

WISDOM FROM THE WASTELANDS

Issue #11: Optional Combat Rules



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In almost every roleplaying game, one of the biggest aspects is combat. *Mutant Future* is no exception, for, in many ways, combat could be considered one of the game's most crucial aspects—next to mutations! In this spirit, here are several new optional rules a Mutant Lord can use to expand the combat possibilities in his or her game.

All-Out Attack

An all-out attack is declared at the beginning of a character's turn, and can be used with any attack form: ranged, melee, and even mental or physical mutation. This aggressive posture gives a +3 to hit and, if using a melee weapon or mutation, +3 to damage (total, not per die) on top of any regular modifiers. The downside to an all-out attack is that a character is more vulnerable to a counterstrike, losing any Dexterity bonus and suffering a +2 AC penalty.

All-Out Defense

As with the all-out attack, a character can declare an all-out defense at the beginning of her turn. While doing this, the character may not make any sort of attack (melee, ranged, or mutation), and is allowed only half her normal movement. An all-out defense provides the character with a -4 to her AC, and a +2 to any physical saving throws, such as dodging out of an explosion's area of effect.

Area Fire

Instead of shooting at a single enemy, a character firing more than one shot per round can target an area up to 10 feet wide. Should an opponent move through this zone, the aiming



character can take opportunity shots at it, if he did not make an attack during his turn. This tactic is useful if opponents are hidden at the start of the round.

Bursts

Any weapon with the Automatic rate of fire can use this option, which should be paired with the new Rate of Fire rules (regarding multiple rounds hitting) detailed below. A character can direct a burst at any number of targets within a 15-foot wide space, with only one hit roll needed. If this succeeds, determine the number of rounds that hit, then roll the appropriate damage and divide this equally between the number of targets. For example, a character using an automatic rifle (automatic trigger, 1d12 damage per round) fires a three-round burst at a group of three mutants. Because of an exceptional hit roll, all three rounds strike home. She rolls 3d12 for damage, with a result of 21, which is then divided between the three targets, causing each 7 points of damage. If the damage rolled was 22, then the damage would be divided as 7 points for two targets and 8 points for the last.

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This publication is dedicated to providing useful information, game content, and ideas to players of modern, science fiction, and post-apocalyptic table-top and role-playing games in general and to fans of Goblinoid Games' *Mutant Future* RPG in particular. The material contained herein are compatible with it and any others that use the "Basic" system introduced in the most popular role-playing games of the early 1970s and are easily adaptable to many other games (especially successor systems, to include those covered by the Open Game License).

Combat Modifiers

Many combat situations will benefit or penalize an attacking character. The table below lists the most common modifiers a ML will use during a fight.

Combat Modifier Table

<i>Situation</i>	<i>Modifier</i>
Attack from behind	+3
Attack from rear flanking position	+2
Firing into melee combat	-2
Attacker kneeling (melee attack)	-2
Attacker prone (melee attack)	-4
Attack from above	+1
Attack from below	-1
Defender kneeling	+1
Defender prone	+2
Defender surprised	+2
Attacker blind	-4
Each round spent aiming (ranged only, cumulative to a maximum of +5)	+1
Attacker kneeling (ranged attack)	+1
Attacker prone (ranged attack)	+2
Attacker successfully grappling defender	+2
Injured in current round	-2
Point blank shot (ranged only)	+2

Firing into Melee: When firing at an enemy engaged in melee combat with a friendly character, the shooter suffers a -2 to hit. If this roll misses by 5 or more, the attacker must make another attack roll, against the friendly character (who gets the benefit of all normal defense/AC bonuses). If the second attack roll hits, the friendly character takes the damage.

Flanking: When two or more characters are in melee combat with the same target, any character who is behind right or behind left of the target gains a +2 to hit. This stacks with the multiple attacker bonus.

Injured in Current Round: During the round, should a character get hit before he can strike, he suffers a -2 to his attack roll (unless the character is one that cannot feel pain,



like robotic units). For example, during a fight a character with an initiative of 3 is shot and wounded by an enemy with an initiative of 5. For this round only, the character suffers the negative to hit modifier when he gets to act. See the Injury Rules below for more effects.

Multiple Attackers Engaging Same Target: When three or more allied characters attack the same target in melee combat, each character gains a +1 to hit. This bonus stacks with the flanking bonus.

Point Blank Shot: When an attacker fires any ranged weapon at a target within five feet, he gains a +2 to hit. Ranged mutations might also apply this bonus, depending on the ML's ruling.

Cover

In ranged combat (using any type of firearm or missile weapon, or even some mutations), a target might gain some benefit from using available cover. This could be anything from jumping behind an overturned table, to kneeling behind a tree stump, to peering around the edge of a steel door.

Anyone using cover must state what they are doing, and the ML will assign the blocking obstacle a level of protection (25%, 50%, or 75%). The coverage levels each give a bonus to the target's AC, and possibly an optional saving throw bonus. As an example of the latter, a target is caught in an explosion but was partly shielded by a concrete wall. The ML decides the character is 50% covered, and gives her +2 bonus to the saving throw versus energy. The ML may also decide that an obstacle, like bushes or a thin wall, only provides concealment (rather than hard cover) and could be penetrated by an attack, or that a target's blocking cover could be damaged by something like an area of effect attack, such as a grenade explosion.

Cover Table

<i>Cover Level</i>	<i>Bonus</i>	<i>Optional Save Bonus</i>
25%	-1 AC	+0
50%	-2 AC	+2
75%	-3 AC	+4

Critical Hits/Misses

During combat, if an attacking player rolls a natural 20, her character scores a critical hit, doing the weapon's maximum damage. For example, when a character gets a critical hit with a long sword (1d8 damage), the strike automatically does 8 points of damage, plus any modifiers (such as Strength bonus, mutation bonuses, etc.).

On the other hand, a critical miss happens when an attacking character rolls a natural 1 to hit, which means she not only automatically misses, but one of two things will happen. The first possibility is that if she is fighting near a companion, the character might actually hit her friend instead. Have the attacker make a normal to hit roll against her companion's AC (including all normal defense/AC bonuses). If she hits, then her friend takes normal damage — including critical hits, if the dice are so unkind.

The other effect, if there is no ally nearby (or if the ML

prefers), is to have the attacking character roll under her Dexterity on a d20 to avoid dropping her weapon. Of course, a character with a natural attack cannot drop this weapon, but must still make the Dexterity roll, or suffer 1d3 points of damage as she injures herself. When the critical miss involves a weapon using any form of ammunition, the ML can decide the weapon jams, requiring 1d3 rounds to clear. If the weapon uses a power cell, the cell shorted, requiring 1d3 rounds to reset and expending one round of power.

This rule only applies to natural rolls of 1 or 20. Modifiers pushing a result to 1 and below, or to 20 and above will not make any normal roll into a critical miss or hit.

Disarming

At some point, a character may choose to disarm an opponent. To adjudicate this, the ML should use the optional Targeting Specific Body Locations rules (described below), since an attacking character usually aims for the target's weapon hand. The attacker first declares an intention to disarm his opponent, and then decides whether he wants to simply knock the item away or cause damage.

When trying to strike an item from the target's hand, a successful roll to hit means the target must either save versus stun or make a Dexterity saving throw (roll under his Dexterity score to hold onto the item). If the save fails, the item is dropped.

If the attacker chose to inflict damage, he must decide whether to hit the limb holding the item, or the item itself. Injuring the arm means the target might suffer from Limb Breakage or Loss (see rules below), while striking the item means it could suffer condition damage. It is the ML's decision whether this damage happens automatically, or if the item may make a save to prevent it.

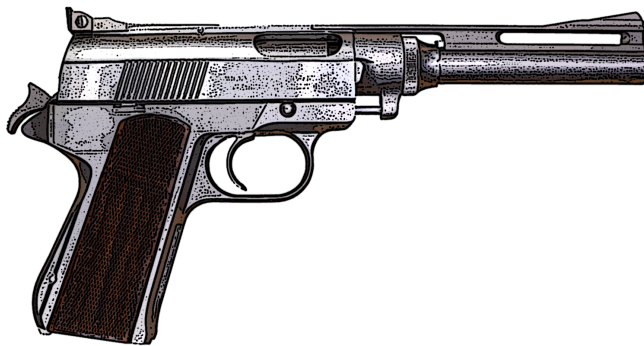
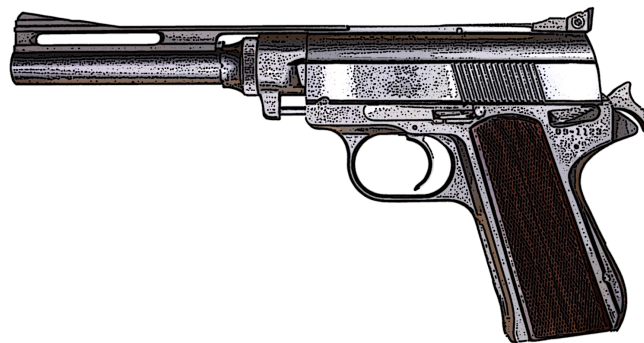
Limb Breakage or Loss

If the ML uses the optional rules for Targeting Specific Body Locations (described below), there is the chance a character's arms, legs, or wings might be broken — or even severed completely — if hit hard enough.

Any strike doing damage equal to 20% of the creature's total hit points breaks a limb, which is unusable until this damage is healed. Damage exceeding the 20% limit is considered lost, with one exception: if the limb sustains a total of 40% of the creature's total hit points, it is blown off. This is a permanent disability unless the limb can be regrown. Even if the limb is amputated, the creature only loses 20% of its hit point total and all damage beyond this limit is lost. Still, losing a limb will be devastating.

Firing Off-Hand

Nearly all character races are considered to have a dominant hand (left or right), which is stronger, more coordinated, and used more often. The only exceptions are artificial entities, like androids and robots, and mutants with the *ambidextrous* mutation (see page 5), both of which can use either hand without disadvantage. Shooting a pistol with the weaker hand will give the firing character a -2 to hit penalty.



Firing Two Weapons

Characters can fire two pistols at once, but must take a -3 modifier on each shot. This stacks with the -2 modifier for shooting with the wrong hand (which means this hand will suffer a -5 to hit). These guns can be fired at different targets, if the targets are next to one another.

Rate of Fire

Although the *Mutant Future* core book describes various rates of fire, the following rules allow the ML a little more flexibility, and add flavor to the game.

Normal Trigger: The shooter fires once per round. If he has multiple attacks per round he may fire more than once but it is still considered to be a normal trigger.

Automatic Trigger: The weapon fires bursts of two or three rounds with every trigger pull. The character must choose the number of rounds fired in each burst, and rolls to hit as normal. If the attack succeeds, one round hits. For every 2 points the roll exceeds the to hit number, an additional round strikes. For example, a character using an automatic rifle fires a three round burst, needing a 14 to hit the target. He rolls a 17, so two of the three rounds hit. A 19 would have resulted in three rounds hitting the target. If the attacker rolls a critical hit then all rounds fired will hit the target, but roll the damage per round normally.

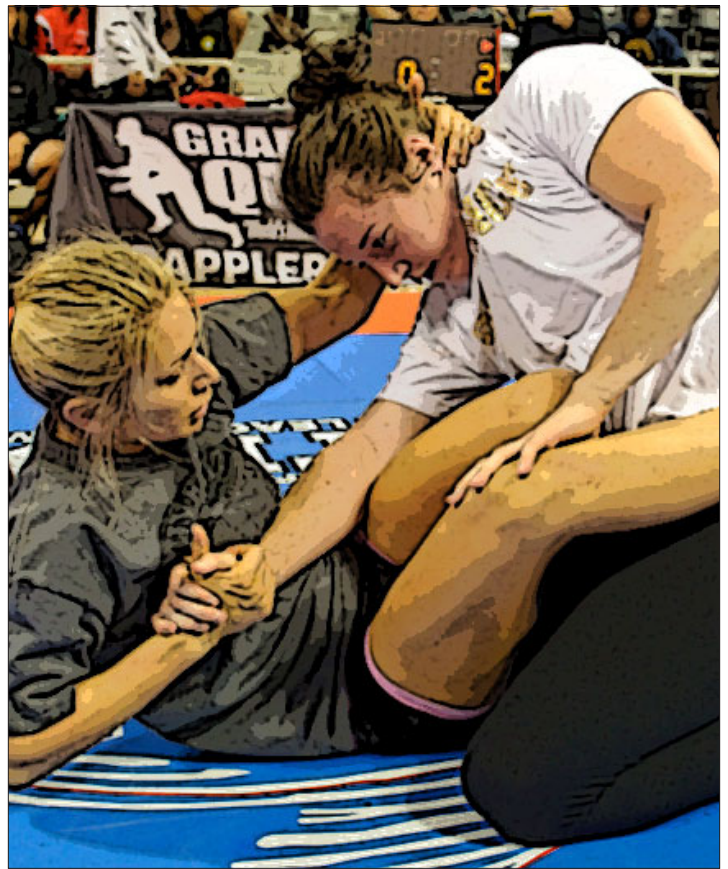
Rapid Fire Trigger: The weapon fires as long as the trigger is held. This is similar to the Automatic Trigger, but instead of single rounds hitting, bursts will hit. For example, a character shoots with Rapid Fire Trigger, sending three three-round bursts down range. For every 3 points his roll exceeds the to hit number, one full burst of three rounds will strike home.

Grappling

With a successful to hit roll, an attacker may grapple a target. Once the hold is established, the attacker may attempt to just hold the target, or inflict damage. After that, the target may try to break the grapple.

Maintaining or breaking the hold is done with a contested Strength roll: the grappler and the target roll 1d20 and add their respective Strengths, with the higher result winning. Since this is NOT an attack roll, Strength modifiers do not count, but other factors (listed in the Grappling Table) will modify the die rolls. If the grappler prevails, then he maintains his grip and may either continue to hold, or cause damage. If the target wins, he has broken free and may act normally. This method makes it possible, though unlikely, for a weak character to struggle free of someone far stronger.

When the attacker simply holds his target, the defender cannot take any action except to make or defend against mental attacks. If the attacker chooses to damage the defender, he may attack normally with any natural weapon he possesses, within reason. For example, a creature that usually gets three attacks, of two claws and a bite, would only be able to bite (since using claws would mean releasing the hold), but would get a +2 to hit. Certain mutations, like *dermal poison slime*, possessed by a defender will harm the attacker. Any creature grappling a target with such a mutation will automatically let go after the first successful attack, as self-preservation is a powerful instinct.



Grappling Table

Effect

Aberrant Form
Adhesive Dermal Secretions
Density Alteration
Friction Control
Increased Balance
Increased Joint Flexibility
Multiple Limbs
Natural Armor
Obese
Prehensile Tail
Simian Deformity
Size Difference

Modifier

Varying modifiers, based on ML decision
+6 to grapple roll
See Size Difference and the Size Modifier Table below
+/-3 to grapple roll
+2 to grapple roll
+2 to grapple roll
+1 to grapple roll for each additional pair of limbs
-2 to attacker's grapple roll
-2 to attacker's grapple roll
+1 to grapple roll
+2 to grapple roll
+2 per size level difference for the grappler (e.g., if a huge creature tries to grapple a humanoid-sized creature, the huge creature gets +4 to the grapple check); see Size Modifier Table below.
+2 to grapple roll

Skeletal Structure Change

Grenade Scatter

Whenever a character misses with a grenade-like weapon, the weapon deviates from its target in both distance and direction. The weapon misses by 3 feet for every point the attack roll missed. To find the direction, roll 1d6 and consult the Grenade Scatter Table. For example, a character throws a grenade toward an attacking mutant, needing a 12 to hit, but only rolls a 7. Since the attack roll missed by 5, the grenade lands 15 feet from the target. The player rolls 1d6 for deviation direction, and gets a 3, the Front right hex. So, the grenade lands 15 feet to the front right of the mutant.

The target could still be within the blast radius, but the explosion might not give the intended effect.

Grenade Scatter Table

d6 Result	Direction Deviated
1	Front left hex
2	Directly in front
3	Front right hex
4	Rear left hex
5	Directly behind
6	Rear right hex

Injury

Getting hurt in combat eventually wears characters down, making them less effective as the fight progresses. There are four injury levels, each with its own attack and movement penalties. As an example, a healthy character with 18 Strength, and 16 Dexterity would have +3 to hit/damage, -2

to AC, +2 to ranged attack, and +2 to initiative. When she becomes lightly injured, these bonuses become +2 to hit/damage, -1 to AC, +1 to ranged attack, and +1 to initiative. Note that these modifiers stack with any modifiers gained through fatigue.

Injury Effect Table

<i>Injury Level</i>	<i>Amount of Damage Suffered</i>	<i>Effect</i>
Uninjured	Up to 25% of total hit points	No effect
Lightly Injured	26-50% of total hit points	-1 to hit and all Strength bonuses, 1 ranged to hit and all Dexterity modifiers (if any), -25% movement
Moderately Injured	51-75% of total hit points	-2 to hit and all Strength bonuses, -2 ranged to hit and all Dexterity modifiers (if any), -50% movement
Heavily Injured	76-99% of total hit points	-3 to hit and all Strength bonuses, -3 ranged to hit and all Dexterity modifiers (if any), -75% movement

Modifiers to Hit Based on Creature Size

As a general rule, it is harder to hit smaller targets and easier to hit larger ones. Consult the table below for combat modifiers based on size. For really large or small targets the mutant lord can determine the modifier.

Size Modifier Table

<i>Size</i>	<i>Modifier</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Modifier</i>
Tiny	-4	Small	-2
Humanoid	+0	Large	+2
Huge	+4		

Targeting Specific Body Locations

In combat, it is generally assumed that all attacks affect an opponent's torso or center mass. To add flavor, the ML can allow a character to aim for specific points on the target's

body. Each location has a negative to hit modifier, and the damage will have different effects.

Body Location Table

<i>Location</i>	<i>Modifier</i>	<i>Effect</i>
Head	-7	Double Damage, save vs. Death or drop to -1 HP, save vs. stun or be knocked unconscious.
Neck	-9	Double Damage, save vs. Death or drop to -1 HP, save vs. stun or be stunned for 1d6 rounds.
Arm	-4	-2 to attacks, Dexterity check or drop any held weapon, save vs. Death or be unable to use arm for 1d6 rounds.
Hand (Paw)	-6	-4 to attacks, Dexterity check or drop any held weapon, save vs. Death or be unable to use hand for 2d6 rounds.
Leg	-4	-25% movement for 1st round, Dexterity check or fall down, save vs. Death or movement reduced by 25% for 1d6 rounds.
Foot (Paw)	-6	-50% movement for 1st round, Dexterity check or fall down, save vs. Death or movement reduced by 50% for 1d6 rounds.

When a target gets struck in the head or neck, double all damage. If this exceeds the 20% rule, then the target must save versus death or instantly drop to -1 hit points. He must also save versus stun to avoid becoming unconscious, or stunned for 1d6 rounds (depending on the hit location). If the target fails to save versus death, he will continue to lose 1 hit point a round until stabilized. Once he reaches -10 hit points (or his negative Constitution score, if the optional rules regarding negative hit points are used from *Wisdom from the Wasteland* issue #8), then he will die.

If a target is disabled by hits in both arms (or all arms/manipulative limbs), then he will not be able to hold a weapon or use any natural attacks involving those limbs until the allotted time has expired. If a target has had all its legs/movement limbs disabled because of failed saves then his movement will be greatly reduced or taken away completely.

All effects are cumulative. For example, a target is shot in one leg and one foot. He suffers a -75% to his movement rate (25%+50%) for the first round, and, since he failed both saves, his movement rate is reduced by 75% for a total of 8 rounds (1d6 rolled for each disabled limb). After he stands back up.

NEW MUTATION

Ambidexterity (Physical)

Most creatures are either right or left handed, and if they attempt to use their off-hand, they will typically suffer a penalty. This mutation allows the mutant to use any hand (or paw, foot, and so forth) as a primary appendage. The mutant will not suffer from any negatives for using the off hand appendage.

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