

# Hero System Sidekick

<b>Book Line:</b>	Hero System	<b>SKU:</b>	106
<b>Book Type:</b>	Rules Supplement	<b>Formats:</b>	Softcover, PDF
<b>Author:</b>	Steven S. Long	<b>Released:</b>	February, 2004
<b>Cost:</b>	14.99\$	<b>ISBN:</b>	1-58366-030-5
<b>Page Count:</b>	128	<b>Hero Designer:</b>	No
<b>Common Abbreviations:</b>	SDK	<b>Print Status:</b>	In Print

Notes: The Revised version was released in August, 2006. It corrected typos, updated pages references to 5ER and changed the price to 14.99\$US from 9.99\$US. No new information was added.

## The Review:

*Reviewed By Gordon Feiner*

The Upside:

HERO Sidekick is a stripped down set of rules for the Hero System. It is not a different set of rules, or an alternate set of rules, this is the Hero System in its most basic form.

At a quarter the size of the Hero System Rules Book, Sidekick distills the essence of what the Hero System Toolkit is down to the basic concepts of functions. As the books states in its introduction, Sidekick achieves this by removing alternate methods, extra options and other minor rules.

The benefit to this approach is that a person new to Hero can easily get into the game with minimal distractions, without all the alternate methods, optional rules and add ons and other interactions. The down side is, of course, it removes some of the massive flexibility of the system itself, which is one of the main selling points for Hero. However, it is very important to note it does not remove all, or even most, of the Hero System flexibility.

If you're not familiar with the Hero System, one of the core tenets of the system is Reasoning From Effect. All the elements in the system are present generically, allowing you to build the effect or concept you envision with a set of tools. Hero is a Generic System for creating exactly the game you want to play, not a complete game ready to play, in any genre you can imagine.

*Chapter One - Character Creation.* This covers what's on your Character Sheet, the Characteristics, Skills, Perks, Talents, and Powers. Everything in Hero is bought with Character Points, allowing you to customize to exactly how you envision your character being. Sidekick suggests two levels to start with, a Heroic Character and a Superheroic Character level.

Characteristics are the basic abilities everyone has, Strength, Dexterity, Constitution and so on. Hero has eight Base Characteristics and six Figured Characteristics, the value of the Figured Characteristics is calculated from the values of the Base Characteristics. Skills are another common aspect to games, what the character knows and can do. There are over fifty Skills in the Hero System that cover just about everything you could need to do. Perks are next, small benefits in the form of resources, privileges and the like; things like Money, Contacts or Concealed Weapons Licenses. Talents are innate abilities that your Character posses, while they are extraordinary aspects, like being Double Jointed, they aren't true Superpowers.

Powers are next, Powers are the building blocks for the Hero System. From a fantasy warriors sword, a wizards spells, a space captains blaster, a superheroes eye beams and amazing strength, or a street-samurai's cybernetic implants - all of these in Hero are built with Powers. The basic premise is you decide on a Special Effect (what you want to do) and then build it with the Powers provided. To help you there are Modifiers that can be applied to make the Powers stronger, more versatile, weaker, or restricted. The Modifiers are called Advantages and Limitations. Power Frameworks are a method of rewarding Concept with a Point Cost Break in the game, two of the three types of Frameworks are in Sidekick.

Finishing of Character Creation are the Character Disadvantages. These, if treated right, are more like Story Hooks that involve the Character, and all their foibles, and personalities, quirks, and background stories directly in the game. This is one of my favorite parts of the system, by bringing the idea of a Person directly into the mechanics of the game rather than leaving it off to the side Hero brings the Character to the front of the game.

This is the longest part of the book, and once you're done everything you need to know about what your Character can do is written right on your sheet. In fact, most of the time you won't have to refer back to the rule book to see what your Character does because it's written right out for you. No looking up lists of spells in numerous other books, or finding just where that one weapons abilities were written out. It's all there at your fingertips.

*Chapter Two - Combat And Adventuring.* This is the chapter that is needed to actually sit down and start playing. It covers that most common of RPGs events, combat. From what happens before it, during, and afterwards when you need to heal up. This is where the majority of the Systems dice rolls take place, and where most of the questions may arise. Helpfully the chapter also comes with a Sample Combat that goes through all many of the possibilities that come up.

*Chapter Three - The Environment.* Sometimes things happen outside of combat - drowning, fires, the world around you is a dangerous place. And while this chapter is not nearly as extensive as its counterpart in the main rules, it covers most of the situations an intrepid adventurer may encounter.

*Chapter Four - Equipment.* This chapter includes how to build Vehicles in the Hero System, as well as provides a list of common equipment for fantasy and modern games (swords and guns). Vehicles use the same basic rules as Characters, but have a slightly different Character Sheet with less on it (after all, a Vehicle doesn't have an Intelligence Score).

*Chapter Five - Example Characters.* And nothing helps a gamer better than a few examples to look at. Two superheroes and a Fantasy Wizard (complete with sample spells built with Powers) are provided, which covers possibly the more complex types of characters to build.

For the new or inexperienced Hero gamer this is an excellent introduction. By removing a lot of the more complex and esoteric aspects of the system you get a functional set of core rules to work with. It is also important to note that those who want to go further with Hero and upgrade to the Full Rules won't have to worry about relearning what they already know. Everything in Sidekick is part of the Core Rules, the only thing the larger rule book offers are more options, more examples, more Advantages, Limitations and Powers. Once you learn how to play Hero with Sidekick you can play in Hero game.

The book walks you through Character Creation, explains the Character Sheet, has a complete Glossary of terms, has a section of Example Power Builds showing how to create things like Cyberware, Psionics, Fantasy Spells and Superpowers.

For the experienced player Sidekick offers an opportunity for a few things. First off, using the Sidekick Rules for Convention Games can simplify and reduce a lot of the prep work. But more importantly, using Sidekick combined with the experience of a veteran Hero Gamer you can easily and quickly introduce new players to the versatility of the system without worrying about too many options getting in the way of learning.

#### The Downside:

If Sidekick needs more of anything it's example Characters. Characters from several different genres, not just Superhero and Fantasy, would have gone further to show off how versatile the system really is.

Of the aspects removed from the main rules, I would have kept the Computer Creation rules in this set of introductory rules.

#### The Otherside:

If you're even curious about Hero I can't recommend this version of the rules enough, for the price you get all the rules, and almost all the Skills, Powers and Modifiers of the main rules. All of the common and important aspects are present, mostly the Optional Rules have been removed along with some complex and esoteric Powers. And it still comes with plenty of creation examples in the Side Bars.

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Last update: **2008/01/01 18:31**

