

Wisdom from the Wastelands

Issue #50:
Artifact
Quality



By Chris “Outlander” Van Deelen and the Skirmisher Game Development Group

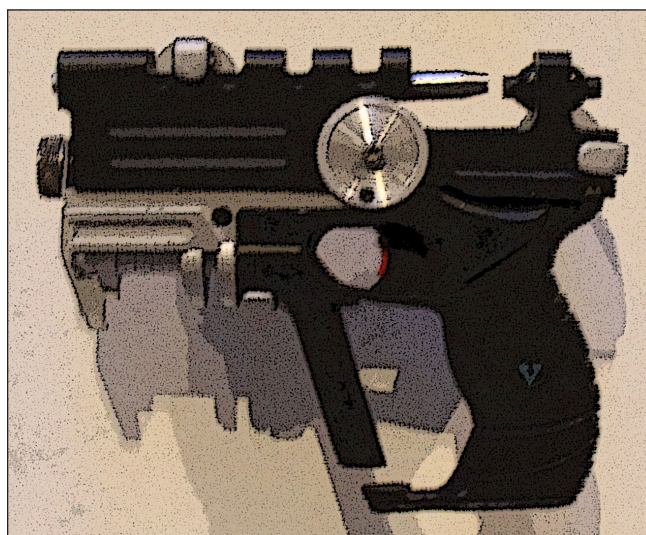
Fantasy games thrive on magical weapons and items, giving players something to shoot for — and to shoot with. These are rewards for overcoming obstacles and defeating monsters, both reflecting and boosting the characters’ growing power and expertise. To provide your science fiction game with similar options, this issue describes a system for including equipment of exceptional quality. While your elf might draw a +5 *vorpall sword* from a dark knight’s sarcophagus, your replicant gets to haul a *master quality* Gauss Pistol from a brain lasher’s lair. This system also includes the shoddy end of the quality spectrum, for those times when patchwork or jury-rigging is the best your tech mutant can manage.

As a real-world example of how to envision these mechanics, consider pounding nails. In a pinch, you can use a wrench as a hammer. This does not work well, but it is better than using your hand or your forehead, and could be free, if you already have the wrench. This “hammer” would have a *Quality Level* of -1. You could also buy a dollar store hammer for a few bucks; it will drive a nail, but the handle might come off in a couple months. This is a run-of-the-mill *Quality Level* of 0. Or, you could get a titanium and poly-carbonate, shock-absorbing, power-converting wonder tool designed by former NASA engineers for the demigods of carpentry. Flaming glory dances over your toolbox as you carry it. You just shake this puppy at nails and they pound themselves: it’s the Chuck Norris of hammers. And it probably has a *Quality Level* of +4 or higher. Given these various tools, which do you think your players would like to carry?

Note 1: Some MLs might consider assigning numerical values too mechanical, and would prefer a more descriptive system. In this case, consider using the following adjectives to represent the various “grades” or *Quality Levels*: Poor, Average, Good, Excellent, Professional, Superior, Master.

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Note 2: This article was designed for use with other, previously published issues of *Wisdom from the Wastelands*, especially those covering high tech weapons (#3, #9, #21, #26, and #46), medical devices (#13), and personal shields (#22).

Armor Quality

Although rumors float of tech wizards with an artisan’s touch still producing Ancient-quality armor and weapons “somewhere beyond the wastes,” these tales are never verified. As far as most can tell, the pinnacles of armor crafting know-how and technology vanished during the final wars.

High-quality materials, exceptional craftsmanship, and

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).



bleeding-edge technology produced exceptional armor that protects better, weighs less, and lasts longer than lesser gear. Unfortunately, this comes at a (steep) cost: better armor is much less common and much more expensive than the everyday.

The **Armor Quality Table** describes the bonuses and costs that can be applied to any armor. This protection might

be the Ancients' high-tech powered suits, reproductions of medieval armor (e.g., chainmail, plate, etc.) made by hobbyists just before the final wars, or gear made after the cataclysm.

Only a few armors, such as LazAb and Environmental Armor, have a Damage Reduction (**DR**) capacity, so this column does not apply to most protection; i.e., if a normal set of the armor does not have a **DR**, a high quality set will not have one either. Also, even though **DR** percentages/results might be very low, this modifier will always be at least a one point bonus or penalty. Otherwise, when calculating the **DR** bonus, always round to the nearest number. Calculating an armor's **Weight Modification** is similar: the result will always be at least a one-pound change from the weight listed for a regular suit of the same armor.

The **Item Saving Throw Modifier** applies only when the armor must save to avoid condition level damage (see *WftW* issue #1 for more information); it does not apply to a wearer's saving throw, unless the ML wishes. Even if the armor fails to save, its superior construction and materials provides a **Condition Level Damage Reduction (DR)**, and the armor may avoid damage all together.

Weapon Quality

Melee and ranged weapons can also be crafted of the finest materials, with the greatest skill. These weapons are more likely to hit and inflict greater damage, while being lighter and stronger than normal weapons. Like the equivalent armor, these guidelines can be applied to high tech, archaic reproduction, or recently-made weapons of the highest qualities.

For the most part, the **Weapons Quality Table** resembles the **Armor Quality Table**, with two additions. As the column heading indicates, a weapon's **To Hit and Damage Modifier** is added to both the initial d20 attack roll and the resulting

Armor Quality Table

Quality Level	AC Modifier	DR Modifier	Weight Modifier	Item Saving Throw Modifier	Condition Level DR	Cost Multiplier
-1	+1	-50%	+25%	-2	+1	-50%
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	-1	+10%	-10%	+1	0	x5
2	-1	+30%	-20%	+2	-1	x10
3	-2	+50%	-30%	+3	-1	x15
4	-2	+70%	-40%	+4	-2	x20
5	-3	+100%	-50%	+5	-2	x25

Weapon Quality Table

Quality Level	To Hit/Damage Modifier	Range Modifier	Weight Modifier	Item Saving Throw Modifier	Condition Level DR	Cost Multiplier
-1	-2	-50%	+25%	-2	+1	-50%
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	+1	+25%	-10%	+1	0	x5
2	+2	+50%	-20%	+2	-1	x10
3	+3	+75%	-30%	+3	-1	x15
4	+4	+100%	-40%	+4	-2	x20
5	+5	+150%	-50%	+5	-2	x25

damage roll. The modifier stacks with any other bonuses the character has, and is added to the damage total, not per damage die. For a weapon's **Range Modifier**, always round up to the nearest whole number.

The modifications and materials described in *WfiW* issue #21 can be included in exceptional, perhaps legendary weapons. The ML should be careful, though, because doing so can result in truly game-breaking creations.

Primitive Firearm Quality

Before the final wars, “primitive” firearms were everywhere, and their quality varied widely. On the low end, the criminal and the desperate used 3D printers to make throw-away guns; these sometimes exploded when fired. But there were also boutique gunsmiths who used the best materials and most precise engineering to lovingly craft revolvers, automatic pistols and rifles, and other weapons with chemically-propelled ammunition more akin to works of art than tools of war. Most weapons were mass-produced, but still of a quality difficult to achieve in the wastelands. The Ancient weapons weigh less and perform better than recently-produced weapons, which can, at times, be more of a threat to firer than target. This questionable craftsmanship is represented by the negative **Quality Level**, and embodies the old adage, “you get what you pay for.”

Advanced Firearm Quality

Like their more primitive cousins, advanced firearms like energy weapons were manufactured to a variety of standards, depending on construction techniques, engineering advances, and component materials. The concept of “planned obsolescence” too often met the practice of “made by the lowest bidder” and turned out a lot of ugly offspring. But there also remained a pride of craftsmanship to balance this out.

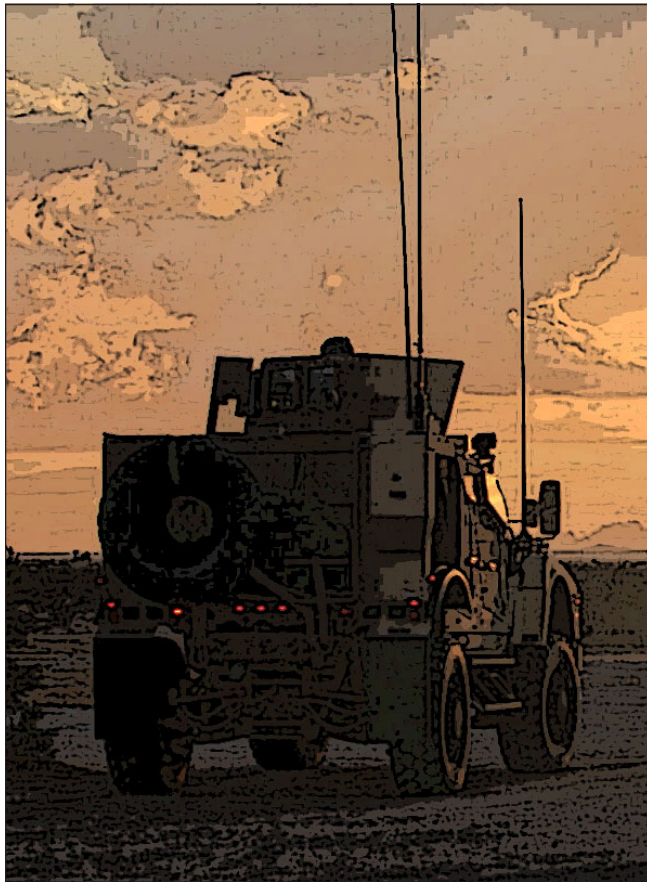


Primitive Firearm Quality Table

Quality Level	To Hit/Damage Modifier	Range Modifier	Weight Modifier	Item Saving Throw Modifier	Condition Level DR	Cost Multiplier
-1	-2	-50%	+25%	-2	+1	-50%
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	+1	+10%	-10%	+1	0	x5
2	+2	+25%	-20%	+2	-1	x10
3	+3	+50%	-30%	+3	-1	x15
4	+4	+75%	-40%	+4	-2	x20
5	+5	+100%	-50%	+5	-2	x25

Advanced Firearms Quality Table

Quality Level	To Hit/Damage Modifier	Range Modifier	Weight Modifier	Item Saving Throw Modifier	Condition Level DR	Cost Multiplier
-1	-1	-25%	+25%	-2	+1	-50%
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	+1	+10%	-10%	+1	0	x5
2	+2	+25%	-20%	+2	-1	x10
3	+3	+50%	-30%	+3	-1	x15
4	+4	+75%	-40%	+4	-2	x20
5	+5	+100%	-50%	+5	-2	x25



Powered Device Quality

All other artifacts — gadgets, gizmos, medical equipment, etc. — also come in varying grades, ranging from disposable near-junk to state of the art. As with other items, you pay for quality, but the better artifacts are more effective. This is reflected in the **Bonus Per Die** column. As an example of

using this column, a normal healing pack cures 3d10 points of damage per discharge, while a healing pack of **Quality Level 2** would restore 3d10+6 points.

The increased **Power Efficiency** is generally seen through longer battery life. For example, a typical flashlight might normally run for eight hours on an energy cell; a 10% increase allows the light to run for eight hours and 48 minutes. High quality devices also weigh less and last longer, as seen in the remaining columns.

Medical Drug Quality

Most medical drugs available in *Mutant Future* were created using standardized chemicals and compounds. But some pharmaceutical companies went further and used far more refined ingredients, while others sold inferior, inert (worthless), or even dangerous material as medication.

In this system, the better a drug's quality, the more effective it is. This can be reflected in a couple different ways: either by changing an effect's die type or by adding a per-die bonus. For example, a normal kit of medi-spray heals 2d8 points of damage per dose. If the PCs find a **Quality Level 2** medi-spray, the ML could indicate its greater potency by increasing the die type one level from d8 to d10, so each dose heals 2d10 damage. Or, she could keep the 2d8 as is, but have a +2 bonus per die (i.e., 2d8+4). The ML should choose one bonus or the other for each medication, not both, as that could make a game-changing (or breaking) drug.

Not every column in the **Drug Quality Table** applies to all medications. For example, a drug that boosts Strength might not heal damage. MLs should choose modifiers appropriate for each drug. The table includes two similar columns: **Saving Throw Modifier** and **Item Saving Throw Modifier**. The former refers to a bonus the medication might give a patient (e.g., for a save against poison), while the

Device Quality Table

Quality Level	Bonus Per Die	Power Efficiency Modifier	Weight Modifier	Item Saving Throw Modifier	Condition Level DR	Cost Multiplier
-1	-1	-50%	+25%	-2	+1	-50%
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	+1	+10%	-10%	+1	0	x5
2	+2	+25%	-20%	+2	-1	x10
3	+3	+50%	-30%	+3	-1	x15
4	+4	+75%	-40%	+4	-2	x20
5	+5	+100%	-50%	+5	-2	x25

Medical Drug Quality Table

Quality Level	Die Type Change	Bonus Per Die	Saving Throw Modifier	Statistic Change	Item Saving Throw Modifier	Condition Level DR	Cost Multiplier
-1	-1 Level	-1	-2	-1	-2	+1	-50%
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	+1 level	+1	+1	+1	+1	-1	x5
2	+1 level	+2	+2	+1	+2	-1	x10
3	+2 levels	+3	+3	+2	+3	-2	x15
4	+2 levels	+4	+4	+2	+4	-2	x20
5	+3 levels	+5	+5	+3	+5	-3	x25

latter refers to the medication's ability to resist being damaged by force, contamination, aging, etc. For information on how the **Condition Level Damage Reduction** might affect medications, see *WftW* issue #17.

Power Source Quality

Even simple batteries can be created from superior materials, lasting longer than their lesser brethren. Higher quality power sources also hold more power and resist damage better. The battery's **Efficiency Modifier** means it likely provides more charges or has a longer run life. For example, using a **Quality Level 5** power cell in a laser pistol gives the weapon 150% more shots (i.e., 25 instead of 10).

Explosive Quality

Superior explosive devices and materials, to include grenades and bombs do more damage, in a greater radius, with better penetration. The **Radius Change** refers to the explosive's area of effect, and should be rounded up to the nearest number. An explosive's **Bonus Per Die** is the amount added/subtracted from each damage die. For example, a frag grenade normally does 5d6 to everything in a 20' radius. A **Quality Level 3** frag grenade does 5d6+10 in a 35' radius. The **Saving Throw**

Modifier indicates how a victim's saving throw is affected, for explosives that allow a save versus an effect or damage.

Personal Shield Versions

WftW issue #22 introduced a wide variety of personal shields; this entry provides the ability to customize those items even more. Higher quality versions provide greater protection, regenerate faster, and last longer on a single power source. The **Hit Point Modifier** should be rounded up to the nearest whole number. Lower end models barely benefit, given the low modifier percentage, but the increase/decrease is always at least 1. A shield's regeneration rate regenerates can never exceed its initial protection. For example, a shield with 10 hit points has a normal regeneration rate of 5 hp/round. A **Quality Level 5** version, with a **Regen Modifier** of +10, has a maximum regeneration rate of 10 hp/round, not 15 as the numbers would indicate.

A shield generator's weight is always modified by at least one pound, even if the result is less than that, to the minimum weight of one-half pound. The **Battery Life Modifier** indicates how much longer a shield can run on an energy source. This time period does stack with the extended life provided by higher quality power sources.

Power Source Quality Table

Quality Level	Efficiency Modifier	Weight Modifier	Item Saving Throw Modifier	Condition Level DR	Cost Multiplier
-1	-50%	+25%	-2	+1	-50%
0	0	0	0	0	0
1	+25%	-10%	+1	-1	x5
2	+50%	-20%	+2	-1	x10
3	+75%	-30%	+3	-2	x15
4	+100%	-40%	+4	-2	x20
5	+150%	-50%	+5	-3	x25

Explosive Quality Table

Quality Level	Radius Change	Bonus Per Die	Saving Throw Modifier	Item Saving Throw Modifier	Condition Level DR	Cost Multiplier
-1	-50%	-1	+2	-2	+1	-50%
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	+25%	+1	-1	+1	-1	x5
2	+50%	+1	-2	+2	-1	x10
3	+75%	+2	-3	+3	-2	x15
4	+100%	+2	-4	+4	-2	x20
5	+150%	+3	-5	+5	-3	x25

Personal Shield Quality Table

Quality Level	Hit Point Modifier	Regen Modifier	Weight Modifier	Battery Life Modifier	Item Saving Throw Modifier	Condition Level DR	Cost Multiplier
-1	-25%	-1	+25%	-50%	-2	+1	-50%
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	+10%	+2	-10%	+10%	+1	-1	x5
2	+20%	+4	-20%	+20%	+2	-1	x10
3	+30%	+6	-30%	+30%	+3	-2	x15
4	+40%	+8	-40%	+40%	+4	-2	x20
5	+50%	+10	-50%	+50%	+5	-3	x25

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