

# WISDOM FROM THE WASTELANDS

Issue #43: Optional Combat Rules II



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**A**s a weary Mutant Lord, nearing the end of a long gaming session and faced with a sudden, sticky conundrum, have you ever looked across your concealing screen of choice, at a table full of your eager/irate/meddlesome players (taut with the expected wisdom of your decision), and thought: "Man ... I wish there was a rule for this"? For many of these unexpected cases, now there is. Issue #11 of *Wisdom from the Wastelands* presented a wealth of optional new combat rules for a variety of interesting and often unpleasant situations. This issue picks up from where that one left off, introducing mechanics for things like charging, recoil, variable firing stances, cooking off ammunition, or grappling while waving sharp pointy objects. As a caution, many of these rules could be potential game breakers or could unduly upset a player on the receiving end; so, as with all optional rules, these should be employed with some care and consideration.

## Attacking While Grappling

The basic rules provided in *WfiW* issue #11 cover grappling while unarmed or using natural attacks. This expansion allows grappling combatants to attack with weapons. Because of the close quarters, an attacker can only use hand-held or smaller weapons (which can include firearms and energy pistols), and suffers a -4 penalty to hit. A successful attack inflicts normal damage, with all applicable modifiers. The proximity and violent movement make this a risky maneuver for the attacker, too. If the to-hit roll misses by 5 or more, the attacker hits herself, inflicting normal damage.

## Bracing

By firmly pressing against a wall, tree, or some other large object, the character is able to reduce his *recoil* penalty (see below) by half, rounded down (e.g., -1 becomes 0, -3 becomes -1). The character may not move in his turn, but can benefit from *cover* (see *WfiW* issue #11 for details).

## Charging

By *charging*, an attacker gives up part of her defensive posture in order to gain an offensive bonus. The character



must declare a charge before moving and be at least 15' away from her target. The attacker gets a +3 bonus to hit in melee combat, but suffers a 2-point AC penalty and loses any DEX bonus to AC. If she hits, the attack does an additional 50% damage (round up) and the defender must save versus stun or be knocked prone. It is possible to charge while firing a weapon, but any to-hit bonuses are more than offset by the attacker's movement. The exact penalties are left up to the ML.

## Double Tap/Rapid Fire

These optional firing rates cover the same principle: sacrificing accuracy for speed. By executing a *double tap*

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

<b>Excessive Bleeding – Heat and Primitive Firearms Ammunition .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Jumping On a Grenade – Optional Sleep, Stun, and Paralysis Rules .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Pause – Snapshot .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Suppressing Fire – Watchful .....</b>	<b>5</b>

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).



attack with a Normal-triggered weapon, or *rapid fire* with weapons having Automatic or Rapid Fire trigger types, the shooter gains an extra attack when using primitive or high-tech firearms. The firer must declare the attack before rolling to hit, and the weapon must have a magazine or energy source, or be belt-fed (i.e., it cannot be a single capacity weapon, like a muzzle-loaded rifle). Both shots or bursts are penalized: the first is  $-2$  to hit, and the second is  $-4$ .

### Excessive Bleeding

Because of the wounds they create, edged weapons can be deadly even if an initial strike does not kill its target. Any cutting attack that does its maximum damage (e.g., 8 points with a 1d8 weapon) causes a wound that bleeds profusely until it can be bandaged or otherwise cared for.

Bleeding damage is based on the weapon's damage dice; see the table below to determine the number of hit points lost every round. If a cutting weapon uses multiple damage dice, find the die type and add +1 point per die. For example, a creature with a claw attack doing 2d6 damage hits Turok for 12 points. Weapons with d6 damage dice cause 1d2 points of bleeding; because there are two dice in the damage pool, Turok loses 1d2+2 hit points per round until he gets treated.

Certain beings are immune to this damage. These include artificial life (e.g., robots, androids, and synthetics) and creatures without functioning vascular systems (e.g., oozes or the walking dead).

### Bleeding Damage By Die Type

Die Type	HP Loss Per Round
d4 or less	1
d6 or d8	1d2
d10	1d3
d12	1d4
d20	1d6
Multiple dice in the damage pool	+1 per die

### Feint

By making a false or distracting maneuver, an attacker can open up her opponent's defenses. The character attempting

to *feint* declares her intention and then rolls to hit, using either melee weapons or natural hand-to-hand attacks.

If the attacker misses, the feint failed and she is left off-balance: she suffers a  $-2$  to-hit penalty on any further attacks that round (if she has multiple attacks) and all attacks made during the next combat round. When the feint succeeds, the attacker does not land a blow; instead, she forces the defender to make an INT check (trying to roll his INT or below on a d20).

Should the defender pass this check, he recognizes or ignores the feint, so there is no effect. If he fails, the defender was suckered by the feint and left himself vulnerable: he instantly loses any DEX bonus to AC and suffers a 2-point AC penalty. This penalty lasts until the end of the next round.

For attackers with multiple melee or natural attacks, the first attack of their round must be the feint. All other attacks that round are considered normal (unless the feint fails).

### Firing Stances

When a character attacks with any sort of firearm, her *firing stance* gives different to-hit and initiative modifiers. The various positions and the associated modifiers are outlined in the table below. The character should declare her stance before making her initiative roll, as several postures will alter the result. If a character has multiple actions per round, she can change her firing stance at a cost of one action per change.

Several of the stances, such as shoulder shooting, do not account for the character possibly using some kind of sight. For more details, see *aiming* in *WftW* issue #11.

### Firing Stance Table

Stance	Effect
Hip shot (pistols)	$-3$ to hit, $+2$ to Initiative, $+1$ to <i>recoil</i> effects
Hip shot (rifles)	$-2$ to hit, $+1$ to Initiative, $+1$ to <i>recoil</i> effects
Two-hand grip (pistol)	$+2$ to hit, $-1$ to <i>recoil</i> effect
Shoulder shooting (pistols)	$-1$ to <i>recoil</i> effects
Shoulder shooting (rifles)	$-2$ to <i>recoil</i> effects
Firing one handed (rifles)	$-3$ to hit, $-3$ to <i>recoil</i> effects

### Heat and Primitive Firearms Ammunition

Exposing black or smokeless powder to high heat is a bad idea: the ammunition tends to "cook-off," either exploding or discharging projectiles in random directions. If a character carrying powder-based rounds suffers a fire or heat attack, she must save versus thermal (see *WftW* issue #1); failure means the ammo explodes.

To find the blast's damage and area of effect consult the **Cook-Off Table** below. These factors depend on the weapon size (see *WftW* issue #11) and the amount of ammunition present. For every 10 rounds (or part thereof) that the target carries, everyone inside the **Damage Radius** suffers the damage listed, but can save versus energy for half damage (round down). Carrying large amounts of ammo also increases this area of effect. The **Cook-Off Table** lists radii for up to 10 rounds of ammo, but for every 10 additional



rounds the target has, the range increases by 5' (to a maximum range of 50'). The increased blast range also applies to Ultra-Light and Light ammo.

For example, Min gets hit with a hot *energy ray* while carrying 35 Medium Rifle rounds, and fails her thermal save. Although the damage listed is 1d10, the amount of ammo she has means the blast does 4d10 points of damage to everyone within the Damage Radius, which increases to 20'.

Exploding ammunition is also hard on weapons. Any weapon that contains detonating ammo must save versus explosive (see *WftW* issue #1). Success means the weapon suffers 1d3 levels of condition damage; failure means the weapon loses 1d3 condition levels, +1 level for every additional 10 rounds of ammunition it holds.

### Cook-Off Table

Weapon Size	Pistol Damage	Rifle Damage	Damage Radius
Ultra-Light	1d4	1d6	Personal
Light	1d6	1d8	Personal
Medium	1d8	1d10	5'
Heavy	1d10	1d12	10'
Ultra-Heavy	1d12	2d8	15'

### Jumping On a Grenade

This deadly but effective action protects one's companions from grenades and similar weapons. When a grenade is thrown into the middle of a group, a character who has not acted in the round may declare her intention to cover the explosive with her body.

To do this, the character must make a DEX check (roll under her ability score on 1d20). If the roll succeeds, the character jumps on the grenade and takes three times the weapon's normal damage when it explodes. Everyone else in the blast radius is then allowed a saving throw versus death. Those who make their save take no damage; those who fail take only half damage.

### Optional Sleep, Stun, and Paralysis Rules

Many weapons, toxins, and mutations force victims to save versus the titular conditions, which could threaten or end a character's life. The save rules in the core rules are an all-or-nothing mechanic: either you suffer the full force of the attack or you don't. Anyone who has been through a CS chamber or been hit in the head can tell you it does not work



like that; instead, the victim gradually regains full mental or physical control over a few moments. This optional rule allows a victim to shake off an attack's effects, but suffer slight drawbacks as he recovers.

The target of an attack must still make a save, and those who fail still suffer fully. However, those who pass their save experience a short-lived, lesser affliction. The severity and duration of this depend on the character's save: those who passed by a great deal might suffer no ill effects or recover more quickly than those who just made it.

The table below outlines the various levels of effect and their associated penalties. Each level lasts for 1d3 rounds, and then the victim drops to the next less severe level, continuing this way until the effect finally wears off completely. For example, Turok gets hit by a stunner and makes his saving throw exactly. Consulting the Stun line on the **Effect Table**, Turok experiences a -5 penalty to his

### Sleep, Stun, and Paralysis Effect Table

Effect	Saving Throw Level of Success			
	Just Made	Made by 1-2	Made by 3-4	Made by 5+
Sleep	Heavily fatigued*	Moderately fatigued	Lightly fatigued	No negative effects
Paralysis	-5 to DEX	-3 to DEX	-1 to DEX	No negative effects
Stun	-5 to WIL	-3 to WIL	-1 to WIL	No negative effects

\*But victim does not have to save to avoid falling unconscious. See *WftW* issue #11 for *Fatigue* rules.



Willpower score. He rolls a 2 on 1d3, so this effect lasts 2 rounds. After the third round, the penalty drops to -3 and Turok rolls 1 on 1d3, so this phase lasts only a single round. This continues until the character recovers completely.

### Pause

By declaring a *pause* the character voluntarily gives up an early initiative to go later in the combat round. The character must declare this intention before the initiative roll is made, and she will automatically go last for that round and the following one.

### Quick Reload

During a fight, running out of ammo at a crucial moment can cost a combatant dearly. This optional rule allows a character to reload his weapon and fire in the same round. The maneuver is risky and sacrifices some accuracy, but many shooters find this an acceptable trade-off.

To quickly change out magazines or power sources, the character must save versus stun. If successful, the weapon is reloaded and can be fired immediately, but with a -2 to-hit penalty.

However, should the save fail, something goes wrong: the shooter either drops the weapon, magazine, or power source, or he didn't seat the fresh load properly. Regardless of the failure source, the shooter cannot use his weapon. The amount of time down depends on how badly the save was failed. If the character missed his roll by 1-3 points, it takes him a full round to pick up the dropped equipment; if he failed the save by 4 or more, it takes 1d3 rounds to properly seat the new magazine or power source.

### Rapid Reaction

At the beginning of her round, a character engaged in ranged combat may declare that she is making a *rapid reaction* attack. For that round only, the character gets a +3 initiative bonus, but suffers a -3 to-hit penalty.

### Readying (Setting) Weapons

By bracing the butt end of a spear or other polearm against a solid object (usually the ground), a defender can inflict double damage against a *charging* attacker. This maneuver requires the attacker to have missed, or the defender to have made his save against being knocked prone. There are no other bonuses.

### Recoil

Primitive firearms from the 19th-21st centuries were notorious for their *recoil*. This kickback meant only stronger users could prevent their weapons from drifting off target — especially when the guns had high rates of fire. And, typically, the more powerful a round fired, the more recoil a weapon had.

The table below lists to-hit penalties for attacking with these more primitive weapons. The modifiers are determined by cross-referencing the character's firing rate and weapon caliber (see *WftW* issue #24 for more information). Exceptionally strong characters can use their STR damage modifier to offset or reduce their penalty. For example, Turok fires an Ultra-Heavy pistol on Single Shot, which gives a -2 to-hit penalty. But, because he has a 16 STR (with a +2 damage modifier) the penalty is reduced to 0.

For characters with multiple attacks per round the to-hit penalty is added to the entire round — and it stacks with each shot. Continuing Turok's example from above, although his high Strength fully compensates for the first shot's recoil, any other shots this round suffer an additional, increasing -2 modifier (for the Single Shot fired from an Ultra-Heavy weapon). So his second shot is -2 to hit, while a third would be -4, and so on. Given the massive penalties, trying to rapidly fire multiple bursts from an Ultra-Heavy weapon quickly becomes an exercise in "spraying and praying."

*Bracing* and different *firing stances* can affect the recoil penalty (see above). If your game uses the *rate of fire* rules from *WftW* issue #11, the recoil penalty decreases the number of bullets hitting a target by reducing the to-hit roll.

### Snapshot

This is similar to *rapid reaction*, but only applies to firearms or ranged attacks. The same bonuses apply.

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### Recoil Table

Weapon Caliber	Single Shot	Multiple Shots	Automatic	Rapid Fire
Ultra-Light	N/A	N/A	-1	-2
Light	N/A	N/A	-2	-3
Medium	N/A	-1	-3	-4
Heavy	-1	-2	-4	-6
Ultra-Heavy	-2	-3	-6	-8



## Suppressing Fire

Also known as “covering fire,” this combat option involves hosing down an area with Automatic or Rapid-Fire weapons, convincing any bad guys to grab cover rather than fire back. The shooter declares his intention, chooses his target, and makes a normal to-hit roll, but uses twice the normal amount of ammunition. If the attack hits, calculate damage for only one shot, not two (despite the ammo expenditure). Whether the attack is successful or not, the barrage encourages targets to keep their heads down, imposing a -6 to-hit penalty if they try to return fire.

## Trip

To *trip* an opponent the character must be within melee range and using a natural or melee weapon with reach, like a leg, tentacle, spear, or whip. After declaring her intention, the character makes a to-hit roll with a -4 penalty for targeting the legs. If successful, the attack does full damage and the target must save versus stun or be knocked prone, suffering all associated penalties.

## Using Firearms as Melee Weapons

In the middle of a fight sometimes really bad things happen: a weapon jams, the energy cell runs dry, or Murphy taps you on the shoulder, and that nifty long-range firearm suddenly turns into a shiny melee-range club — just as the rampaging horde crests the rise. When this happens, the wielder may have no choice but to use the firearm in something other than in its intended role, and smite the mutants with it.

This is possible, but the attacker suffers a -2 penalty to hit. Any damage inflicted is based on the weapon’s size (see the table below). Fortunately, STR bonuses apply as usual

and can mitigate the penalties. Unfortunately, most of these weapons were not designed for this kind of abuse; if the wielder rolls a natural 1 on the to-hit roll, the weapon suffers 1d3-1 levels of condition damage (no saving throw allowed).

## Improvised Melee Weapon Table

Firearm Size	Damage
Hold Out pistol	1d2
Pistol	1d4
Carbine	1d6
Rifle	1d8
Very large rifle/squad support weapon	1d12

## Watchful/Overwatch

Before rolling initiative a character can declare that he is being *watchful*, which allows him to hold his action until another character performs a specific activity. This could include the enemy moving, moving into or out of cover, changing stances, entering melee combat, and so forth. When the condition is met the character may attack at that moment, going before the target. However, if the condition is not met the *watchful* character loses his action for the round.

As an example, Turok is battling several mutants in a series of underground ruins. Even though he loses sight of them, Turok guesses they are probably going to rush him from around a corner. He takes a *watchful* stance, giving up his initiative, and waits until the enemy rounds the bend. The first mutant does appear and, before it can act, Turok swings away. If none of the bad guys present themselves, Turok just stands there for the round with his sword cocked.

For those using firearms, there is a variant of *watchful* called *overwatch*. This allows a stationary, gun-wielding character to cover moving allies. The shooter must declare that he is on overwatch and take no other action, but can fire at an approaching target before it engages his buddies in melee combat. He does not incur the usual penalties for firing into melee and there is no chance he accidentally shoots his friends. If no enemy appears, the character on overwatch loses his action.



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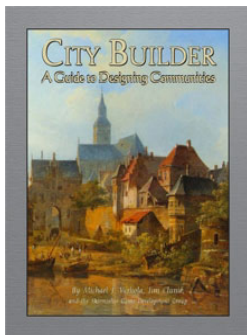
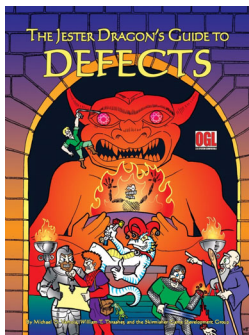
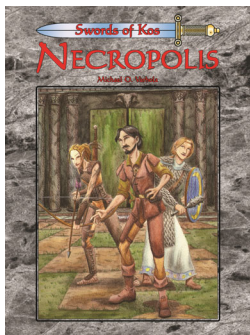
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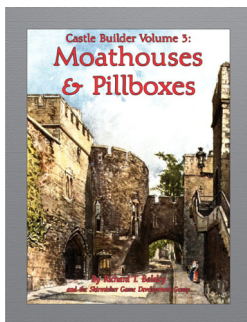
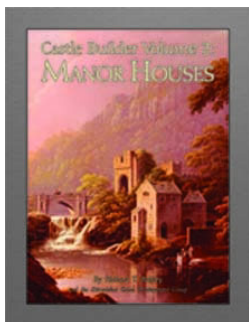
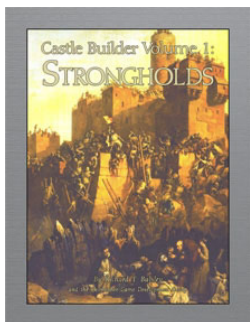


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