

MECHA WORLD

An Apocalypse/Dungeon World-inspired RP System—with Mecha!

by Jake Humphrey

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1 Introduction

This document details a Dungeon World-like tabletop roleplay system for the mecha genre. The creation of this system was motivated by a number of problems faced while playing Mekton Zeta, notably:

- The amount of time and work required to create a mecha.
- Lack of roleplaying incentives
- Overwhelming rule complexity.

Conversely, when I played Dungeon World, I was impressed by its ability to integrate the fiction and roleplaying into the mechanics. I want to bring this playstyle to my Mekton Zeta campaign, and whilst creating a whole new system rather than being a better GM may seem like overkill, it will certainly be fun.

2 Stats

The base of any RP is the stats. I wanted to cut a fine compromise between the simplicity of, say, Apocalypse World's 5: Cool, Hard, Hot, Smart, and Weird, while still getting the coverage of Mekton Zeta's 9. With that in mind, Mecha World uses the following stats:

2.1 Cool

With a "Cool" stat existing in both Apocalypse World and Mekton Zeta, it seemed silly to not include it here. Cool symbolises how a character deals with pressure. A Cool character walks out into bulletstorms fearlessly, and take the vilest insults without batting an eye. An Uncool character can most often be found cowering in fear, being reduced to tears, or not getting in the goddamn robot, Shinji.

2.2 Talk

You may walk the walk, but can you do this? Talk represents how well a character can communicate, whether that be rousing speeches, witty comebacks, or pep talks. A Talkative character can inspire the masses to their cause, humiliate opponents in battles of wits, or brief an entire squadron. An untalkative character misses key details in their explanations, accidentally insults people they're trying to inspire, or thinks of the perfect retort five days later in the shower.

2.3 Hard

Another stat stolen from Apocalypse World, Hard represents a character's strength and build. Can your character karate chop a pile of bricks clean in two? Do do they eat raw eggs for breakfast, and cow pie for lunch? Do they have to buy two seats at the cinema? Then they're probably a Hard character. If your character eats cup ramen three times a day, faints when struck by falling sunbeams, and doesn't know their hack squats from their hyper extensions, they probably have a low score in this stat.

2.4 Fast

The counterpart to Hard among the physical stats, Fast represents a character's running speed and manual dexterity. A fast character may be an Olympic athlete, a ninjutsu master, or even a world-record holding Rubik's cube solver. Slow characters have trouble getting out of bed in the morning, struggle to keep their balance or footing, and react to dangerous situations a little too late.

2.5 Tech

In a darkened room, the curtains drawn, green text adorns a black background of a glowing computer screen. Such is the lifestyle of your typical Techie character. If you want to fix or augment your mecha with cool prototype weapons, hack your opponent's automated defenses to take out their base without getting out of your comfy chair, or create a GUI interface in Visual Basic to back-trace a caller's IP address, choose a high score in this stat. Non-technical characters will be relegated to padded cockpits with single buttons, lest they accidentally set off the alarms whilst trying to force a door open, or cut the wrong wire attempting to defuse a homemade bomb.

2.6 Plan

Have you ever walked into a room and forgotten what you came in for? Is your cockpit's monitor adorned with post-its of your various passwords? Do you often find yourself unable to react when the floor is blown out from under your feet by improvised explosive devices? If so, you probably don't have a high Plan score. Planners act fast, and they act with precision. They can make a squadron of 4 soldiers seem like a dozen to the enemy, deduce the keycode to a locked door by the pattern of grime on the keys, or reveal to their enemies that all their weaponry has been disabled from the start. They set up the dominoes, then knock them all down like a house of cards. Checkmate.

3 Moves

The moves are the blood of a *-World game, and they keep the game, well, moving. Any move consists of a trigger, and an action. A success generally means the player gets their desired outcome, a partial success is still a success, but a slightly worse overall outcome, and a failure means the GM can make a move.

Class- and Mecha-specific moves will be treated in their own sections, so the basic moves accessible to everyone (human or giant robot) will be detailed here.

3.1 Basic Moves

3.1.1 Brawl

When you **trade blows or blades with someone**, Roll +Hard

- On a 10+, deal your damage to the enemy and choose one:
 - Force the enemy into a nearby danger
 - Avoid a counterattack
- On a 7–9, deal your damage to the enemy but receive a counterattack
- On a 6 or less, you miss and your enemy takes advantage

3.1.2 Flourish

When you **execute a fancy combat technique**, Roll +Fast

- On a 10+, deal your damage to the enemy and avoid their attack
- On a 7–9, choose one:
 - Deal damage to your enemy
 - Avoid a counterattack
- On a 6 or less, you fail and your enemy takes advantage

3.1.3 Burst

When you **spray and pray with an automatic weapon**, Roll +Cool

- On a 10+, deal your damage to the enemy
- On a 7–9, choose two:

- Deal damage to your enemy
- Don't hit any unintended targets
- Still have ammo in the gun
- On a 6 or less, choose one

3.1.4 Aim

When you **take aim and fire with a semi-auto or single-action weapon**, Roll +Plan

- On a 10+, deal your damage to the enemy
- On a 7–9, choose two:
 - Deal damage to your enemy
 - You don't have to displace to get a good shot
 - You don't draw unwanted attention
- On a 6 or less, choose one

3.1.5 Hold Fast

When you **stand your ground**, Roll +Cool

- On a 10+, you maintain the status quo despite outside forces
- On a 7–9, choose two:
 - maintain the status quo
 - you don't take attrition
 - you don't lose something important
- On a 6 or less, choose one

3.1.6 Taunt

When you **make a snarky comment at someone**, Roll +Talk

- On a 10+, choose two:
 - you provoke them into making an error
 - you provoke them into revealing information

- you don't provoke a retaliation
- On a 7–9, choose one
- On a 6 or less, your target ignores your foolish yapping

3.1.7 Defy

When you **make a last-ditch attempt to avoid a calamity**, pick the stat you are using. If you do it:

- By ignoring the danger, use Cool
- With quick talking, an inspiring word, or a witty retort, use Talk
- With a feat of strength or endurance, use Hard
- With lightning reflexes or speed, use Fast
- By using gadgets or technical knowledge, use Tech
- With a premeditated strategy or a bright idea, use Plan

Assuming the GM agrees have time to react, Roll+Stat:

- On a 10+, you do what you set out to, the threat doesn't come to bear
- On a 7–9, you stumble, hesitate, or flinch: the GM will offer you a worse outcome, hard bargain, or ugly choice

3.1.8 Jury Rig

When you **use a piece of equipment for something other than its intended purpose**, Roll +Tech

- On a 10+, you succeed
- On a 7–9, you succeed, but choose one:
 - you damage the equipment beyond repair
 - you set off a previously-unknown function of the equipment
 - you hurt yourself in the process
- On a 6 or less, just choose one

3.2 Special Moves

4 Classes

4.1 Swordsmaster

These fools lack honour and discipline. Look at them now, laughing carelessly over a shared lunch. They could be attacked right now, and only you would be able to defend yourself. While they waste away their time you sit here, tirelessly drawing and resheathing your sword to shave off those precious milliseconds that could mean the difference between life and death.

A warrior's life is tough, to be sure, but it has its rewards. What are they to you? To lay down your life in defense of your lord, like the samurai of old? Or do you prefer to feel the breath of your enemy leave them, while you bask in the knowledge that when it came right down to it, you were better than them? Whatever your goal, you will find it hard to attain with these weaklings around. They lack honour and discipline, but you can change that.

4.1.1 Look

Choose one for each:

Tired Eyes, Fierce Eyes, or Piercing Eyes.

Topknot, Wild Hair, or Shorn Hair

Gi and Hakama, Noble Wear, or Bandages

4.1.2 Stats

Choose one set:

- Cool+1 Talk-1 Hard+1 Fast+2 Tech-1 Plan+1
- Cool+1 Talk+1 Hard+1 Fast+2 Tech-1 Plan-1
- Cool=0 Talk-1 Hard+2 Fast+2 Tech-1 Plan-1
- Cool+1 Talk-1 Hard=0 Fast+2 Tech+1 Plan=0

4.1.3 Signature Weapon

You are the bone of your sword. Perhaps it was created by a master smith centuries ago, or perhaps you found it on the floor. Regardless, this is your sword and it is irreplaceable, so don't lose it.

Your base sword comes with a matching sheath and is (2-harm, hand, 2 weight).

Choose a look:

- Straight or Curved
- Single-edged, Double-edged, or Thrusting
- Simple Design, Elaborate Design, or High-Tech Design

Choose two enhancements:

- Serrated (+1-harm)
- Vibrating (+1 piercing, messy, hi-tech)
- Disposable (infinite)
- Perfectly-Balanced (precise)
- Tasseled (+short, thrown)
- Well-Crafted (−1 weight)
- Twin (you have two and can dual-wield, but each individually is 1-harm and 1 weight. You can deal damage with both during an attack, but your other enhancement applies to only one blade)

4.1.4 Quickdraw

When you **are attacked in melee by an enemy while your sword is sheathed**, Roll +Fast

- On a 10+, draw your sword and inflict your damage, negating the incoming attack
- On a 7–9, draw your sword and inflict your damage, but the enemy’s attack still lands
- On a 6 or less, the enemy reaches you before you can draw your sword

4.1.5 You Are Already Dead

When you **resheathe your sword immediately after dealing damage**, Roll +Cool

- On a 10+, Choose 2:
 - Additional wounds are revealed on your enemy, adding 1-harm to the damage and applying the messy tag.
 - Your spirit overflows, hitting nearby enemies for 1s-harm

- A nearby mook flees in terror
- A nearby character is impressed
- On a 7–9, choose 1

4.1.6 Equipment

You get your signature weapon, but choose your defenses:

- Padded Clothes (1-armour, 1 weight)
- Samurai Armour (2-armour, 3 weight)
- Exoskeleton (2-armour, fused, 0 weight)

4.2 Hikikomori

What was that noise? Is someone there? Maybe if you're quiet enough, they'll think you're not in. You shun outside contact. Friends only ever let you down. To support yourself, here, with your own two hands is enough. Well, in addition to the food your nice older sibling leaves outside your door.

The gentle hum of the machinery, the moonlight streaming in through the viewing port. This is the life. Solitude is not loneliness; that's what the others don't understand. Always asking what's wrong. They'll never understand you. Not like you do.

4.2.1 Look

Choose one for each:

Tired Eyes, Calculating Eyes, or Hair Over Eyes.

Messy Hair, Long Straight Hair, or Covered Hair

Tracksuit, T-shirt and Jeans, or Pyjamas

4.2.2 Stats

Choose one set:

- Cool+1 Talk-2 Hard-1 Fast+1 Tech+2 Plan+2
- Cool-1 Talk+1 Hard=0 Fast=0 Tech+2 Plan+1
- Cool+1 Talk-1 Hard+2 Fast-1 Tech+2 Plan-1

- Cool=0 Talk=0 Hard-2 Fast+2 Tech+2 Plan+1

4.2.3 Security Expert

When you **attempt to overcome network security**, Roll +Tech

- On a 10+, choose three from the list below:
 - You learn something new about your adversary
 - You disable something of the enemy's
 - You sow misinformation among the enemy
 - Your intrusion is undetected
- On a 7–9, choose one
- On a 6 or less, you are detected before you can do anything

4.2.4 Don't Come In!

When you **trap a room or entrance**, Roll +Plan and deplete 1 Tech Item

- On a 10+, hold 3
- On a 7–9, hold 2
- On a 6 or less, hold 1, plus whatever the GM says when you spend it

Spend your hold when a character approaches the trap to choose one of the following:

- neutralise the intruder
- observe the intruder
- play a prerecorded message to the intruder

4.2.5 Kindred Spirits

When you **talk with another weirdo**, invert your talk score when rolling +Talk with them

4.2.6 Equipment

Choose a weapon:

- Antique sword (hand, valuable, 2-harm, 2 weight)
- Taser (intimate, 2s-harm, hi-tech, 0 weight)

You get:

- 2 Tech Items (hi-tech, 1 weight)
- Laptop (valuable, hi-tech, 1 weight)
- An item which affords you emotional security, at your option it can also provide 1-armour

5 Mecha

6 Equipment