

POWER PROFILE: SPEED POWERS



“Super-speed” is one of the more common powers whether a character’s main theme or just one amongst a collection of abilities. Speed powers are all about moving, acting, and reacting *fast*: at the upper-end, speedsters can circle the globe in seconds or perform a week’s work in the blink of an eye.

SPEED DESCRIPTORS

- **Speed** is the key descriptor for the powers in this profile. The *Hero’s Handbook* covers the concept of speed in relation to ranks and measures on pages 10–12: to determine speed in miles per hour (MPH) simply add 9 (the time value of one hour) to the speed rank. So speed rank 0 is 2 MPH, rank 1 is 4 MPH, and so on. The “speed of sound” is 770 MPH at sea level (speed rank 9 is enough to break the sound barrier).
- **Lightspeed:** The speed of light is 186,000 miles per *second*, putting it at nearly 670 million miles per hour, or speed rank 29. Most characters are not likely to have such a high rank (although, at 58 power points, it’s not outside the realm of possibility). On an Earth-sized planet, with a circumference of approximately 25,000 miles, speed rank 24 is sufficient to circle the globe and be back at your starting point in a single move action. If you’re okay making that a double move, speed rank 23 will do the trick. Anything faster is largely wasted unless you’re racing against another super-fast opponent, which the GM may prefer to handle as a challenge (*Hero’s Handbook*, page 185. See also **Chapter 5** of the *Gamemaster’s Guide*).

SPEED HAZARDS

Comic book speed powers tend to be truly extraordinary, allowing otherwise ordinary people to run many times the speed of sound, perhaps even nearing the speed of light! They tend to ignore the various physics problems involved in a human-sized figure moving at that speed; realistically, there’s no way for a human body to withstand such stress and, even if that were possible, someone moving a Mach 20 (to say nothing of any significant fraction of lightspeed) through a crowded city would cause tremendous damage from air turbulence and vibration.

The comics hand-wave away such concerns with talk of “frictionless auras” or “molecular vibration control” and other unconscious safety mechanisms built-in to keep super-speed from wrecking either the user or the environment. Likewise, they tend to ignore issues like perceiving and reacting to obstacles at such high speeds or the dynamics of collisions: a speedster who tripped or slammed into something moving even at the speed of sound would be instantly pulped by the kinetic energy, to say nothing of the effect of truly high speeds.

Like the comics, M&M tends to be quite forgiving when it comes to speedsters interacting with the environment; collision damage based on speed rank may not be realistic, but it’s sufficient and reflects how things tend to work in the comics, where a speedster can get tripped up but not splattered all over the pavement. Brief and occasional failures of the safety mechanisms of super-speed can make for good complications (see **Speed Complications**).