

WISDOM FROM THE WASTELANDS

Issue #21: High-Tech Melee Weapons



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Although most Ancients considered melee weapons (swords, axes, maces, spears, and even exotic ranged weapons like bolas and shuriken) to be archaic, some did practice the use of such weapons, and there were inevitably high tech versions. This issue deals with these modern melee weapons, alternate methods of creating them, and introduces some new weapons. Mutant Lords should be aware that serious, munchkin-style abuse is a very real possibility when creating a weapon with these guidelines. As a suggestion, no weapon should have more than two modifications, e.g., a duralloy cryo-sword. The ML can create a truly monstrous, game-breaking weapon using these rules, so use them wisely! The game you save might be your own. A special thanks goes out to Chris Olmstead, Carl Ross, and Chad Zsideg for contributing ideas to this article.

SECTION I: ALTERNATE CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS

Unlike their historic, steel predecessors, many modern weapons were created from different high tech alloys. As a result, these weapons are lighter, more durable, and, in many cases, will often inflict far greater damage than comparable weapons from ages past. Following are several sorts of alternate materials, descriptions of them, and their game effects.

Dura-Aluminum: An extremely light and durable mixture of aluminum and composites. Weapons created from this material weigh half the usual amount, and gain a +2 to all saving throws against breakage (see *WftW Issue #1: Artifacts, Manuals, and Toolkits*, or the Encounters and Combat section of the *Mutant Future* core rulebook for more information).

Crystalline Obsidian: Obsidian can be given an exceedingly sharp edge, but it is a very brittle material. Combining obsidian with a crystal matrix allows a keen sharpness, while producing a far more resilient weapon. All blades created from this substance inflict +2 per die damage.

Duralloy: Weapons created from this specialized mixture of alloys weigh the same as, but are far more durable than, their normal counterparts. All duralloy weapons gain a +4



to saving throws.

ConductAlloy: Many energized weapons are created using this special alloy, which encourages the transfer of energy from one point to another. All energy-based melee weapons made from this material have a +2 to hit and +2 per die damage.

Super Dense: Certain types of melee weapons were constructed of super dense metallic alloys. The additional weight made wielding them more difficult, but allowed them to inflict significantly more damage. All weapons created with this material weigh twice the normal amount, do +2 per die damage, and give the wielder a +2 to hit. All saving throws for these weapons have a +3 bonus.

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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).

SECTION II: EDGING

The Ancients had many different sharpening and hardening techniques for putting and keeping an edge on weapons. Some of these processes would produce weapons able to cut through even the densest material and inflict horrible wounds (increasing the chance of inflicting a critical hit; see *WftW Issue #11: Optional Combat Rules*). Following are several sorts of edgings, descriptions for them, and their game effects.

Carbon Filament: Nanites realign the carbon atoms within the edge's steel matrix, making it denser and sharper, while creating beautiful patterns akin to those on the Ancients' Damascus blades. +4 to hit and +4 per die damage. Critical on 17-20.

Diamond: Advances in material science allowed weapon edges to be plated with a super-hard crystal coating. +3 to hit and +3 per die damage. Critical on 18-20.

Gamma Xenon: This edging is a slightly radioactive energy field powered by a single mini-fusion cell, which is good for 40 minutes of continuous use. +2 to hit and +2 per die damage. No bonus to Critical. Inflicts class 2 radiation on the target.

Keen: A process created by an engineer with literary enthusiasms, this was nicknamed a "vorpal" edge. +1 to hit and +1 per die damage. No bonus chance to critical.

Laser-Sharpened: By using lasers to sculpt a weapon's edge, the blade becomes much sharper and lasts longer. +2 to hit and +2 per die damage. Critical on 19-20.

Molecular: The pinnacle of edging technology produces an edge one molecule wide and able to cut through anything. +5 to hit and +5 per die damage. Critical on 16-20.

Vibrating: Not the same as a vibro weapon, but similar. Any weapon with this edge is powered by a mini-fusion cell, good for 90 minutes use. Weapon has +1 to hit and +1 per die damage. Critical on 19-20.



SECTION III: ENHANCEMENTS

In addition to making melee weapons from high tech materials, the Ancients were able to further enhance their killing power by adding a variety of devices that would terrify an opponent.

Cryo Weapons

All melee weapons can be modified to do cold damage. This requires a power cell and specialized emitters that chill the weapon. When hit by this type of weapon, a target first suffers regular damage, then takes cold damage. The target must then make a saving throw against death or suffer 1d2 points of Dexterity loss due to the extreme cold. This loss is regained at the target's regular healing rate per day.

The ML can also require a saving throw for metal and plastic items carried by the target, as the extreme cold could damage these items (see *WftW Issue #1*, or the Encounters and Combat section of the revised *Mutant Future* core rulebook for more details). If the saving throw fails, the item suffers 1d3 levels of condition damage.

Against targets that are normally vulnerable to cold-based attacks, the wielder gains a +2 to hit and inflicts 50% more damage (unless the condition of the vulnerability states otherwise). Also, these targets suffer critical hits on 18-20, instead of the usual 20. For damage bonuses using cryo weapons, see the **Primary Weapon Damage Table** (below).

Energetic Proton Blades

Similar to laser blades, these specialized weapons have emitters built into their blade edges that generate a stream of highly energized proton particles. Though not quite as powerful as lasers, the electrical current wreaks havoc on other electrical systems and robotic units.

Any robot, android, or synthetic being (but not Replicants) struck by the weapon automatically takes 50% more damage and must save versus energy or be stunned for 2d4 rounds. Also, any target carrying electrical equipment must save for each piece (see *WftW Issue #1*, or the Encounters and Combat section of the revised *Mutant Future* core rulebook for more details). If the saving throw fails, the item suffers 1d3 levels of condition damage. If the target is grounded, the ML should decide on how (or if) it is affected.

Against targets that are normally vulnerable to energy-based attacks, the wielder gains a +2 to hit and inflicts 50% more damage (unless the condition of the vulnerability states otherwise). Also, these targets suffer critical hits on 18-20, instead of the usual 20. For damage bonuses using energetic proton weapons, see the **Primary Weapon Damage Table** (below). Note, all damage inflicted using these weapons is considered electrical; when not activated, they are mostly just a hilt.

Energized Weapons

These appear to be normal melee weapons when not activated. However, once activated they glow with a bright blue light and inflict extra damage when they hit. Energized weapons come in three sizes: small, 1H, and two-handed. Each of

these does its own bonus damage (on top of the melee weapon's regular damage), and has its own battery lifespan. While not quite as powerful as most vibro weapons, any type of melee weapon can be energized — unlike the vibro upgrade, which is limited to edge weapons only. For damage bonuses using energized weapons, see the **Primary Weapon Damage Table** (below).

Harmonized Energy Weapons

This option is available for any of the energy weapons described in this issue. These weapons use specialized energy emitters that constantly shift through various energy harmonic fields to inflict double damage against personal force fields. If the weapon's field becomes deactivated, the weapon will inflict regular damage when it hits.

Laser Blades

Many edged weapons could be modified to carry a power source and have emitters built into the edge of the blade, turning an already deadly weapon into a cutting nightmare.

All laser blades can use different laser crystals, some of which cause cold or thermal damage, but all inflict energy damage when they hit. If for some reason the weapon loses power or otherwise loses the ability to emit the laser, it will still do the weapon's standard damage. For damage bonuses using laser weapons, see the **Primary Weapon Damage Table** (below).

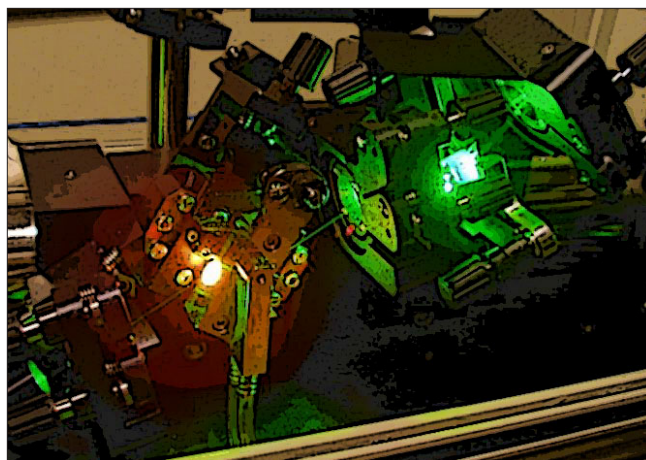
Laser Crystals

All laser weapons have crystals that focus the energy transferred through them into powerful, coherent beams of light. There are several different kinds available, with various sizes for the different types of laser weapon (i.e., crystals intended for pistols will not work in rifles or squad support weapons). Crystals can be changed out of laser weapons only if the user is familiar with the weapon (has figured out the artifact). Doing this requires no repair roll.

Cobalt crystals do cold-based damage (the only type of laser that does) and cause numbness (unless the target is immune to cold-based attacks), which gives penalties to attack and armor class.

Gamma crystals have no damage modifier but the target is also exposed to class 3 radiation (save versus Radiation required).

Microwave crystals inflict less damage than normal on most targets. But if used against robotic units the damage is doubled, and the robotic unit must save versus energy attacks



or be stunned for 1d12 rounds.

Ultraviolet crystals might blind a target by overloading the optic nerves (or sensors). The target must save versus energy or be blinded for 1d6 rounds.

Thermal damage may set flammable objects on fire. The ML should decide the chance of this happening, based on the material hit.

Paralyzing & Stunning

All melee weapons can be modified to carry a specialized energy charge. The weapon does regular damage when it hits, but the target must also save against stun, or be paralyzed for 1d6 rounds. These weapons are each powered by a standard micro-fusion cell, which will have a charge life that varies with the weapon size.

Paralyzing Weapon Battery Life Table

Weapon Size	Battery Life
Small (dagger, dirk, etc.)	90 Minutes
1H (e.g., short sword, mace, spear, long sword)	60 Minutes
Two-Handed (e.g., battle axe, bastard sword, great axe, long spear)	30 Minutes

Radioactive Weapons

With large numbers of mutants gaining immunity to wasteland radiation, it was only a matter of time before some of these creatures began to use weapons that are highly radioactive and extremely dangerous to those not properly protected.

There are two types of radioactive weapons: those specifically formed from radioactive material, such as

Laser Crystal Effect Table

Crystal Type/Color	Damage Modifier	Additional Effect
Cobalt (Blue)	Cold, +1 point of damage per die	Numbing effect: -2 to hit, +2 to AC
Gamma (Green)	None	Each attack exposes target to class 3 radiation
Infrared (Red)	Thermal, +1point of damage per die	None
Microwave (White)	-2 points of damage per dice	Additional EMP damage against robotic units
Multi-Light Frequency (Multi-Colored)	Thermal, +50% Damage	None
Ultraviolet (Purple)	None	Possible blindness

uranium and other deadly agents; and those regular melee weapons that were simply contaminated by radiation. Any weapons created from radioactive material will always be Super Dense (see above) and will typically emit radiation classes 7-10. Contaminated weapons can be of any intensity, but most often emit radiation classes 1-6.

To permanently imbue a weapon with radiation, it must be left in a radiation field for no less than 11 months, minus the class of the radiation. For example, consider a character who wants to have a mace with class 5 radiation. He would have to leave it in a class 5 field for 6 months. If he wanted a weapon with class 10 radiation, he would have to leave it in a class 10 field for 1 month for it to become permanently radioactive. If the weapon isn't exposed long enough, the radioactivity will last for only 1d3 months before dissipating.

Thermal Weapons

Like Cryo weapons, all regular melee weapons can be modified to inflict thermal damage. This change requires a power cell and specialized emitters, which heat the metal until it is almost white-hot but still stable. Note that only Duralloy and Super Dense metals can use this option.

When hit by this type of weapon, a target first suffers regular damage, then takes thermal damage. Especially hairy targets must save against death or catch fire, taking an additional 3d6 points of damage per round until the flames are extinguished.

The ML can also require a saving throw for flammable items carried by the target, as the extreme heat could damage these items (see *WftW Issue #1*, or the Encounters and Combat section of the revised *Mutant Future* core rulebook for more details). If the saving throw fails, the item suffers 1d3 points of condition damage.

Against targets that are normally vulnerable to heat-based attacks, the wielder gains a +2 to hit and inflicts 50% more damage (unless the condition of the vulnerability states otherwise). Also, these targets suffer critical hits on 18-20, instead of the usual 20. For damage bonuses using thermal weapons, see the **Primary Weapon Damage Table**.

Primary Weapon Damage Table

Weapon Type	Small	1H	Two-Handed
Cryo	+2d6	+4d6	+6d6
Energized	+2d6	+4d6	+6d6
Laser/Energetic			
Thermal	+2d6	+4d6	+6d6

SECTION IV: NEW MELEE WEAPONS

This list contains a large number of new melee weapons, with their weights, typical damages, costs (which was left generic, as it could be gold, credits, bottle caps — you name it, depending on the campaign), and types.

This last category shows which weapons can be wielded one-handed (Small or 1H), and those that need to be wielded two-handed (2H). Note that all the weapons listed can be modernized, and may use any of the modifications or materials listed in this issue.



New Melee Weapons Table

Weapon	Damage	Weight	Cost	Type
Axe, Battle	1d10	8 lbs.	15	2H
Axe, Great	3d4	12 lbs.	30	2H
Axe, Hand	1d6	2 lbs.	5	Small
Bola	1d4	1 lb.	3	Small
Club, Great	1d10	10 lbs.	8	2H
Dagger	1d4	1 lb.	5	Small
Dart	1d2	0.1 lbs.	0.2 per	Small
Flail, Heavy	2d6	12 lbs.	25	2H
Glaive	2d4	11 lbs.	12	2H
Halberd	1d10	15 lbs.	15	2H
Hammer, Light	1d4	2 lbs.	2	Small
Katana	1d10	4 lbs.	40	1H
Kukri	1d6	3 lbs.	8	Small
Mace, Heavy	1d8	10 lbs.	15	2H
Mace, War	2d6	15 lbs.	30	2H
Maul	3d4	22 lbs.	20	2H
Nunchaku	2d3	2 lbs.	3	1H
Rapier	1d6	2 lbs.	25	1H
Sai	1d4	1 lb.	3	Small
Scimitar	1d6	5 lbs.	20	1H
Shuriken	1d4	0.1 lb.	0.2 per	Small
Sickle	2d3	3 lbs.	8	Small
Spear, Great	2d6	10 lbs.	35	2H
Spear, Long	2d4	7 lbs.	7	2H
Spear, Short	1d6	3 lbs.	2	1H
Staff, Bo	1d6	2 lbs.	5	2H
Staff, Jo	1d4	1 lb.	3	1H
Sword, Bastard	1d10	7 lbs.	40	2H
Sword, Broad	2d4	6 lbs.	35	2H
Sword, Great	3d4	9 lbs.	65	2H
Tonfa	2d3	2 lbs.	10	Small
Trident	1d8	5 lbs.	18	1H
Whip	1d3	2 lbs.	3	1H

Vibro Weapons

These weapons vibrate at an incredible rate, and can cause hideous damage. Although the *Mutant Future* core rulebook already has two *vibro* blades, below are several new types the ML can use in his campaign.

Note that all these weapons are powered by mini-fusion cells, have a +2 to hit bonus, and inflict critical hits on a roll of 19-20 (this includes the *vibro dagger* and *vibro sword* from the core rulebook).

Vibro Weapons Table

Weapon	Damage	Battery Life
Vibro Battle Axe	1d10 +12	30 Minutes
Vibro Bastard Sword	1d10 +20	40 Minutes
Vibro Broad Sword	2d4 +16	40 Minutes
Vibro Great Axe	3d4 +22	20 Minutes
Vibro Great Sword	3d4 +22	20 Minutes
Vibro Hand Axe	1d6 +8	60 Minutes
Vibro Katana	1d10 +20	30 Minutes
Vibro Long Spear	2d4 +12	40 Minutes
Vibro Scimitar	1d6 +10	30 Minutes
Vibro Short Sword	1d6 +8	60 Minutes
Vibro Spear	1d6 +10	40 Minutes
Vibro Two-handed Sword	1d10 +26	20 Minutes

SECTION V: OPTIONAL COMBAT RULES

Following are a number of optional combat rules that ML's can allow players and their opponents make use of.

Throwing Melee Weapons

Occasionally a character may attempt to throw a melee weapon at a target, despite the fact that these weapons are not meant to be thrown. The attacker uses her ranged attack, not her melee attack when rolling to hit. The range and penalty to hit are based entirely upon the size of the weapon.



The weapon inflicts half damage (rounded down, minimum of 1 point), and the attacker does not do any bonus damage for having a high Strength score.

For example, a character tries throwing a long sword at a fleeing target. The weapon is one handed, giving a -4 to hit. The character manages to hit and rolls for damage as normal, getting a 6. Since the weapon was thrown, the damage is only 3.

Thrown Melee Weapon Table

Weapon Size	Range	Penalty
Small	Strength x3 in feet	-2 to hit
One-Handed	Strength in feet	-4 to hit
Two-Handed	1/2 Strength in feet	-6 to hit

Wielding Two Weapons at Once

A character may use two small weapons (see the New Melee Weapons Table above) simultaneously, making two attacks in a single round, but with a -3 penalty to each to hit roll. The character may also attempt to wield two 1H weapons at once, but suffer a -5 to hit penalty to each weapon. Characters with the *increased physical attribute (dexterity)* mutation will suffer only a -1 or -3 to hit respectively.

Wielding a Two-Handed Weapon in One Hand

A character may also wield a two-handed weapon in one hand, but suffer a -3 to hit, unless they have the *gigantism* mutation, the *increased physical attribute (strength)* mutation, or an exceptionally high strength (18 or more).

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Content posted on the site includes material tying in with specific issues of this publication, Chris "Outlander" Van Deelen's ongoing feature on "Monsters from Movies, Games, and other Media," and more!

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