

WISDOM FROM THE WASTELANDS

Issue #19:
Robots Part 4



By Derek Holland and the Skirmisher Game Development Group

Robots are just as important to *Mutant Future* as biological creatures. They can be antagonists, sources of information, or even slave labor. In this fourth installment of Derek's robot-themed issues there are new forms of locomotion, new accessories and weapons, and some additional rules. Some of these were listed in previous issues.

How Technology Condition Affects Robots

The *Mutant Future* core book describes how artifacts have different conditions due to age and wear. This can be applied to robots as well. Here are some suggested effects of the five categories:

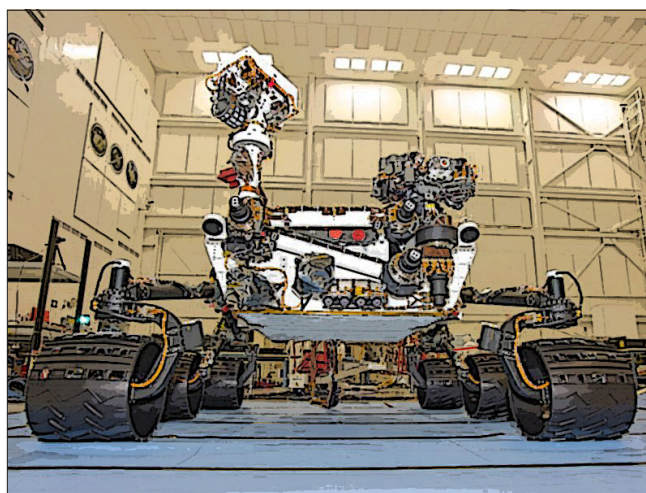
Level	Condition
1	The robot has 1/8th of its normal hit points, a +4 penalty to its armor class (maximum 9), does 1/2 damage with all melee and energy weapons, and has its movement rate reduced to 50%
2	The robot has 25% of its normal hit points, a +2 penalty to its armor class (maximum 9), does 1/2 damage with all energy weapons, and has its movement rate reduced to 50%
3	The robot has 50% of its normal hit points, a +1 penalty to its armor class (maximum 7), and has its movement rate reduced to 75%
4	The robot has 75% of its normal hit points
5	The robot has all normal stats

Alternate Energy Sources

Although robots were originally created with batteries or clips, many have been modified after breaking down. Here are some suggestions on alternate power sources and their effects on the robots' abilities.

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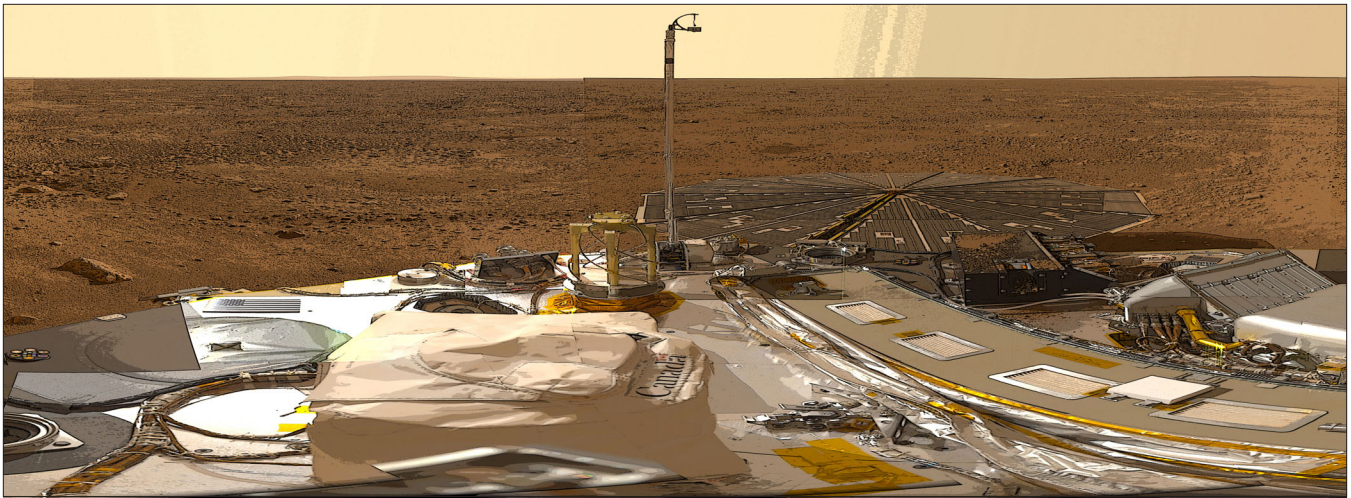
A *furnace* allows the robot to produce power by burning material. The device is bulky, adding 50% to the robot's mass, and it does not produce nearly the power of a radioactive battery. The robot loses initiative every round and its movement rate is reduced to 30' (10'). Flying, aquatic, and small robots cannot have furnaces.

Cables allow a robot to use energy produced by a generator, but this limits the robot's movement. Any other penalties relate to the type of generator and its output. As an example, some generators produce more or less power than the robot requires, which can have a major impact on the robot's longevity and performance.

Solar panels allow a robot to run off sunlight. As long as they are in good condition, solar panels do not produce a penalty on a bright, sunny day. Cloudy days reduce movement to 75% of normal, and the robot can not function at night. Some with the technical ability might try to wire in power cells/storage batteries, to extend a robot's daily activity period, but this may cause damage to the overall power system.

Heat exchange allows a robot to use thermal differences

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).



between itself and its surroundings to produce electricity. Unfortunately, the system has optimal environmental temperature requirements; outside them, the robot's ability to function suffers, with the variance in air or water temperature determining the penalties. The only time the robot cannot function is when the external temperature is within one degree of its internal temperature. The longer the robot functions the smaller the temperature difference will be, so this system cannot be run 24/7. Every so often, the robot must have time to cool down or warm up. Dormant robots need a kick like a fire or blast of cold to start.

Power leech technology allows the robot to draw energy from nearby machines. Though there are several versions of this power source, the most common requires a drain of equal hit dice within a certain distance. Others are more or less effective, which may mean different ranges or number of hit dice drained.

Also note, batteries also have technology condition levels that may affect the robot in a negative manner. See the section above, *How Technology Conditions Affect Robots*, for more details. And see below for a different energy source under *Remora*.

Remora

These small robots attach themselves to larger machines in order to draw from the hosts' power production. In this way, remora act like parasite mutations, which were introduced in *Creatures of the Wastelands*. Similarly to how parasite mutations provide living creatures with powers in exchange for ability points or some sort of drawback, remora provide accessories while affecting one of the following: movement rate, armor class, hit dice, or damage from energy weapons. The exact penalty is up to the ML, and should relate to the robot's technology condition and power source. A large robot in good condition can host as many as five remoras. When the host is rendered inactive, those remora that can move on their own will leave the robot, to either immediately search for a new host or attack those that destroyed their old host. Others simply wait for another host to venture past, and then hop aboard. Some examples:

A *motion detector robot* is 1' long and looks like a box

with legs. It was a remote for another, now nonfunctional robot, and needs a host to continue operating. When attached to a larger robot, it provides constant motion detection in a 180 degree arc and drains enough power to reduce the host's main movement rate by 30' (10').

A *telepathic cables robot* is 3' long, excluding the cables. It acts as a physical interface, connecting biological creature(s) and its host robot, and protecting both from the other's mind. The cables are cumbersome, so they force the host robot to move sluggishly in combat, increasing its armor class by +3, to a maximum of 9.

Magbots are tiny, only 4" long, and come in groups of six or eight. They provide their host with the *magnetic feet* accessory, but have no ability to control the strength of the field they produce. When walking on a metal surface, reduce the host's movement rate by 30' (10'). Small metal objects also stick to the magbots and this increases the host's mass by a small amount, which may or may not inflict a penalty.

Artillery robots are found on military machines, and acts as loading mechanisms when the host's are damaged. It is spider like and weighs no more than a pound. Each artillery robot slows the fire rate of the weapon it reloads to one half normal. For weapons fired once per round, the rate becomes every other round.

Microbot swarms act as a robot repair unit. They are constantly moving, searching for damage, which makes it all but impossible for the host to hide. They surprise on a 1 on a d8 instead of a 1-2 on a d6. (See the *Mutant Future* core book for more information.)

Nano Enhancements

Nanites can provide significant enhancements to robots, but for a cost: if the nanites do not have access to the proper raw materials, they will consume other parts of the robot to complete their task. Nano enhancers are found in small jars and can be a standard part of treasure hoards. It takes time, from hours to months, for the nanites to complete the changes they make to their host machine. This depends on the grade and condition of the nanites: nanites that have been out in the weather for decades will take more time to work than those coming straight out of a vial from a vault. In effect, the

nanite alterations are like parasite mutations that include an age chart. As some jars have been corrupted, a robot may be altered in very weird ways — MLs may wish to use the mutation charts from the *Mutant Future* core book or Skirmisher's *Mutations of the Wastelands* to replicate these changes. The progression can be stopped at a certain level, but that would mean shorting out the nanites — not a good thing to do with a robot. A few simple example enhancements are included below.

Armor Enhancement

Time (days)	Cumulative Effects (penalties if raw materials not provided)
1-2	Armor class gains a 1 point bonus (a 1 point penalty to initiative)
3-4	Armor class gains an additional 1 point bonus (loss of 1 hit die per 10 total hit dice)
5-6	Armor class gains an additional 1 point bonus (another 1 point penalty to initiative)
7-8	Armor class gains an additional 1 point bonus (-30' [10'] to limb based locomotion or -1 die size to damage by one type of weapon)
9+	Armor class gains an additional 1 point bonus (loss of second hit die per 10 hit dice)

Computer Enhancement

Time (weeks)	Cumulative Effects (penalties if raw materials not provided)
1-4	+1 Intelligence (1 point penalty to initiative)
5-8	+1 Willpower (-1 to hit due to sensor degradation)
9-12	An additional +1 Intelligence (an additional 1 point penalty to initiative)
13-16	An additional +1 Willpower (an additional -1 to hit due to sensor degradation)
17+	An additional +2 Intelligence (an additional -2 to hit due to sensor degradation)

Nano enhancements can also be used to reverse the effects of technology condition. If there are no available raw materials, then the first listed effects in the chart above are repaired at the expense of the later listed effects.

NEW LOCOMOTION

Magnetic Drive

This method of movement uses the Earth's (or other planet's) magnetic field. It repels the robot in the direction the machine wants to travel. The robot flies as though it has an inductor but has no exhaust and is not capable of space flight.

Wormhole Drive

This very rare form of locomotion allows the robot to teleport. The range is usually short, 10 miles, but some of the most powerful military bots can travel up to 500 astronomical units (so they can go anywhere in the solar system). It takes time to recharge the drive and the robot can teleport only once per hour.

NEW MANIPULATOR

Tractor Beam

This device allows the robot to lift and move (or throw) objects from a certain distance. The capability is very crude and does not permit fine motor manipulation, such as operating buttons, levers, and such.

NEW ACCESSORIES

Animal Call/Lure

A robot with this device can summon creatures. Some are restricted to specific species and other can replicate any call or lure they analyze for one minute. This can affect mutant animals, and requires a save versus stun to resist.

DNA Scanner

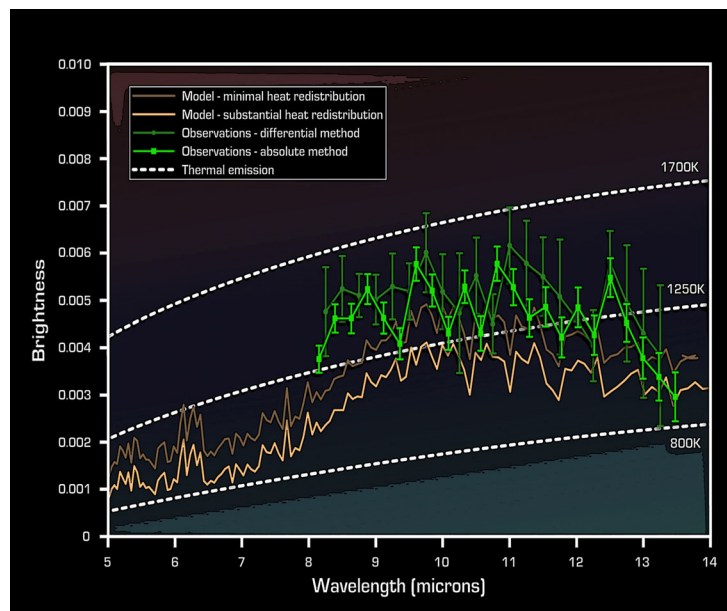
This device allows a robot to use beam scans and blood samples to identify an organism's mutations and traits. This usually takes 1 round per creature, using a blood sample; it takes a little longer with the beam technology, as this has to cut out background "noise" — microbes in the air. It can also be used as a lock, so only the robot's owner may command it.

Drug Synthesizer

Medbots use these devices to produce medicines. Anything in the *Mutant Future* corebook's "Advanced Drugs and Chemicals" section can be made with the right raw materials.

Environmental Analyzer

Found almost exclusively in testbots and unreality robots (see Issue #18: Robots Part 3), environmental analyzers allow the robot to study different laws of physics. This accessory protects a robot from most planar effects that cause insanity. On the MF plane, variants of this accessory are used to study air, food, and water quality, as well as biological specimens and geological features.



Extra-Dimensional Space

The robot can twist space to form an extra-dimensional pocket where it can store things. The limitation on size and mass depend on the robot model: some can only create space for 1 cubic foot and 1 pound, while others robots can open 100,000 cubic feet and accommodate 5 tons. When a robot with this accessory is destroyed there is a 5% chance the space and all within it are lost forever. Otherwise, they are expelled on top of the robot's remains (and on anyone nearby, if there is enough material).

Fabricator

The robot can construct one or more types of objects. This process requires raw materials, with the quality of those materials helping determine the quality of the end product, which can include gasses and liquids. Some robots can use a fabricator to create cybernetic implants within a creature, thus bypassing the need for surgery.

Food Synthesizer

When in good condition, these machines are the best source of food in the wastes. They produce tasty, nutritious items from almost any non-toxic organic material. Those in bad condition may produce inedible or toxic items.

Gravity Manipulator

This machine can do three things: increase gravity up to ten times normal, reduce gravity to 1/10th normal, or create spots of normal or altered gravity that are not up or down — i.e., sideways or diagonal in a certain direction.

Hardened Circuits

This accessory makes a robot or other machine immune to EMP effects. Some versions also reduce damage from electrical attacks by 1/2.

Matter/Energy Converter

This device takes matter or energy and converts it to the other, with most uses related to producing energy — but some are used to store objects and people. The device range and amount of matter/energy stored varies depending on the robot.



Medical Scanner

Medbots use these devices to determine the health of their patients. A person must be in contact with the robot for 1 minute for a complete scan.

Poison Detector

This device detects substances that will harm pure humans. It requires a sample and takes one round to analyze.

Polymorphic Frame

Robots with this accessory can change form. Most have two forms to choose from but some machines can have as many as five. Robots that need more than five will have the liquid state frame.

Remote

Remotes are devices that allow a machine to use its sensors from a distance. Most remotes have a range of 500' and the same sensors as the robot itself, but there are exceptions. Military robots have crawling or flying remotes to scout nearby areas and thus negate any chances of surprise. Some also have small weapons or flash devices used to distract opponents.

Seed

The robot has nanites that, when placed with the proper raw materials, will “grow” a new robot of the same model. Fortunately, very advanced robots have very specific material needs — so the whole planet cannot be converted into a massive swarm of robots.

Telepathic Cables

Using this device, robots can communicate directly with a brain (this can be anything with a brain, even animals and plants). Some versions allow mental control and a save versus stun is required to keep free of the machine's influence.

NEW WEAPONS

Damage, range, and other unmentioned characteristics are for the ML to decide when designing robots. Rays, unless otherwise determined by the ML, are lines of effect and may strike more than one person or object.

Bouncing Bomb

The robot's explosives are made to bounce and will only detonate when a signal is transmitted. The robot can use these bombs to get around cover, or even to cause damage (usually d6 per hit) before detonation, via direct impacts with the bomb — like being hit with a rock.

Bubble Cannon

This weapon causes millions of microscopic bubbles to form inside the target. When the bubbles collapse, they produce a great deal of heat. The resulting damage is half heat and half physical, and only applies to fleshy beings (i.e., animals, humans, and some androids — but not plants).

Caltrops

The caltrops robots can drop come in many different designs, but there are several basic forms. Some variants are relatively blunt, meant to keep animals and humans at bay with minimal harm. Other, sharper forms are intended to control a battlefield. And some, which are almost two-dimensional, are meant to destroy vehicles.

Charge Screen

Charge screens are defensive and do damage to everything within range, which depends on the type of robot. When used in combination with a force field, a charge screen can detonate explosives before they can damage the field and robot. Most charge screens do electrical damage but some do thermal or even radiation.

Confusion Ray

This weapon scrambles the target's mind, causing short-term confusion (see the *Mutant Future* core book for information on confusion).

Darkness Field

The robot can snuff out all light within a specific range (usually 10' to 150'). Optical sensors and beings which rely on the traditional visual spectrum are affected by the darkness. Mutants with *thermal vision*, *ultraviolet vision*, or *unique sense* mutations will have an easier time getting around.

Drain

The robot can drain power cells from a distance. Every round or minute (depending on robot model), a year's worth of use is drained from the targeted power source. (See the *Mutant Future* core book for more information on power source lifetimes.)

Drill

This accessory for ray weapons allows bots to ignore force fields, no matter their source — and is the only way to punch through the indestructible forms. Using a drill requires a great deal of energy, so it can only be used a limited number of times per day. A drill-enhanced weapon inflicts double damage when used against fields created by the *force screen* mutation.

Energy Mirror

Robots with this accessory have either actual mirrors or some super-science effect that allows them to redirect the beams from energy weapons after firing them. There is a penalty to hit, but this allows robots to shoot around cover with their ray weapons.

Enlarge/Shrink Ray

This weapon induces the *dwarfism* or *gigantism* mutations in the target on the first hit, with each subsequent strike doubling the effect. The maximum size decrease is to 1" and increase to 100'. The effect only lasts an hour, so a robot could not zap someone a year later and get the increased effectiveness.



Fear Ray

Anyone hit by this ray must save versus stun or be overwhelmed with fear, which can mean the target runs away or completely collapse (and may take no action until the effect ends).

Force Field

Force fields are indestructible but very energy intensive. The robot (and anything else within the field) is completely protected from all forms of damage. A typical robot can raise its force fields for 5 round per day. Anything running into a field, such as a vehicle, takes falling/impact damage.

Invisible

One or more of the robot's weapons are hidden from sight, and possibly other senses. This is very common in robots that disperse caltrops, and assassin bots that have weapons generating rays invisible to normal vision (rather than the colored beams seen in movies).

Life Ray

The air is full of bacteria and fungal spores. This weapon causes them to grow, inflicting random diseases upon the target.

Mist Cloud

The robot can produce a cloud of mist around itself, obscuring vision and making it harder to target the robot. Some robots produce mist that is not water — this may be poison, corrosives, or other chemicals.

Mouth

Some robots have an aperture that allows them to engulf targets, trapping them within the machine until freed. In the case of lumberbots, mining bots, and recycling bots, the target also takes shredding or crushing damage. In the case of police and military bots, the target is immobilized.

Necrotic Ray

This weapon inhibits cellular regeneration. Half the damage is permanent unless treated with Ancients' medicine.

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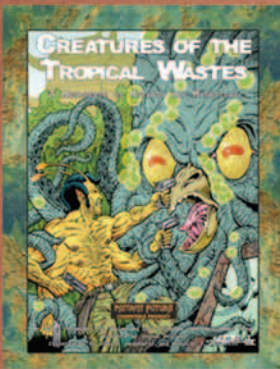
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