

GADGET GUIDE: CYBERTECH

The concept of prosthetic limbs or replacing parts of the body with machines has been around since mythic heroes with arms of finely crafted silver and the like. Modern technology has made the idea of “cybernetic organisms” (cyborgs or even just borgs for short) even more common, with entire sub-genres of fiction—cyberpunk, and later posthumanist—devoted to human enhancement and “upgrades”. This **Gadget Guide** looks at the concept of cyberware and how it works in M&M game terms.

DESCRIPTORS

Cybernetics is the study of control systems, often applied to the field of human-machine interface (“cyber-” comes from a Greek root word meaning “to steer”). *Bionics* is the application of biological principles to engineering, often in the area of producing machines that mimic body parts, organs, or organisms in some fashion.

In modern parlance, cyberware is hardware designed to be implanted or grafted onto a biological life form (usually a human being) to function as part of that individual’s body, either to replace a damaged or missing part, or to provide some enhancement. A creature with cyberware implants is a *cyborg*.

While the vast majority of cyberware is technological, there may be cybernetic implants with alternative descriptors, from “steampunk” clockworks to magically crafted replacements with their own powers or enhancements.

Because it is grafted into the subject’s body, cyberware is generally not considered either equipment or a Removable device, but rather a descriptor for powers the subject possesses, no different than those granted by strange radiation or other things that alter an otherwise normal person. Thus characters generally pay for their cyberware with power points like other powers. **Power Profile: Tech Powers** provides some abilities that may be cyber-based or interact with cyberware.

Cybernetic implants are often fairly obvious, unless they are hidden beneath the outer layers of skin and muscle or else concealed with artificial skin or the like. Cyberware follows the usual guidelines for **Noticing Power Effects** given in **Chapter 6** of the *Hero’s Handbook*: continuous and permanent effects are not noticeable by default, while instant, concentration, and sustained effects are. The Noticeable and Subtle modifiers may change how easy the effects of cyberware are to detect, and obvious cyborgs may have to deal with a prejudice complication from some people.



CYBERLIMBS

Some of the very first prosthetics were crude replacements of lost limbs, ranging from peg-legs and hooks through to fully functional bionic replacements. A replacement cyberlimb with essentially the same capabilities as a flesh-and-blood hand, foot, arm, or leg is just a descriptor and has no real point cost, unless the GM wants to consider it a Feature (for the minor benefits of having a limb that doesn’t bleed or feel pain in the same fashion as a biological one). Of course, having a cyberlimb may also be a complication at times, particularly if it suffers damage or malfunctions, or is detected by a scanner.

CYBERHANDS

A replacement hand may provide any of the following effects. Total the point costs of all the effects the cyberhand provides to determine its cost. If the character has only one cyberhand (rather than a pair) some effects may be Limited to One Hand, or have a complication. Otherwise assume the effects are the same whether the character has one cyberhand or two. The GM may wish to require a Feature effect for concealed devices in cyberhands, particularly if they allow for surprise attacks.

- **Extendable Fingers:** The fingers of your cyberhand can telescope and flex like tentacles, providing additional reach and flexibility. *Feature, 1 point.*
- **Finger Blades:** Concealed blades slide out of your fingertips. *Strength-based Damage, 1 point per rank.*
- **Finger Tools:** Small tools emerge from hidden compartments in the fingertips. *Enhanced Advantage 1 (Improvised Tools), 1 point.*
- **Grappler:** Your cyberhand can extend or launch out on a cable from your arm, acting like a grabber or grappling hook. *Elongation, Limited to One Arm, plus Movement (Swinging), 2 points + 1 point per 2 ranks.*
- **Improved Dexterity:** The cyberhand has improved Dexterity over a normal flesh-and-blood hand. *Enhanced Dexterity, 2 points per rank.*
- **Weapon:** Your cyberhand can morph into a hand-held weapon or flip open or otherwise shift to allow a concealed weapon to move into its place. See the various weapons **Gadget Guides** (including **Archaic, Asian Weapons, Guns, and Energy Weapons**) for ideas. *Cost as weapon attack effect.*



CYBERARMS

In addition to having a cyberhand, a full replacement cyberarm may have additional space for larger weapons (stored in the forearm or converting the whole arm into a weapon) as well as the following:

- **Enhanced Strength:** The cyberarm's artificial muscles or motors are stronger than normal. *Enhanced Strength, Limited to One Arm, 1 point per rank.*
- **Extendable:** Your cyberarm can extend out like a telescoping spring. *Elongation, Limited to One Arm, 1 point per 2 ranks.*
- **Extra Arms:** In addition to having replacement arms, you might also have extra cyberarms grafted onto your torso. The extra arms can have any of the effects associated with regular replacement cyberarms. *Extra Limbs, 1 point per rank.*

CYBERLEGS

A cybernetic leg replacement may mimic the form and function of a normal humanoid leg, or abandon that design for a differently jointed digitigrade leg, for example (with an extended "ankle" joint). Cyberlegs are more common in pairs, although a character might still have just one. They can provide the following effects:

- **Compartments:** A cyberleg may have concealed compartments for carrying small items, including equipment. *Feature, 1 point.*
- **Kicking:** Artificial leg muscles or motors can provide more powerful kicks in close combat. *Strength-based Damage, 1 point per rank.*
- **Leaping:** Enhanced leg strength provides greatly increased jumping distances. *Leaping, 1 point per rank.*
- **Speed:** Increased leg strength and actuator motors allow the character to run at increased speed, perhaps as fast (or faster) than a moving car! *Speed, 1 point per rank.*
- **Swimming:** Modified feet (possibly able to deploy into flippers) and leg strength give you enhanced swimming speed. *Swimming, 1 point per rank.*
- **Traction:** Your feet have built-in treads, spikes, or a similar surface to enhance traction, perhaps modifying themselves to suit different surfaces. Amongst other things, you never need to wear shoes! *Movement (Sure Footed), 2 points per rank.*

BODYWARE

Cybernetic enhancement of the torso and overall body, or implants to enhance or replace various organs, can grant a number of effects.

ARMOR

Your skin is reinforced with sub-dermal armored materials or covered in armor plating or similar material, giving you improved damage resistance. Obviously artificial armor

qualifies for the Noticeable flaw and may cause other complications. Reinforced armor may have the Impervious extra as well.

Armor: Protection • 1 point per rank

COMPARTMENT

Part of your body cavity (usually abdomen) contains a small storage space, accessible from a hidden panel, and sufficient to hold about a cubic foot (volume rank 0).

Compartment: Feature 1 • 1 point

DRUG INJECTOR

You have an injector tap built into your bloodstream, or even artificial glands capable of creating and delivering certain biochemicals to your system on command. The effects of these drugs can be anything the GM permits for their biochemical descriptors, although things like Enhanced Abilities with the Fades modifier or Regeneration are common. See **Power Profile: Life Powers** for some additional ideas.

Drug Injector: Drug or biochemical effect, often with the Fades or Unreliable (limited uses) modifiers • *per effect cost*

FILTER LUNGS

Your lungs and throat have built-in filters able to remove many harmful gases and other airborne toxins, irritants, and pathogens.

Filter Lungs: Immunity 2 (airborne gases and toxins) • 2 points

FULL CYBORG

Your entire human body, with the exception of your brain, has been replaced with a machine body. Your brain is kept alive inside a life support system connected to your new body, and you have a weakness complication concerning your brain, which may suffer if its support system is damaged or compromised in any way. Otherwise, you're a machine in nearly every way. If you no longer have a human brain as well (your memories and personality digitally transferred to a computer brain, for example), then you are a true construct rather than a cyborg. Your cybernetic body need not be limited to the humanoid form and can have any of a wide range of traits. See **Gadget Guide: Constructs** for details.

Full Cyborg: Immunity 30 (Fortitude effects), No Stamina rank • 10 points

GILL IMPLANTS

You have artificial gills implanted along your neck or clavicles, or else the lining of your lungs is altered to be able to extract oxygen from water, allowing you to breathe normally while submerged.

Gill Implants: Immunity 1 (drowning) • 1 point

REDUNDANT ORGANS

Your internal systems have backups and redundancies built into them, giving you more resiliency than an un-augmented person.

Redundant Organs: Enhanced Advantage 1 (Diehard), Immunity 2 (critical hits) • 3 points

SEMI-AUTONOMOUS WEAPON

A semi-autonomous weapon ("SAW" or "cyber-SAW") is a cybernetic weapon able to act at least partially on its own under the direction of its own computer and programs. Once activated, the SAW carries out its instructions, usually attacking available targets identified by its sensors (and those of its "host").

A SAW is often a concealed weapon, having a rank of Subtle, meaning it is difficult to detect until it is deployed. It can have a variety of configurations, from taking over (and possibly reconfiguring) an existing cyberlimb to extending a new "limb" from within the character's body (typically stored inside another limb or in the main body cavity). A SAW that extends out of the mouth is an assassin's weapon, especially useful for a surprise attack, or a finishing attack in an intimate moment. Some hosts might not even know they have a SAW installed until it activates!

The SAW is designed as a fairly "dumb" construct with suitable attack effects, capable of taking its own actions during a round, but limited by its connection to the host character. Because of this, many SAWs have Elongation to give them additional reach.

Particularly durable SAWs have the Heroic modifier in place of Active. With the Multiple Minions modifier, you can even have more than one SAW, and with the Horde modifier, you can activate them all at once.

Semi-Autonomous Weapon: Summon SAW, Active, Mental Link, Triggered, Limited to moving with summoner • 2 points + 2 points per rank

SAMPLE SAW: CYBERSNAKE

PL8

STR 3 STA — AGL 8 DEX 0 FGT 8 INT — AWE 0 PRE —

Powers: **Armor** (Protection 4), **Combat Programming** (Enhanced Advantage 11 (Chokehold, Defensive Roll 4, Fast Grab, Improved Critical (rippers), Improved Grab, Improved Initiative 2, Takedown), **Construct** (Immunity 30: (Fortitude effects)), **Infrared Scanner** (Senses 1 (Infravision)), **Rippers** (Strength-based Damage 5), **Telescopic** (Elongation 1)

Offense: Initiative +16, Grab +8, Rippers +8 (Close, Damage 8, crit. 19–20)

Defense: Dodge 8, Parry 8, Fortitude Immune, Toughness 8/4, Will Immune

Totals: Abilities 8 + Powers 52 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 + Defenses 0 = 60

SKELETAL REINFORCEMENT

Your skeleton has either been replaced or reinforced with new materials, such as diamond-analog carbon molecules, making your bones virtually unbreakable, allowing you to withstand considerable physical punishment.

Skeletal Reinforcement: Immunity 20 (Bludgeoning Damage), Limited to Half Effect • 10 points

SKINMORPH

Your artificial skin can shift in response to neural electrical pulses, allowing you to change your outward appearance at will, molding your features, skin tone, etc., however you wish, or according to a set of pre-programmed instructions. Skinmorph gives you a +20 circumstance bonus to Deception checks involving disguising your appearance.

Skinmorph: Morph 2 (people of your size and gender) • 10 points

STINGER

A drug injector (previously) designed to inject *other* people via a small hypodermic, usually concealed in a fingertip or inside the mouth (allowing you to inject with a bite... or a kiss). A stinger may also be mounted as part of a SAW, giving it a "poison sting". Apply the Ranged modifier and your stinger can fire drug-tipped darts as well.

Stinger: Affliction (Resisted and Overcome by Fortitude; choose conditions based on the appropriate drug or toxin), Cumulative, Resistible (Toughness) • 1 point per rank

HEADWARE

Headware covers cybernetic enhancement or replacement of sensory organs like the eyes, ears, nose, and tongue, as well as enhancement of the brain and central nervous system.

CEREBRAL CACHE

Your brain has a slaved computer memory system, giving you additional mental "processing power" and memory "storage." Given the technological descriptors, this enhancement (like some other cyberware) may allow certain computer-targeting powers to affect you. See **Power Profiles: Tech Powers** for details.

Cerebral Cache: Enhanced Advantage (Eidetic Memory), Quickness (Limited to Mental Actions) • 1 point + 1 point per rank

CHEMICAL ANALYZER

Your tongue and sinuses are enhanced with chemical analyzers, giving you enhanced olfactory senses.

Chemical Analyzer: Acute or Accurate and Analytical Olfactory • 2 or 4 points.

CYBEREARS

Your ears are enhanced or replaced with artificial implants. Cyberears can provide various auditory Senses effects, including Accurate, Analytical, Counters Illusion, Extended, Penetrates Concealment, Rapid, and Ultra-Hearing. Cyberears can also provide Immunity to Hearing-Dependent Attacks.

Cyberears: Senses (Auditory) • 1 point per rank **Optional:** Immunity 5 (hearing-dependent attacks) • 5 points

CYBEREYES

Your eyes are enhanced or replaced with artificial implants. Cybereyes can provide different visual Senses effects, including Analytical, Counters Concealment, Counters Illusion, Darkvision, Distance Sense, Extended, Infravision, Low-Light Vision, Microscopic Vision, Penetrates Concealment ("X-Ray Vision"), Radius (with side- and back-facing visual sensors), Rapid, and Ultravision. Cybereyes can also provide Immunity to Vision-Dependent Attacks.

Cybereyes: Senses (Visual) • 1 point per rank **Optional:** Immunity 5 (vision-dependent attacks) • 5 points

CYBERHAIR

Your natural hair has been replaced by artificial fibers the respond to mild electrical current, allowing you to animate and move them at will. The fibers may also be somewhat elastic, able to stretch and then snap back to their normal length. This allows your cyberhair to function somewhat like an additional prehensile limb.

Cyberhair may also have a Feature, allowing it to change color and texture at will as well as length, providing a +5 circumstance bonus to Deception checks to disguise your appearance.

Cyberhair: Extra Limb 1 • 1 point + 1 point per 2 ranks for any ranks of Elongation, Limited to Cyberhair Only. **Optional:** Feature 1 (change color and texture) • 1 point

CYBERVOX

Your voice box is modified or replaced by implants. At the basic level, a cybervox gives you considerable ability to mimic and reproduce sounds, a +5 circumstance bonus to Deception involving sounds and voices per Feature rank. A cybervox may also give you the ability to "speak" in the ultra- or infrasonic ranges (an auditory Communication effect) or even other sonic powers. See **Power Profiles: Sonic Powers** for additional information.

Cybervox: Feature (mimic sounds, +5 Deception bonus) • 1 point per rank **Optional:** Communication (auditory) • 4 points per rank

HEADLINK

You have an implanted radio communicator, connected to your auditory nerves and allowing you to respond

through subvocalization. If your headlink is encrypted, apply a rank of the Subtle modifier. In some settings, a headlink may allow you to subscribe to cellular communication services, extending its range through the cell network as a Feature.

Headlink: Communication (Radio) • 4 points per rank

INTERFACE JACK

An input/output port allows you to plug in to a computer or computer network and interface with it, providing and receiving input with nothing more than your brain. An interface jack is normally touch ranged, requiring either a hardwired connection like a cable or contact induction pads of some type (usually in the fingers or palms of the hands). If you also have a headlink (previously) then you can also interface wirelessly using its radio signal.

Interface Jack: Comprehend Machines 2 • 4 points

MIND SHIELD

Cybernetic implants in your brain shield you from the effects of mental powers. Some Mind Shield implants may be Limited to Half Effect, reducing the effectiveness of mental powers, but not blocking them out completely. Note that the default Mind Shield screens out all mental powers, both friendly and hostile, and cannot be turned off. A sustained version can be switched off, but leaves you without any protection while it is off.

Mind Shield: Immunity 10 (mental powers) • 10 points

NEURAL BOOSTERS

Your central nervous system is rewired and enhanced with superconductors, signal boosters, and computer sub-processors, giving you a faster response time. Some versions of neural boosters may also grant ranks in Quickness, allowing you to perform routine (or pre-programmed) activities faster, or offer Seize Initiative as an Enhanced Advantage as well.

Neural Boosters: Enhanced Advantage (Improved Initiative) • 1 point per rank. **Optional:** Enhanced Advantage 1 (Seize Initiative) • 1 point and/or Quickness • 1 point per rank

PERSONA BACKUP

Your brain has an automatic “backup” system, like a computer, that maintains a regularly updated copy of your memories and personality. Should you ever be killed, your persona backup can be installed into a new body (clone, cybernetic construct, etc.) with memories complete up to the point of your last backup. This process is assumed to take at least two weeks (time rank 18), additional ranks can reduce the time, to a minimum determined by the GM. Extremely fast backup recovery may involve nanotechnology, exotic “smart” matter, or similar super-science that restores your body almost instantly.

Persona Backup: Immortality, Limited (body transfer) • 1 point per rank.

SKILL SOFTWARE

You have the ability to download pre-programmed models of different skills and advantages into your mind, usually through an interface jack or a cerebral cache, perhaps via a wireless headlink connection. The action required for your Variable effect is the time needed to swap out existing skill software programs for others. It is a standard action by default, apply the Move Action or Free Action modifiers to do it faster, or the Slow flaw if it takes longer.

Skill Software: Variable (Skills and Advantages) • 7 points per rank.

TARGETING SYSTEM

Range finders and other sensors, coupled with targeting software and links to your central nervous system, allow you to target ranged attacks with greater accuracy, making you into a living targeting scope. The bonus from your targeting system counts against your power level limits, although some targeting systems also include Enhanced Advantage (Improved Aim) for an additional circumstance bonus. If you can also receive a readout from your range finder, add Senses (Distance Sense).

Targeting System: Enhanced Advantage (Ranged Attack) • 1 point per rank.

CYBER COMPLICATIONS

Extensive modification of the body and brain can lead to a number of drawbacks as well as advantages, and cyberware may include some of the following complications.

ADDICTION

Cyber-users may become addicted to the contents of drug injectors (previously) or to medication used to manage the pain or healing of their implants. They may even initially acquire some implants to deal with the degeneration caused by long-term abuse of substances.

CORTEX BOMB

A tiny explosive device with a timer or triggered detonator is implanted in your brain or one of your other vital organs. Cortex bombs are used as blackmail and suicide devices to ensure the compliance of subjects, and to eliminate them in the case of capture or interrogation. Disabling a cortex bomb requires either blocking its detonator signal (using a sensory effect like Concealment) or carefully removing it using surgery (minimum DC 30 Technology and Treatment checks). Similar technology may include toxin-release capsules and explosive or toxic nanites in the victim's system.

A cortex bomb is a serious Weakness complication, which results in the target's death, if the bomb goes off! The complication may also cause difficulties while whomever controls the detonation of the bomb can give the character orders. In fact, it is primarily the threat of the device that is the complication, rather than its actual use.

CYBERPSYCHOSIS

The gradual transition from flesh-and-blood to partially or even wholly machine can have adverse psychological effects, collectively referred to as "cyberpsychosis." Common forms of the condition include:

- A gradual loss of empathy and a growing sense of detachment, becoming more cold and machine-like, and feeling less and less in common with "organic" beings.
- A loss of control over one's emotions, leading to random—and often violent—outbursts of anger, doubt, fear, sadness, and so forth.
- A weakening of the ego or sense of self, leading to a loss of will (perhaps even an actual decrease in Will defense rank) and a vulnerability to interaction skills or mental powers.
- A loss of memory or identity due to trauma or actual modification of the brain.

Cyberpsychosis may be treated with conventional psychotherapy (or by specialists trained in dealing with it) as well as drug therapies (see the **Addiction** complication) but treatment may be limited in its ability to control and reverse the condition.

DISABILITY

Cyberware is often used to correct a disability, such as the loss of a limb, meaning the malfunction or loss of the implant results in having to deal with the effects of that complication again. A character with cybernetic eyes, for example, who loses the use of them not only suffers power loss of the additional Senses effects, but is also blind!

Cybernetic characters also tend to be targets for more extreme violence. It's more likely, in the comics, to see a character's bionic arm bloodlessly severed or torn off in combat than it is to see the same done to a character's flesh-and-blood limb, since the loss of a limb is just a

temporary complication for the cyborg, rather than a life-altering injury.

Lastly, cybernetic implants can pose certain complications when it comes to using the Treatment skill on cyborgs (see the **Tech Support** sidebar, following). Implants can complicate traditional medical treatment, from increasing the difficult of some Treatment checks to dealing with semi-autonomous weapons that won't allow medics anywhere near the injured character! Full cyborgs scarcely need medical treatment at all—they require technicians!

POWER LOSS

Cyberware can fail in a number of different ways. It may be damaged in combat or by accident, run out of power, or develop a mechanical or programming fault in need of repair. Cybernetic software might be "infected" with virus programs, causing it to malfunction or shut down altogether, and attacks like an electromagnetic pulse might shut down cybernetics, causing power loss (and possibly some disabilities).

PREJUDICE

Cybernetic implants are quite often obvious and can be disturbing, especially if they are extensive or especially unnatural looking. Cyborgs may suffer prejudice, being treated either as tragic cripples or inhuman freaks who are more machine than human, and some might direct the same prejudice at themselves.

WEAKNESS

Cybernetic implants can lead to a vulnerability to things like electrical attacks or those intended to affect machines. This can range from added degrees of effect for electrical attacks to effects with computer, technology, or related descriptors being able to affect cyborgs where they would have no effect on flesh-and-blood targets. For example, cybernetic might be vulnerable to outside computer hacking or reprogramming.

Cyberware can create a dependence on the implants to sustain the character's life, without them, the cyborg not only suffers from disabilities, but may well perish! The same may be true, to a lesser degree, of drugs or other treatments intended to prevent rejection of the character's artificial implants.

TECH SUPPORT

Cyberware is hardware (and software) and can suffer from breakdowns, technical problems, and damage. Gamemasters may wish to consider failures of a character's cyberware or other problems related to it as temporary complications (power loss, disability, or otherwise). Damage to cyberware impairing its function can be considered the same as lasting injuries (**Chapter 8** of the *Hero's Handbook*) and having a non-functional cyberarm is not all that different from having a broken bone or an otherwise disabled flesh-and-blood arm.

Repairing and maintaining cyberware is the province of the Technology skill, as given in **Chapter 4** of the *Hero's Handbook*. In some instances, substitute Technology for the uses of the Treatment skill when working with cyborgs, or use the lower of the two skills for characters trained as both medics and technicians. Otherwise, Treatment may suffer a circumstance penalty for unusual biology or biochemistry, as noted in the skill description.

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MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS GADGET GUIDE: CYBERTECH

Writing and Design: Steve Kenson

Editing and Development: Jon Leitheusser

Art Direction: Pauline Benney

Graphic Design: Hal Mangold

Interior Art: Alex Sheikman

Playtesters: Leon Chang, James Dawsey, Glenn Hall, Nathan Kahler, Jack Norris, Aaron Sullivan

Publisher: Chris Pramas

Green Ronin Staff: Pauline Benney, Bill Bodden, Joe

Carriker, Steve Kenson, Jon Leitheusser, Nicole

Lindroos, Hal Mangold, Jack Norris, Chris Pramas, Evan

Sass, Marc Schmalz

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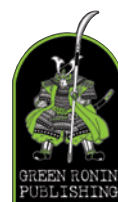
3815 S. Othello St., Suite 100 #304

Seattle, WA 98118

Email: custserv@greenronin.com

Web Sites: www.greenronin.com

www.mutantsandmasterminds.com



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