

GADGET GUIDE: ROBOTS

As heroes, villains, and legions of minions, robots have been a staple of the superhero genre since the first days of comic strips. Although they have become more sophisticated as real-world technology has moved ever closer to the mechanical marvels of comic books, robots remain common technology for both heroes and villains.

ROBOT DESIGN

Robots are constructs, as described on pages 179–181 of the *Hero's Handbook*. Creating a robot follows steps similar to those of creating a character (given on pages 23–24 of the book) modified as follows:

CONCEPT

Start with the robot's intended purpose: is it a soldier or guard, a chaperone, a servant, exploratory scout, or is it used for tasks like dispensing medicine or construction? A robot's purpose provides considerable direction in terms of its capabilities, although some things may be multipurpose or "repurposed"—for example, a welding or medical laser could also be used as a weapon (if the robot's programming allows).

POWER LEVEL

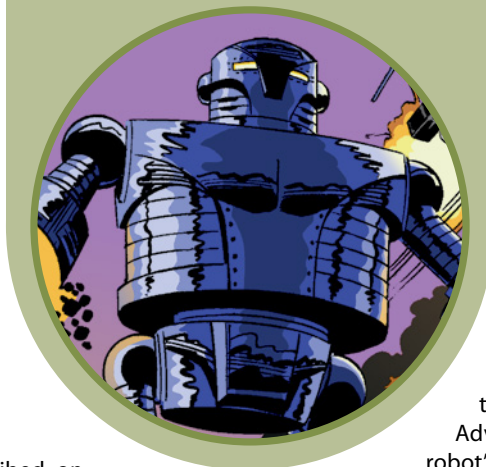
The robot's power level is limited to that of the series, if it is the creation of a player character. Otherwise, the robot may have any power level the GM wishes that suits the series and the robot's intended use. Generally speaking, robot minions can be higher power level than robots lacking the minion descriptor, and singular robots can be a higher power level than robots encountered in larger numbers.

ABILITIES

As constructs, robots have different starting abilities than characters, but still increase those basic abilities in the same way: spending 2 power points per +1 rank in an ability.

SKILLS

Similarly, robots may have restrictions on the skills they can possess, based on their abilities, and how they can apply those skills, but otherwise acquire them in the



same fashion, spending 1 power point per 2 skill ranks they possess.

ADVANTAGES

Robots generally do not possess as many advantages as characters do, although they can be designed for them, particularly combat units provided with various combat advantages. Some of these may come from Enhanced Advantage powers as part of the robot's construction.

POWERS

Robots can have as wide a range of powers as the Gamemaster allows; robots in the comic books can do everything from grow and shrink to shapeshift and control the elements. Robots generally do not possess power descriptors based on biology or living systems, but that does not prevent them from having power effects like Regeneration (self-repair systems) or even Healing (useful for sophisticated medical robots).

COMPLICATIONS

Robots tend to have a few complications simply by the nature of how they are constructed, and might have others, as well. See the **Complications** section later in this Guide for details.

GAMEMASTER APPROVAL

Finally, if the robot is a player creation, the Gamemaster looks over the design, makes sure it fits the rules parameters, and approves it for use in the game.

"FLESHING" THINGS OUT

The individual design steps are detailed further in the following sections. Note that the rules in this Guide are not intended for use with heroes or villains who happen to be robots, as they are not considered constructs—they typically have both the full range of abilities and the same free will as other characters, although they typically have some measure of Immunity (either life support or full Immunity to Fortitude effects) and "robotic" or "technological" descriptors for many of their traits. **Power Profile: Tech Powers** covers the essentials of a hero or villain character who is also a robot, android, or similar artificial being.

BASIC CAPABILITIES

All robots share certain basic capabilities as part of their nature, including:

- **No Stamina, Intellect, and Presence:** Robots by default have no rank in Stamina, Intellect, and Presence. They are not living beings, nor are they sentient or self-aware (although some may mimic such qualities). They do have Awareness (a base rank of 0), since robots are assumed to be capable of operating on their own, following pre-programmed instructions, which requires a measure of Awareness of their surroundings. Lacking these three abilities has a net value of -30 points.
- **Immunity to Fortitude Effects:** As constructs, robots have no biological systems. They are machines, not living beings. Thus, though they do not recover or heal on their own (lacking a Stamina rank), they are also immune to things affecting living creatures (resisted by Fortitude).
- **Immunity to Interaction:** Since they lack Intellect and Presence, robots can neither use interaction skills nor be affected by them. They cannot be deceived, persuaded, intimidated, and so forth. They can be given incorrect *information*, but not led, through interaction, to believe something they did not before. Non-intelligent robots can use the non-interactive aspects of Insight (machinery can “detect lies” for example) but not those involving evaluating others or getting a sense or “gut feeling” about anything. This ability is an effect of the lack of Intellect and Presence and has no point cost. A robot that adds ranks in those abilities loses this trait (or must pay for 5 ranks of Immunity to retain it).
- **Immunity to Mental Effects:** Similarly, as they lack Intellect and Presence, robots do not have “minds” as such and are immune to mental effects that do not specifically work on machines with descriptors appropriate to the robot. So, for example, a telepathic Mind Reading effect automatically fails against a robot (no resistance check required). There’s nothing there to “read”! This ability is an effect of the lack of Intellect and Presence and has no point cost. A robot that adds ranks in those abilities loses this trait (or must pay for 10 ranks of Immunity to retain it).

ABILITIES

As noted previously, robots by default lack any rank in Stamina, Intellect, or Presence, being unliving and non-sentient. They do have a measure of the other five abilities, set at a default rank of 0, just like for characters.

STRENGTH

Strength is commonly the highest ability for robots, motors and metal being stronger than muscle and bone. Take a robot’s size into account when considering its Strength, as ranks of Growth increase base Strength rank. Robots may also have ranks of Power-Lifting (*Hero’s Handbook*, page 123) to represent sustained hydraulics and similar systems useful for lifting and carrying great weights, but not for any other purpose.

AGILITY

The classic comic book robot is not overly agile, being a large, clanking menace, but there are also quick, agile robots with computer speeds and servo-motors or swift-flowing nanomachines and the like.

DEXTERITY

While some robots display more brute force than finesse, robots intended for relatively fine and delicate work may have substantial Dexterity ranks, rivaling or even exceeding the most dextrous humans. However, robots tend to be specialists and are more likely to have appropriately high ranks in pre-programmed skills based on Dexterity or an overall advantage like Ranged Attack (see **Skills** and **Advantages**, following).

FIGHTING

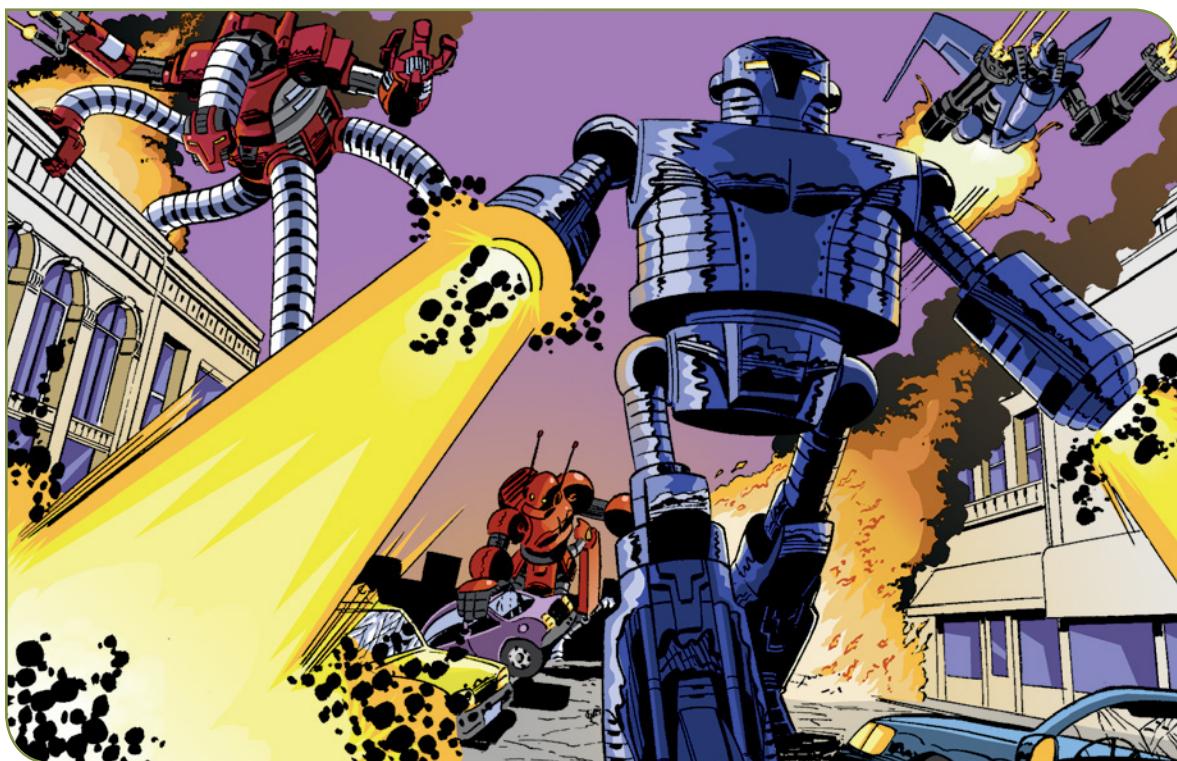
Unless a robot is specifically intended to attack and defend itself, it is not likely to have much of a Fighting rank and is more likely to rely upon its innate Toughness and Immunity to protect it from harm. Still, most comic book robots used by heroes and villains have some Fighting ranks, since they’re fairly sure to get into scrapes.

“THE DEVIL HAS BUILT A ROBOT!”

Comic books indiscriminately mix-and-match fictional elements and origins from all across the spectrum, so it would not be surprising, for example, to encounter robots built by ancient aliens, steampunk gnomes, sinister sorcerers, or even the Devil himself!

All of these constructs are still “robots” and typically involve some type of technology, but may also have other descriptors, such as alien, clockwork, steam-powered, arcane, or evil as part of their nature. The additional descriptors mean the robot may interact with some effects differently (a diabolic robot held at bay by holy symbols, for example) but otherwise does not change the information found in this Guide.

Do not allow the “robot” descriptor to limit your imagination (or that of your players) when it comes to producing interesting creations to add some fun and color to your **MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS** game!



AWARENESS

Although they lack Intellect or Presence, robots are assumed to have some degree of Awareness, able to move through their surroundings and physically interact with them. This actually takes a considerable sophistication in programming in the real world, but it's a given for comic book machines. Awareness for most robots simply measures the sensitivity and accuracy of their sensors, which are assumed to roughly approximate human sensory capabilities, modified by the robot's powers (see **Powers**). Robots lacking a sensory ability have a potential complication which may come into play.

SKILLS

When it comes to robots, it is less a matter of "skill" than it is of "programming" with regards to tasks the robot can perform. Robots lacking Intellect are automatons, capable of accepting commands and carrying them out, but incapable of self-directed action, creativity, or changing their instructions. Skill modifiers essentially measure how capable a robot is at performing a task, ranging from things like Close Combat or Stealth to using Expertise to perform certain job skills.

REPROGRAMMABLE SKILLS

Since a robot's skills are essentially software (whether electronic or encoded on punch cards, wax cylinders, etc.), it may be possible to change them around by reprogramming the robot or uploading different skills into its active memory. If this is a significant capability in game play, it can be handled as a Variable effect, Limited to Enhanced

Skills, with an Action appropriate to the time required to change the skills around (or the Slow modifier if they can only be changed outside of action time).

ADVANTAGES

Robots may be designed for some advantages, particularly combat advantages for military or combat units. Robots cannot have fortune advantages (unless they are free-willed player characters), nor can they have skill advantages involving skills they cannot use, such as interaction skills. Improved Hold is a common advantage to reflect a robot's literal "iron grip," and Teamwork is appropriate for groups of robots designed and programmed to operate together.

POWERS

Power effects cover everything else about a robot not handled by abilities, skills, advantages, or complications (following). Amongst other things, this includes unusual chassis configurations, movement capabilities, sensor systems, and armaments. Note that power effects not listed here are not forbidden, simply rare enough as to not be worth mentioning. As mentioned under **Robot Design**, robots can have potentially any powers the GM permits.

AFFLICTION

Useful primarily for unusual weapons or attacks a robot might have, ranging from tasers to gas grenades. See the appropriate weapon **Gadget Guide** or **Power Profile** for some ideas.

BURROWING

A robot designed for underground exploration or travel might have this effect, perhaps with some type of tunneling drill mechanism.

COMMUNICATION

Radio Communication is a common effect for robots, especially if they are remote-controlled. A Mental Link extra for a Summon Robots effect might be radio- rather than mental-based.

COMPREHEND

A useful effect for translator robots fluent in different forms of communication (six million or otherwise). This usually involves intelligence, although a translator robot could mindlessly translate, repeating whatever it hears in a different language until ordered to do otherwise.

CONCEALMENT

Different forms of Concealment may be “cloaking” or camouflage technology good for infiltration or combat robots.

DAMAGE

The standard attack effect, which might be a close weapon to add to the robot’s Strength damage or a ranged weapon ranging from ballistics to energy beam weapons. See the different weapon **Gadget Guides** and **Power Profiles** for a wide range of Damage effects.

ELONGATION

A robot might be built with telescoping limbs, able to elongate and return to a “resting” shape. This is also an effect suitable for nanomorph or shape-changing robots.

EXTRA LIMBS

While the default design of a robot is humanoid, it does not have to be, and a robot could have additional limbs, perhaps many of them, and a limb configuration more like an octopus (for example) than a humanoid.

FEATURE

This is the catch-all effect for small “add-ons” or features a robot might have; anything useful enough to be worth accounting for, but minor enough not to fit into an existing effect.

FLIGHT

Another mode of movement, using anything from chemical rockets to anti-gravity. Some robot designs may have Flight modifiers, particularly Gliding or Wings.

GROWTH

Although a robot could be capable of changing size, this effect usually reflects a robot built at a larger size, with the Permanent and Innate modifiers. The robot benefits from all of the Growth bonuses (except for Stamina, which applies solely to Toughness) but also has to deal with all of the penalties all of the time.

ILLUSION

Not a common effect for robots, it may involve image- or sound-projecting equipment.

IMMORTALITY

This effect means the robot is self-repairing to the point of being able to rebuild itself if destroyed! This is common for nanotech robots, able to reconstitute from even a tiny amount of their substance.

IMMUNITY

In addition to their standard immunities (Fortitude and mental effects and interaction skills), robots may have additional immunities by virtue of their design. A robot built to operate in intense heat, for example, may have Immunity to Heat Damage or even all Heat Effects. Similarly, a robot with heavy shielding may have Immunity to some or all Electrical Effects.

LEAPING

Hydraulic or mechanical limbs may grant a robot leaping as a form of movement.

MORPH

This effect suits “infiltrator” robots or androids, but assumed the robot can change its appearance. If the robot is disguised as something other than a robot, that can be considered a Feature, possibly with a Power Loss complication that the robot’s true nature may be revealed by damage puncturing or tearing its artificial outer “skin”.

MOVE OBJECT

Suitable for effects like tractor beams or control over magnetism, suitable for moving things at a distance.

MOVEMENT

Various Movement effects may suit robots, depending on configuration. Slithering, Sure-footed, Swinging, Wall-crawling, and Water-walking may reflect different designs. Environmental Adaptation is appropriate for robots designed for a particular environment.

PROTECTION

This is the standard means of increasing a robot's Toughness, as they have no Stamina. Effects that improve Stamina (such as Growth) affect Toughness instead. A robot's Toughness may be Impervious to reflect rigid armor plating and reinforced structures.

QUICKNESS

Able to operate at computer- or machine-speeds, some robots may have ranks of this effect, possibly Limited to particular specialty tasks. For example, a maintenance robot might have Quickness, Limited to Technology skill checks.

REGENERATION

This effect reflects self-repair capabilities, and is the only means for a robot to "recover" from damage without external repairs, since it does not have Stamina to recover on its own.

REMOTE SENSING

A robot with a small remote sensor may have this effect, effectively able to "scan" away from where its main body is located. Use Perception to notice the remote rather than Insight.

SENSES

Use the Senses effect options to construct suites of sensors for a robot with capabilities beyond the normal human sensory ranges, including low-light or infrared vision, ultra-sonic hearing, radio reception, and so forth. See **Power Profile: Sensory Powers** for options.

SHRINKING

Like Growth, this effect usually applies to robots that are permanently smaller than medium sized, having ranks of Shrinking with the Permanent and Innate modifiers. Small robots may have the Normal Strength extra, being stronger than their size would suggest.

SPEED

This effect typically means the robot has a form of locomotion other than walking, although a legged robot may be able to run at high sustained speeds (not having the same physical limitations as a flesh and blood creature). It may also mean a robot with wheels, treads or the like.

SWIMMING

This effect generally means that this is a robot specifically designed for underwater movement, since robots otherwise tend to have negative buoyancy and sink

(although with their Immunities can move along the bottom of a body of water unharmed).

VARIABLE

This effect suits reconfigurable robots with modular parts or the ability to change their construction. It particularly suits nanotech robots able to reconfigure at the microscopic level. See the Mechamorph power in **Power Profiles: Tech Powers** for a possible configuration.

COMPLICATIONS

Although they are tireless and completely loyal servants, robots do have their limitations.

First and foremost, non-intelligent robots are capable of independent action, but only within the parameters of their programming and orders. A robot ordered to guard a particular place will do so until the order is countermanded or the robot is no longer capable of carrying out the command. Robots cannot exercise creativity or initiative when it comes to interpreting or carrying out their orders.

As constructs, robots may be subject to mechanical problems. While they're immune to the concerns of living beings, they may be vulnerable to things like power surges, electromagnetism, or fine grit or other obstructions in their mechanisms. Gamemasters can handle these vulnerabilities on a case-by-case basis depending on the robot and the situation.

A robot's design or construction may impose certain physical disabilities on it, ranging from having wheels (and being therefore unable to navigate stairs) to lacking hands or certain sensory capabilities (most commonly touch, taste, and smell). These can create some complications.

Lastly, robots not specifically disguised or camouflaged are obviously machines and people react to them accordingly, making it difficult for the robot to pass unnoticed.

ROBOT CREATION

Non-intelligent robots are non-player characters by definition, meaning someone usually created and controls them. Robots can belong to a character through the Minion and Sidekick advantages as well as different versions of the Summon effect. The advantages better suit standard robots that are always "on-call" or available to a character, while Summon works for characters able to call or summon robot minions to them (or create them on the spot) and particularly able to command a wide range of different kinds of robots with the Variable Type modifier.

Robots created using the inventing rules (*Hero's Handbook*, page 159) can be handled as inventing a Summon effect for that robot; divide the robot's total point cost by 15 to determine the number of Summon ranks necessary.

SAMPLE ROBOTS

The following are just a few examples of the diverse types of robots. See page 181 of the *Hero's Handbook* and pages 141–142 of the *Gamemaster's Guide* for some general robot archetypes and pages 121–124 of the *Gamemaster's Guide* for the Robot villain archetype.

GRABBER

A cylindrical-shaped robot with a single rotating sensor “eye” and multiple telescoping metal limbs designed to grab and restrain targets, used as a guard and capture mechanism.

GRABBERPL 6

STR 6 STA — AGL 0 DEX 0 FGT 0 INT — AWE 2 PRE —

Powers: **Armor** (Impervious Protection 8), **Elongation 2**, **Enhanced Advantage 1** (Improved Hold), **Extra Limbs 5**, **Immunity 30** (Fortitude effects), **Senses 3** (darkvision, radio)

Skills: Close Combat: Grabbing 6 (+6)

Offense: Initiative +0, Grab +6 (Close, +5 to opposed check, –5 to target's checks to escape, Damage 6)

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

Totals Abilities –14 + Powers 57 + Advantages 0 + Skills 3 + Defenses 8 = 54

MORPHBOT

A robot made of microscopic nanomachines able to reconfigure themselves into different shapes. Some morphbots have even more extensive abilities to change their traits, such as mimicking the abilities and powers of other characters.

MORPHBOTPL 8

STR 6 STA — AGL 0 DEX 0 FGT 6 INT — AWE 1 PRE —

Powers: **Disguise** (Morph 4, any form), **Immunity 30** (Fortitude effects), **Mechamorph** (Variable 6, Free Action), **Self-Repairing** (Regeneration 5)

Skills: Ranged Combat: Morph Weapons 6 (+6)

Offense: Initiative +0, Morph Weapons +6 (Ranged, Damage up to rank 10), Unarmed +6 (Close, Damage up to rank 10)

Defense: Dodge 8, Parry 8, Fortitude Immune, Toughness Varies up to rank 8, Will Immune

Totals Abilities –4 + Powers 103 + Advantages 0 + Skills 3 + Defenses 16 = 118

SERVO

A small, spider-like maintenance robot used to perform repairs (or sabotage). Not particularly intended for combat, but capable of it when necessary.

SERVOPL 4

STR 1 STA — AGL 0 DEX 3 FGT 0 INT — AWE 1 PRE —

Powers: **Welding Torch** (Damage 4, Precise), **Extra Limbs 4**, **Immunity 30** (Fortitude effects), **Movement 2** (wall-crawling), **Senses 3** (darkvision, radio), **Shrinking 4** (Innate, Permanent)

Skills: Close Combat: Welding Torch 4 (+4), Technology 8 (+8)

Offense: Initiative +0, Welding Torch +4 (Close, Damage 4)

Defense: Dodge 6, Parry 6, Fortitude Immune, Toughness 0, Will Immune

Totals Abilities –18 + Powers 55 + Advantages 0 + Skills 6 + Defenses 8 = 51

TOY SOLDIER

This robot looks like a harmless child's toy, from an old fashioned “wooden soldier” to a modern plastic action figure. Individually, they're not much more than tiny mobile gun-platforms, but they usually show up in small hordes.

TOY SOLDIERPL 4

STR –5 STA — AGL 0 DEX 0 FGT 0 INT — AWE 0 PRE —

Powers: **Built-in Weapon** (Ranged Damage 4), **Immunity 30** (Fortitude effects), **Shrinking 8** (Innate, Permanent)

Skills: Ranged Combat: Weapon 4 (+4)

Offense: Initiative +0, Built-in Weapon +4 (Ranged, Damage 4)

Defense: Dodge 8, Parry 8, Fortitude Immune, Toughness 0, Will Immune

Totals Abilities –36 + Powers 55 + Advantages 0 + Skills 2 + Defenses 8 = 30

WARBOT

A hulking, humanoid tank, programmed for battlefield and search-and-destroy missions without compassion or mercy.

WARBOTPL 9

STR 10 STA — AGL 0 DEX 0 FGT 8 INT — AWE 1 PRE —

Powers: **Armor** (Impervious Protection 8), **Blaster Cannon** (Ranged Damage 10), **Immunity 30** (Fortitude effects), **Large** (Growth 4, Innate, Permanent), **Senses 3** (darkvision, radio), **Speed 2**

Skills: Ranged Combat: Blaster Cannon 8 (+8)

Offense: Initiative +0, Blaster Cannon +8 (Ranged, Damage 10), Unarmed +8 (Close, Damage 10)

Defense: Dodge 7, Parry 7, Fortitude Immune, Toughness 12, Will Immune

Totals Abilities 0 + Powers 70 + Advantages 0 + Skills 4 + Defenses 10 = 84

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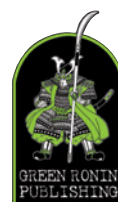
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