showed up offering goods at a quarter of the cost, they were welcomed in most colonies (though, of course, not by everybody). Boston, New York, Newport, Philadelphia, New Burn, and other ports became “free ports” for pirates – places where they could walk the streets in utter safety, repair ships and buy supplies as if they were honest men.



Merchants and judges even offered financial backing to pirates, and many fortunes were made this way. There was no legal way to get one’s money back, if the pirates didn’t return. Yet, there are very few cases of people losing money on a pirate venture. Captain Kidd’s voyage (well-financed by government officials and bankers) comes to mind as the only real money-loser.

The governors of these colonies in the 1690s were especially corrupt (except for Virginia, which was hostile to all pirates). Bribes were so common as to be handled in public, and honest citizens who complained were curtly shown to the door. Boston even went so far as to try to lure pirates from Newport, much as large cities today vie for factories and conventions!

It is true that Massachusetts was largely Puritan, and the famous minister Cotton Mather railed bitterly against the pirates. Boston itself had grown more cosmopolitan than the rest of Massachusetts by this time, however, and Cotton Mather railed against so many things that many people ignored him. Money talked louder and more clearly to most Bostonians and other colonists.

Continued on next page . . .

If a ship were to resist, however, that was a different story. The Jolly Roger (skull and crossbones flag) was a demand to surrender. If the prey did not, the Jolly Roger was hauled down and a solid red flag was raised – war with no quarter (unconditional surrender or a to-the-death fight). When the ship was boarded, the fighting was to the death, and often surrendering at that point was too late for mercy. Those that were spared the cutlass were held for ransom, cast adrift, marooned, tortured, or enslaved. Again, this was good policy – ships learned not to resist.

Pirates often *were* very cruel by most 20th-century standards, but not by contemporary standards. Prisoners that had resisted were often tortured to reveal the location of treasure (jewels are small, while a ship is large and sometimes sinking). Torture is hardly unique to pirates; all European countries, even religions, at this time used torture as a means of extracting information. Many of the pirates were escaped slaves and criminals who had been tortured themselves and copied techniques they knew first-hand to be effective. There may have been sadists among the pirates who enjoyed torture for its own sake, but no greater percentage than among the general population.

One type of punishment that was not seen very often in pirate crews was flogging. Flogging was the most common punishment in navies and merchant marines in those times, and most pirates had served on other ships before “going on the account.” Sailors were flogged for very minor offenses in those days, and it was thoroughly hated. Consequently, the pirates would not flog their victims, with one exception: They would ask the surrendered crew if their captain was cruel. If the answer was yes, the pirates would flog him gleefully – and to the joy of the unfortunate captain’s crew!

CENTERS OF PIRACY

There are various ports where pirates are welcome throughout this time and others where they are banned (or hanged, imprisoned, enslaved, blown out of the water, etc.). The ports’ attitudes shift as the politics of the age shift. Throughout the entire era, only the bases of the Barbary pirates remain constant – although they suffer from periodic Christian attacks. They are not open to freelance Christian pirates; conversion and agreement to work for the local Bey are necessary prerequisites for safe harbor.

Otherwise, until 1720, pirates always have a safe port – but this might not be the same port they left from. Starting in the 1690s, pirate voyages begin to last longer, and by this time treaties and wars are growing shorter between nations. A pirate ship that leaves an English port to plunder the Spanish might find itself in trouble for attacking England’s new ally when it returns! There is always somewhere to go, though.

Tortuga

Tortuga is a small island off Hispaniola. The Spanish claimed it, of course – they claimed *all* lands in the New World – but never occupied it. After they began to persecute the buccaneers in Hispaniola, Tortuga was used as a buccaneer base and was colonized by the French government. It is rocky and has a good, easily defensible harbor.

The first settler of influence was a man named La Vasseur, an engineer who helped defend La Rochelle from Richelieu’s attacks. Utterly paranoid and eventually megalomaniacal, he directed the building of a huge fortress on top of the hill overlooking the harbor. He then proclaimed himself king and was promptly murdered by his subjects. The fortress was magnificent, though.



HEAVING THE LEAD

The lead line is an essential part of any ship's gear. It is named for the large piece of lead that is tied to the end of a rope or chain. There are markers, sometimes just knots, every fathom (two yards). It is used when negotiating unknown waters where there is the possibility of scraping the bottom. The leadsman (pronounced "ledsmun") is secured by ropes on the outside of the bow railings. He has both hands free for swinging the 10-pound lead over his head and tossing it as far forward as possible. In this manner, the line is nearly vertical by the time the ship comes over the weight. The leadsman reads off the distance, and casts the lead again.

The ship is usually moving as slowly as possible during this time – 1 or 2 yards per second. This is done by taking in all but a small sail, or even turning some of the sails to actually push the ship backward. The front-pushing sails would barely outweigh the back-pushing sails, and sailors will be ready with ropes in hand to reverse them if the lead line shows the bottom suddenly sloping upward.

The lead line is usually 25 fathoms (50 yards) long, and is marked for 20 fathoms. It takes a strong man to toss it over and over again.

When negotiating a channel, the ship might have two or three boats out ahead, each with a lead line. In this way, a narrow, winding channel can be picked out of a generally broad, shallow strait.

HURRICANES

The hurricane season in the Caribbean is usually 12 weeks, from August to October. Hurricanes effectively prevented any but the most desperate voyages, and even careening wasn't done during most of this time. The heart of the hurricane area was north of a line drawn due west of Honduras, up to the northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico. This included Cuba, Hispaniola, and Tortuga. The Spanish Main was not usually affected directly by hurricanes, but winds were still high enough to daunt all but the bravest of crews.

A hurricane will do (1d×10)% damage to all of a ship's systems. The winds on the Spanish Main during these times do half that damage.



The Spanish galleons in the Elizabethan era usually had 28 guns: four 24-pounders, four 18-pounders, ten 10-pounders and ten 7-pounders. This totals 338 pounds of cannonballs, for a Firepower Rating of 169. By the time of the Anglo-Dutch wars of the late 17th century (and the Golden Age of Piracy), the large warships were carrying over 50 guns, with a Firepower Rating of 400 or more. By the Napoleonic wars, the smaller warships (frigates) each had a firepower rating of 300+, and the larger ships-of-the-line had over 700!

Cost and Weight of Artillery

Naval bronze guns cost \$4,000 per ton. This includes the cost of carriage, tackle, and operating equipment. Naval gun carriages are heavier than those of land guns (they don't have to be hauled around by horses); a broadside gun weighs 200 times the weight of the shot. A 12-pounder weighs about 1.25 tons and costs \$5,000; a 24-pounder weighs about 2.5 tons and costs \$10,000. Swivel guns do not have wheeled carriages and are more lightly constructed. They weigh only 50 times the weight of the shot and cost \$3 a pound. The heaviest swivels are 3-pounders.

Ammunition uses half the weight of the shot in powder for each firing. A 12-pounder needs six pounds of powder; a 3-pounder needs 1.5 pounds. The normal price for ammunition is \$1 per pound for shot and \$2 per pound for powder. This is subject to change; the price may go up scandalously if the Spaniards are coming and you are known to be short.

CREW

The larger the vessel, the more sailors are needed. A fighting ship needs a much larger crew to man the guns, repair ship damage, and replace casualties.

Small sloops can be operated by as few as three people, though a minimum crew of six to ten is more common. A small sloop will hold as many as 40 people, though, and pirates often sailed at full capacity. Note that few cannon or provisions can be carried with so many men on board!

Large sloops need a minimum of six sailors; ten is less stressful. They can carry up to 100 people.

Brigs can be crewed by ten people, and rarely carry more than 30 if they are merchants. Use the tonnage rules, p. 103, to determine carrying capacity.

Merchant ships require 15 to 20 seamen, and rarely carry more than 50.

Warships carry many more men than the minimum needed to operate the ship. Not only are casualties to be expected, but men are needed to man the guns, operate the pumps, serve as marines (boarders and marksmen), act as messengers in the heat of battle, clear rubble, fight fires, repair damage, carry the wounded, become prize crew, etc. A small warship can operate with 20 men if it has to, but usually carries 100 to 200. Large warships can be run by 30 men in an emergency, but often carry over 400!

See *Jobs*, p. 16, for crew salaries. Crew expected to be paid and might mutiny if money is not forthcoming. Pirates might vote a captain out who didn't supply them with suitable prey. Make a reaction roll at -3 to determine an unpaid crew's reaction. Poor or worse reaction means mutiny. A small percentage of the salary, about 10%, might be paid before sailing, the rest due at the end of the voyage.

