

GADGET GUIDE: MECHA

Giant robots are a staple of the superhero genre, from the minions of supervillains to superheroes in their own right.

Gadget Guide: Mecha looks at larger, particularly piloted, robots and how to create and use them in M&M.

The term *mecha* comes from the Japanese abbreviation for “mechanical” and technically refers to all kinds of mechanical or technological devices. The Japanese still use the term robot (*robotto*) for mecha with humanoid limbs. In the translation of Japanese *anime* and *manga* to the American market, *mecha* largely refers to stories involving giant (usually humanoid) robots.

For the purposes of this **Guide**, mecha do *not* include form-fitting power armor of the type covered in **Power Profiles: Armor Powers** although they may include larger “battlesuits” that are essentially humanoid vehicles carrying a pilot, rather than worn suits of armor.

MECHA DESIGN

Mecha are similar to both constructs and vehicles, as described in **Chapter 7** of the *Hero's Handbook*, vehicles since they may carry a pilot or even passengers, considered constructs due to their form, which is generally humanoid or otherwise based on a living creature.

Mecha are acquired with equipment points, the same as vehicles and headquarters: Each rank of the Equipment advantages provides 5 points to purchase the mecha's traits. Simply divide a mecha's point total by 5 and round up to determine how many Equipment ranks it requires.

MECHA POWER LEVEL

In most M&M series, mecha are subject to the same series power level limits as characters, and non-player character mecha have their power level derived from their applicable traits, just like other NPCs.

In a more mecha-focused series, the GM may wish to have two separate power levels: one for the mecha themselves, and another for their pilots, and other characters.

Example: In the *Soul Mirrors* series, humans use mecha to battle the Phyren, alien extradimensional energy beings. The GM sets the power level of the series at 12 for the Phyren and the human-piloted mecha designed to fight them, but chooses a power level of 6 for the mecha pilots and other human characters, and generally bans humans from having any powers outside of their mecha.



MECHA ABILITIES

Like constructs, mecha have their own ranks in Strength, Agility, Dexterity, Fighting, and Awareness. They have no ranks in Stamina, Intellect, or Presence by default. They have Dodge, Parry, and Toughness defenses, but no Fortitude or Will.

Strength is typically based on a mecha's size and the efficiency of its artificial “muscles”. It determines close combat damage and lifting/carrying capacity.

Agility is the mecha's mobility or “handling” and determines its basic maneuverability and Dodge defense.

Dexterity is the mecha's precision for targeting as well as using its limbs. A mecha lacking manipulative limbs may still have Dexterity (for targeting purposes) but also a Disability complication.

Fighting likewise measures a mecha's precision with close combat attacks and its ability to evade the same.

Awareness measures the sensitivity of the mecha's sensor systems and ability to pick up and process information.

A mecha's abilities substitute for the pilot's, combining the controlling pilot's skill rank with the mecha's ability rank (subject to power level limits).

“Mecha” given Stamina ranks are bio-mechanical beings able to heal on their own, while mecha with Intellect ranks are intelligent and capable of independent action. They may also have Presence ranks, if they can interact with other creatures, and Intellect and Presence skills of their own.

MECHA AND ENVIRONMENTS

Mecha have no Stamina rank and Immunity to Fortitude Effects, meaning they have no life support requirements of their own and can, by default, function in any environment that does not cause direct damage (resisted by Toughness rather than Fortitude). The inability to function in a particular environment, or impaired function in an environment, may be considered a complication for some mecha.

Similarly, like vehicles, mecha are assumed to provide the benefits of their capabilities to their pilots and passengers; so long as they are enclosed within the mecha, they are immune to any environmental effects outside of it. Failure of a mecha's environmental systems may be a potential complication or the result of damage or stress

to the mecha's systems (see **Mecha Stress and Damage**, following).

MECHA STRESS AND DAMAGE

Having no Stamina, mecha are incapable of fatigue. They can, however, use extra effort as described in **Chapter 1** of the *Hero's Handbook*. Rather than fatigue, mecha suffer *stress*, much like equipment. Like characters, mecha have three distinct levels of stress: impaired, disabled, and immobilized. The circumstance penalties for impaired or disabled mecha apply to all checks utilizing the mecha's systems. Additionally, a disabled mecha is hindered (–1 to speed rank) much like an exhausted character. These conditions persist until the mecha undergoes maintenance to repair them (see **Repairing Damage**).

In some settings, the GM may also rule that extra effort involving mecha imposes fatigue on the *pilot*, just like an ordinary use of extra effort by that character. This is particularly appropriate in cases where the pilot is linked to the mecha in some fashion, such as a direct mind-machine interface or sympathetic magic.

Mecha suffer damage like characters but, like other constructs, do not recover from damage on their own unless they have Regeneration; they must be repaired otherwise. At the GM's option, rather than suffering a cumulative –1 Toughness penalty, mecha may suffer an impaired or disabled condition affecting one or more systems (sensors, weapons, environmental, and so forth). Damage to mecha systems may also be handled as a complication, particularly the long-term loss of a system, which can be considered a "lasting injury" (see **Chapter 8** of the *Hero's Handbook*).

At the GM's discretion, some mecha may be considered minions (*Hero's Handbook*, **Chapter 8**). This is particularly appropriate for large battles, where each successful attack takes out a target, and it's not worth tracking individual mecha damage.

REPAIRING DAMAGE

Repairing mecha damage requires the proper tools and a garage, hangar, or similar facility. A character without the proper tools suffers a –5 circumstance penalty on the Technology skill check, as usual. Repairing minor damage like a Toughness penalty is a simple check (DC 15, one hour), repairing a staggered result is a complex check (DC 25, one day). Destroyed mecha cannot be repaired; they are "totaled" and must be rebuilt from scratch.

JURY-RIGGING

When mecha suffer damage in an action scene, characters may need to initiate emergency repairs or bypass some of the mecha's systems. This is generally a Technology skill check with the DC based on the severity of the damage and/or the complexity of the system, as chosen by the GM. See the guidelines for jury-rigging repairs under the **Technology** skill in **Chapter 4** of the *Hero's Handbook*.

MECHA SIZE

By default, mecha should be at least size rank –1, big enough to enclose a size rank –2 human pilot. Smaller "mecha" tend to fall under the category of power armor (see **Power Profile: Armor Powers**) unless the pilot is correspondingly smaller: A size rank –2 (human sized) mecha might have a size rank –4 alien pilot, for example.

This means mecha usually have 4 or more ranks of Permanent, Innate Growth, with the standard size modifiers applied to their traits. Mecha size does not modify Stamina (as they have none) but does affect Toughness. See the **Reference Tables** section at the back of the *Hero's Handbook* for a quick summary of modifiers by size rank.

MECHA MOVEMENT

Mecha have ground speed rank 0—modified by their size—at no cost. So a size rank 2 mecha has Speed 2 (base 0 + 2 for size). Many mecha have additional movement effects as well:

- **Flight** is common for mecha equipped with rockets or capable of morphing into aircraft (see **Mechamorphs**, following).
- **Leaping** may represent short-range "jump-jets" or enhanced lower limbs that allow mecha to make tremendous leaps.
- **Movement** effects are relatively rare for mecha, save for Space Travel (although, even then, mecha are more likely to be carried on board a starship than capable of space travel on their own). Environmental Adaptation may show up for mecha designed to operate in specific environments.
- **Swimming** suits "submarine" mecha designed to operate on or under water. Mecha may or may not be able to swim on their own, depending on their design capabilities. Not being able to swim may constitute a complication in some circumstances.

A mecha's movement applies to it and to its pilot, crew, and passengers, just like a character's movement applies to that character and everything he or she is wearing or carrying.

Mecha can have multiple movement modes, paying the full point cost for the most expensive mode, and acquiring the others as Alternate Effects of that primary mode.

Like a vehicle, a mecha's drive system (the exact mechanics of its movement) is left as a descriptor. Mecha fuel and power systems are also handled as descriptors and complications on the occasions when problems arise, the same as ammunition. See **Ammo, Batteries, and Charges** in the **Equipment** section of **Chapter 7** of the *Hero's Handbook*.

MECHA FEATURES

Mecha can have a number of Features. As with vehicles, "standard" features for a mecha, allowing it and its passengers to operate normally in its chosen environment(s), are in-



cluded as descriptors at no cost. This includes things like environmental systems, safety harnesses, seating (or other accommodations) for the pilot and crew, internal lighting, and so forth.

Possible mecha Features include the following, which the GM should feel free to add to as needed:

- **Advantage:** The mecha has the equivalent of a combat or general advantage (see **Chapter 5** of the *Hero's Handbook*). Mecha cannot have fortune or skill advantages (although their pilots may).
- **Autopilot:** The mecha is capable of self-piloting, moving on its own to follow simple pre-programmed instructions. Unless given additional ability ranks, treat the mecha's Intellect as -5.
- **Cargo:** The mecha has space to contain cargo inside of itself. It can carry a volume of cargo equal to its size rank +10. So a size rank 0 mecha can carry up to 1,000 cubic feet of cargo (volume rank 10).
- **Lifepods:** The mecha's cockpit is capable of ejecting from its chassis and maintaining environmental systems for a time in order to allow the pilot/crew to escape the destruction of the mecha. Larger mecha capable of carrying passengers (see the following) have sufficient lifepods to accommodate as many as they can carry.
- **Passengers:** The mecha can carry people other than its pilot and crew. The mecha must be at least size

rank 0 (enough to carry four passengers). Each additional size rank doubles the number of passengers.

- **Remote Piloting:** The mecha can be piloted remotely via telepresence, similar to the Communication Link effect of Senses and the Mental Link extra of Summon. Choose a sense type for the link, sensory effects targeting that sense type may interfere with or disrupt it.
- **Transponder:** The mecha has an IFF (Identification, Friend or Foe) system, sending out a signal other IFF transponders can read to identify the machine. In addition to being able to easily tell friend from foe on the battlefield, mecha with transponders can ignore the cover friendly targets normally provide to foes like the Precise Attack advantage.
- **Vehicle Feature:** Mecha may also have suitable vehicle Features (see **Gadget Guide: Vehicles**). The GM should approve any such Features.

MECHA POWERS

Like characters, mecha can have any power effect the Gamemaster approves. Mecha powers have their own descriptors and, like vehicles and headquarters, they are not necessarily limited to the same standards as equipment, unless the GM chooses for them to be (typically series where mecha are common and "standard equipment" for the heroes).

DEFENSES

Mecha rely on their basic Toughness and Defense ranks against attacks, but may have additional built-in defenses including (but not limited to): additional ranks of Protection (sometimes Impervious) as armor-plating and structural reinforcement, although the mecha's Protection could also be Sustained in the form of a force field or "defense screen" of some type. Some mecha have layered defenses of both types. Additional defenses might be ablative, having the Fades modifier and degrading during use until they are used up or repaired. Mecha defenses apply to all characters inside it, so a mecha with Immunity to Magical Attacks protects those inside from all such attacks, for example.

SENSORS

Mecha are assumed to have basic sensors roughly equal to a human's senses for the mecha's given Awareness. A low or negative Awareness rank suggests limited sensors while a higher Awareness rank means more detailed and accurate ones. Mecha can also have various Senses effects to represent exotic or unusual sensors outside of the human range, such as radar (Accurate Radio, often with ranks of Extended) and sonar (Accurate Extended Ultra-Hearing).

WEAPONS

Offensive effects serve for mecha-mounted weapons of all kinds, from high-caliber auto-cannons and missile batteries to blaster cannons and pulse lasers. See the **Heavy Weapons Gadget Guide** and the **Energy Weapons Gadget Guide** for plenty of weapons suitable for use with mecha and the guidelines on handling them in play.

MECHAMORPHS

In some settings, mecha have morphing or transforming abilities, either changing their form and function or merging to form even more powerful mecha out of their assembled parts.

MORPHING MECHA

Morphing mecha use the Metamorph modifier of the Morph effect (**Chapter 6** of the *Hero's Handbook*). The mecha can have Metamorph as a stand alone Feature and does not need Morph unless its transformation also serves to disguise it in some way, such as allowing the mecha to appear as an otherwise ordinary vehicle.

Mecha can have multiple Metamorph extras, allowing them to assume different configurations. All of the mecha's forms must be at least a minimum size for its pilot and crew. Mecha able to assume an especially wide range of forms may have a Variable effect rather than Metamorph; the mecha redistributes power points amongst its traits whenever it changes form. See the

Variable effect in **Chapter 6** of the *Hero's Handbook* and **Power Profile: Morphing Powers** for additional information and ideas.

COMPOSITE MECHA

A composite mecha is formed when two more smaller mecha merge to form another (usually more powerful) machine. This is essentially the same as the **Combine** power from **Power Profile: Summoning Powers**: a Summon effect costing 2 points per rank that requires all of the components be present to assemble the composite form and leaves the components unable to act on their own while a part of the composite form.

Divide the point cost of the composite mecha by 15 to determine the required Summon rank, then divide the needed ranks amongst the component mecha as evenly as possible. Typically, the "lead" or "head" component carries any remainder in the Summon ranks. The composite form may have a higher power level than its components, although it is still limited by the power level(s) set for the series (see **Mecha Power Level**, previously).

If the components can Combine in multiple ways (such as five mecha able to link together into five different combinations), make each additional composite form an Alternate Effect of the most expensive (and highest ranked) form. If the composite form can also morph—without the need to break apart and recombine—apply the guidelines for morphing mecha (previously).

Example: *The three Starbird mecha can combine to form the Nova-Hawk, a more powerful mecha form uniting their powers. Nova-Hawk costs 150 points which, divided by 15, equals 10 ranks for the Combine (Summon) power. Starbird-Blue and Starbird-Gold each have 3 ranks, while Starbird-Red (the lead mecha) has 4, costing 6 and 8 points, respectively. The Starbirds take a standard action on their turns to combine and, thereafter, must act together as Nova-Hawk until they end the combination and break apart again (as a free action).*

MECHA IN ACTION

The following rules deal with mecha interacting with each other and with other characters in action time.

MECHA PILOTING

As a default, mecha pilots use the Vehicles skill for checks involving operating and controlling mecha. The Vehicles skill may substitute for any Agility- or Strength-based skill check like Acrobatics or Athletics involving mecha as well.

MECHA EXPERTISE

If the GM prefers, Mecha can be made into an Expertise skill (Dexterity-based) distinct from Vehicles. For most M&M settings, however, using the standard Vehicle skill makes things considerably simpler.

UNTRAINED USE

The Vehicles skill cannot be used untrained and there is generally no “routine” operation of mecha, so characters untrained in the skill cannot pilot mecha unless the GM specifically chooses to allow it.

LINKED MECHA

For some settings and types of mecha, the Vehicles skill may not be needed or used. Mecha linked to their pilots and designed to mimic their movements, for example, may simply translate the pilot’s own physical skills and movements into those of the mecha. This is a 0-point Feature (although the GM may choose to charge a Feature rank for it in settings where linked mecha coexist alongside more cumbersome ones piloted with the Vehicles skill).

REMOTE MECHA

With Remote Piloting (see **Mecha Features**) a pilot does not even need to be present to control the mecha! A remote pilot operates the mecha from a distance using a communications link. Difficulties can arise when a sensory effect disrupts this link, leaving the mecha unable to receive instructions. The Feedback flaw may apply to some types of remote piloting, particularly if the GM wants to ensure that mecha pilots are not completely insulated from the effects of combat.

MECHA COMBAT SKILLS

“Mecha Weapons” is a specialization of the Close Combat and Ranged Combat skills, with the default assumption that ranks of the Close Attack and Ranged Attack advantages apply to using mecha weapons as well as personal weapons. So attacks with mecha weapons use the mecha’s Dexterity + Attack advantage (if any) + Mecha Combat Skill (if any). Some mecha weapons may also be Accurate, applying that bonus, or Area effect weapons requiring no attack check, except for a direct hit. See **Gadget Guide: Heavy Weapons** for details and examples.

The GM may choose to allow personal combat skills to apply to similar mecha weapons. For example, Ranged Combat: Guns might suit for firing a mecha-mounted gun, and Close Combat: Swords might apply for wielding the blade of a giant mecha. This is particularly appropriate when dealing with linked mecha (previously) which closely mimic their pilot’s movements.

MECHA ACTIONS

Most skill checks to pilot or move mecha are move actions, unless specified otherwise. Controlling a mecha in operation requires a move action each round, and may require a skill check. Essentially the pilot’s controlling move action translates into the mecha’s move action to move or do something similar. Routine operation, such as walking along, or flying under normal conditions, does not require a check.

Linked mecha operate essentially like any other larger-sized characters with Growth, taking their regular allotment of actions (one move and one standard, plus a number of free actions) each turn.

MECHA COMBAT

Attacking a mecha is just like attacking a character. Mecha generally have an applicable size modifier included in their defense, and tend to be easier to hit than characters overall due to their size.

TARGETING OCCUPANTS

An attack against a mecha occupant is made like any other attack, except that a character inside a mecha benefits from cover and concealment provided by the mecha. See **Cover** and **Concealment** in **Chapter 8** of the *Hero’s Handbook*. Note that crew and passengers completely enclosed in a mecha and not visible to attackers on the outside (complete cover) cannot be targeted by attacks, including perception ranged effects. Some mecha have windows or open cockpits, leaving the pilot visible (and subject to targeting). Treat this as a weakness complication when it comes into play (see **Chapter 2** of the *Hero’s Handbook*).

MECHA MANEUVERS

Mecha use the same combat maneuvers as characters, found in **Chapter 8** of the *Hero’s Handbook*. In particular the Accurate Attack, All-out Attack, Defensive Attack, Feint, Power Attack, and Slam Attack maneuvers may all apply to mecha.

WEAPONS LOCK

A mecha gunner can take a Ready action to achieve a “weapons lock” on a target. The attacker makes the attack check in advance. If it is successful, the weapon is “locked” and the attacker can make that successful attack automatically when using the readied action. If the attack check is unsuccessful, no weapon lock is achieved. The gunner can choose to try again on the next turn or use the readied action to fire manually, making the attack check when the attack is made. Taking another action while holding a weapon lock breaks the lock, but the attacker still gets a +2 bonus, if making an attack check with that weapon in the next turn (like the aim action). Anything that conceals the target from the attacker’s accurate senses also breaks the weapon lock.

Example: *The pilot of an MF-15 Raptor (in fighter mode) readies an attack on an alien craft. The pilot makes the attack check, even though the attack is not yet initiated. The check result is successful against the alien ship’s Defense so, as long as the Raptor pilot maintains the lock, she can fire on the enemy vessel and hit it with her readied action. She gets on the comm and says, “Alien vessel! I have a weapons lock on you. If you do not withdraw, I will open fire.” Then she awaits their response, finger poised on the trigger....*

SPECIAL TACTICS ARMORED UNIT

PL8/ER18

STR 8 STA — AGL 0 DEX 2 FGT 4 INT — AWE 0 PRE —

Powers: **Armor** (Protection 6, Impervious Toughness 8); **Construct** (Immunity 30 (Fortitude effects)); **Large** (Growth 4, Permanent, Innate); **Pulse Rifle** (Ranged Damage 8, Multiattack, **AE: Rocket Launcher** (Burst Area Ranged Damage 8)); **Sensor Suite** (Senses 6: Accurate Radio [radar], Extended Hearing, Extended Vision, Infravision, Radio)

Typical Pilot Traits: Close Combat: Mecha 4 (+8), Ranged Combat: Guns 6 (+8), Vehicles 8 (+10), Fortitude 5, Will 5

Offense: Initiative +1, Pulse Rifle +8 (Ranged, Damage 8), Unarmed +8 (Close, Damage 8)

Defense: Dodge 6, Parry 6, Fortitude Immune, Toughness 10, Will Immune

Totals: Abilities -10 + Powers 84 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 + Defenses 12 = 86

SAMPLE MECHA

The following are some iconic examples of mecha. Each has its own power level and an Equipment Rank (ER) based on the number of ranks of Equipment advantage needed for that mecha. Feel free to modify and customize these mecha to suit your own games and to use them as archetypes and models for creating your own original mecha.

SPECIAL TACTICS ARMORED UNIT

The pilot of this humanoid tank is a fearsome force on any battlefield: the STAU's size and strength allow for heavier armament than any individual soldier could carry, with the maneuverability to move behind enemy lines and inflict maximum damage in lightning-strikes. STAUs are quite capable of operating on their own, but are more often deployed in small squads, making them even more effective. Models armed with non-lethal or crowd-control weapons may even be used by law enforcement, from police to federal organizations like AEGIS.



KERBERALTES

Its origin is unknown, its purpose a mystery, but Kerberaltes is the only thing standing between humanity and monstrous alien invaders, and able to banish them to a limbo dimension.

Kerberaltes charges a high price for its protection: the pilot of this mystic guardian risks his or her very soul. Kerberaltes' pilot



KERBERALTES

PL11/ER28

STR 14 STA — AGL 5 DEX 5 FGT 6 INT — AWE 3 PRE —

Powers: **Armor** (Impervious Toughness 8); **Gargantuan** (Growth 12, Permanent, Innate); **Construct** (Immunity 30 (Fortitude effects)); **Dimensional Fist** (Strength Damage Affects Insubstantial 2); **Dimensional Vortex** (Cone Area Affliction 11, Resisted and Overcome by Will; Dazed, Stunned, Transported, Affects Insubstantial 2); **Sensors** (Senses 10 (Accurate, Acute and Ranged Detect Aliens, Communication Link (pilot's best friend or significant other), Radius Vision (All), Vision Counters Concealment (Invisibility)); **Shield Generator** (Sustained Protection 4, Impervious, Fades); **Wings** (Flight 6 (120 MPH))

Typical Pilot Traits: Close Combat: Mecha 2 (+8), Ranged Combat: Guns 4 (+9), Fortitude 6, Will 8

Offense: Initiative +5, Dimensional Fist +8 (Close, Damage 14 Affects Incorporeal), Dimensional Vortex (Close, Cone Area Affliction, DC 21 Will)

Defense: Dodge 6, Parry 6, Fortitude Immune, Toughness 16 (12 without shields), Will Immune

Totals: Abilities 12 + Powers 115 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 + Defenses 13 = 140

TITANZOR-V

PL13/ER27

STR 16 STA — AGL 2 DEX 4 FGT 4 INT — AWE 1 PRE —

Powers: **Armor** (Impervious Toughness 16); **Atomic Beam** (Ranged Damage 13, radiation; **AE:** Cone Area Damage 13; **AE: Rocket Fists**, Ranged Damage 13, bludgeoning); **Colossal** (Growth 16, Permanent, Innate); **Construct** (Immunity 30 (Fortitude effects)); **Features** 4 (Cargo, Instant Up, Lifepods, Power Attack); **Jump Jets** (Leaping 8 (1 mile)); **Sensors** (Senses 6 (Extended Vision, Radio, Vision Penetrates Concealment))

Typical Pilot Traits: Close Combat: Unarmed 6 (+10), Ranged Combat: Mecha Weapons 8 (+12), Vehicles 10 (+14), Fortitude 6, Will 6

Offense: Initiative +2, Atomic Beam +12 (Ranged, Damage 13), Rocket Fists +12 (Ranged, Damage 13), Unarmed +10 (Close, Damage 16)

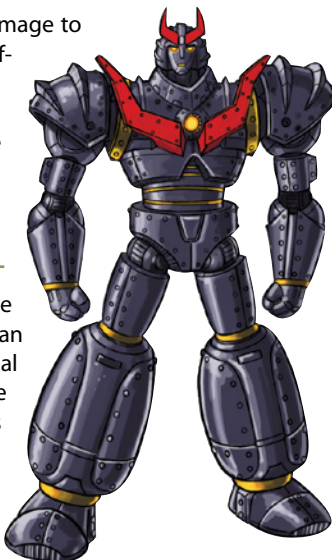
Defense: Dodge 4, Parry 4, Fortitude Immune, Toughness 16, Will Immune

Totals: Abilities -8 + Powers 125 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 + Defenses 18 = 135

suffers Feedback from damage to the mecha and a Side-Effect (Weaken Will, DC 20) when rolling a natural 1 or 20 while operating the mecha.

TITANZOR-V

Titanzor-V serves the cause of justice, deployed by an elite team of international crime fighters to thwart the schemes of the enemies of peace, from artificial earthquakes to sabotaged nuclear plants and giant monsters.



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