GADGET GUIDE: ALIEN TECH

In most comic book universes, like Earth-Prime, the home of *Freedom City* and *Emerald City,* humanity is not alone in the cosmos, far from it, in fact. Any number of alien civilizations have contact with Earth, ranging from the lone survivors of long-lost worlds and peaceful explorers to invading empires, marauding warlords, or inhuman horrors. Each of these alien species has its own technology, used to further its purposes, and often so advanced as to appear like just another super-power to the inhabitants of a world of costumed heroes and villains. This Guide looks at technology and devices commonly used by aliens, and how to include them in your M&M series.

ters in a MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS setting. It's important to note that, while alien super-science may be commonplace in the culture it comes from, it may or may not be considered suitable for equipment in a modern Earth-centic M&M series. It is generally fine if limited to vehicles and installations, along with fairly routine equipment like weapons and life support, but the GM is encouraged to make unusual alien technology into powers with the Removable flaw or a suitable Power Loss complication rather than equipment acquired with points from the Equipment advantage. See **Chapter 7** of the *Hero's Handbook* for additional discussion.

DESCRIPTORS

The following descriptors in particular apply to alien technology in an M&M setting.

- **Alien** simply means "foreign" or, for most M&M settings, "not from Earth." The important thing about an alien descriptor is the lack of familiarity earthly characters may have with alien technology. Not only might it be far in advance of human science (see the **Unfamiliar Technology** sidebar) but alien tech might have completely different design esthetics as well; whereas a human-designed weapon is fairly easily recognized as a weapon, an alien weapon might not be apparent until it is actually used, or what appears to be a weapon could prove to be just a sensor or recording device for alien scientists or tourists! This unfamiliarity can lead to misunderstandings between humans and aliens, creating conflicts in a story.

- **Preternatural** is a step beyond merely alien. Preternatural effects and technologies may not even follow the same physical laws as those we know, belonging to an entirely different region of the universe or a different—vastly alien—cosmos altogether. Such things are truly "unnatural" and may have a frightening quality to them, even in just their implications. Preternatural versions of alien technology often have disturbing biological elements, perhaps being a form of alien biotech (see **Gadget Guide: Biotech** for details).

- **Super-Science** is scientific understanding beyond Earth's modern science, and technology based upon it. It's purely speculative, fictional, science like faster-than-light travel or teleportation, for example. More advanced alien technology is often super-science, as are many of the devices created and used by charac-

ALIEN WEAPONS

Only rarely do aliens in the comics "come in peace." More often, they arrive on Earth as invaders, armed for combat. Alien arsenals may include any of the weapons from the various other **Gadget Guides**, particularly **Energy Weapons**, although some particularly warlike species also favor various close combat weapons as well.

BLASTER

Although alien species use a wide variety of weapons, the blaster is the most ubiquitous throughout known space: a simple beam of charged particles that inflicts impact damage, found in varieties from small hand weapons to larger rifles or ship-based cannons. The blaster technology of certain species may carry a particular "signature" (color, noise, beam frequency, etc.) those familiar with alien cultures can identify.

Blaster: Ranged Damage, typically 2–8 ranks • *2 points per rank*

CLOSE WEAPONS

Militaristic alien cultures often still make use of close combat weapons, particularly those with great cultural or ceremonial significance. These are often similar to various archaic human weapons (see **Gadget Guide: Archaic Weapons** and **Asian Weapons**) perhaps with a slight modification or the addition of a weapon feature or two. Close weapons from an advanced culture may be forged from nigh-indestructible alloys or have additional technological features like damaging energy fields or even "blades" of solidified force.

Close Weapons: Damage (often Strength-based) often with modifiers like Penetrating, Reach, etc. • *1 point per rank*

CONTROL POD

Some alien weapons are more subtle than blasters or blades, using advanced technology to turn humans into loyal slaves of their new alien masters. A control pod typically attaches to the skin near the head or spinal cord, sending a mind controlling signal to the victim. Preternatural control pods are often creatures in their own right: small parasites that latch onto and control their victims. If a control pod is tiny and easily hidden (say, at the base of the spine) it may also have the Subtle modifier. Some control pods need careful placement, adding Grab-based or Limited to Restrained Targets (a –2 per rank flaw).

Control Pod: Affliction (Resisted and Overcome by Will; Entranced, Compelled, Controlled), Progressive • *3 points per rank*

ALIEN DEFENSES

Both alien explorers and invaders look to protect themselves from attack, detection, and the effects of dangerous environments.

CONTAINMENT POD

Aliens may take prisoners, either victims kidnapped for purposes of examination and imitation, or prisoners of war kept alive for repatriation, reprogramming, or due to some other quirk of the aliens' culture. Containment pods are individual life support units that keep creatures placed within them in a state of suspended animation, allowing them to be revived at a later time. For some alien species, this might even function as a "larder," preserving creatures like humans as food....

At the GM's discretion, containment pods can be considered an added headquarters feature, much like prison cells, in which case the feature improves existing Holding Cells for any number of prisoners based on the size of the installation. See **Chapter 7** of the *Hero's Handbook* and **Gadget Guide: Installations** for more information.

Containment Pod: Enhanced Advantage 1 (Trance) plus Immunity 4 (Aging, Starvation, and Suffocation), Affects Others, Others Only, Limited to Helpless Subjects • *1 point*

ENVIRONMENT SUIT

Traveling through space and visiting other worlds, aliens often have and wear protective life support gear providing them with a comfortable environment, which may differ significantly from an Earth-normal environment, if the species hails from a planet with a significantly different atmosphere, temperature, or gravity.

Environment Suit: Immunity 7 (cold, heat, pressure, radiation, suffocation, vacuum) • *7 points*

FORCE CELL

Rather than placing prisoners in containment pods (previously), some aliens may use more conventional prison

cells augmented with force fields, or made entirely out of force fields. These fields can provide cells capable of withstanding the kind of might superhumans can bring to bear, and might have other features as well, including power dampeners (see **Gadget Guide: Power Gadgets** for an example).

Force cells may be a feature of an alien vessel or installation, applying the Impervious extra to the Toughness of the Holding Cells feature.

Force Cell: Create Force Cell, Impervious, Limited to Trapping, Limited to Helpless Targets • *1 point per 2 ranks*

GUN-JAMMING FIELD

Although primitive Earth firearms are often little threat to superior alien defenses, some prefer not to take any risk, and deploy technology that renders chemical propellant weapons useless in a given area, while still allowing advanced (typically energy-based) alien weapons to function. A gun-jamming field can turn a small fighting chance on the part of Earthly security and military forces into a complete rout when soldiers' guns fail to work. Apply additional ranks of the Area modifier to expand the field's influence over a wider area.

Gun-Jamming Field: Nullify Firearms, Burst Area, Simultaneous, Sustained • *5 points per rank*

ALIEN SENSORS

Whether their mission is exploration or paving the way for conquest, aliens make use of various sensor devices to gather information and transmit it back to their mothership or home world.

COMMUNICATOR

A simple communications device, transmitting an encrypted signal to an alien communications network. Individual devices have a limited range, but can be boosted by base vehicles, installations, or orbiting vessels.

Communicator: Communication 3 (radio), Subtle • *13 points*

EXAMINATION SUITE

Whether studying other life-forms out of scientific curiosity or looking for weaknesses to exploit militarily, many aliens use complex banks of sensors to closely examine living subjects, which are usually restrained or sedated for the process. Successful Technology checks using an examination suite can provide the user with details about a being's physiology, capabilities, and weaknesses.

Examination Suite: Senses 8 (Detect Life Form, Acute, Analytical, Microscopic Vision, Penetrates Concealment, Rapid 3), uses Technology in place of Perception, Limited to Restrained Subjects • *3 points*

MIND PROBE

The mind probe takes the physical scrutiny of the examination suite a step further, delving into the deepest recesses of the subject's mind, scanning thoughts and sifting through memories to give the alien examiners a more detailed view of an alien culture and whatever the subject might know. The probe requires fitting leads or scanner pods closely around the subject's head, so it can only be used fairly motionless subjects (usually restrained in some fashion).

Mind Probe: Mind Reading, Cumulative, Effortless, Close, Limited to Restrained Subjects • *1 point per rank*

UNIVERSAL TRANSLATOR

Alien invaders are not necessarily going to bother to learn English (or any other human language) yet they always seem able to speak it, or to make their demands understood. This piece of technology automatically provides translations from a vast database of languages and can quickly and easily extrapolate based on brief exposure to new languages. It may be entirely calculation-based, or have a telepathic component, allowing speakers to understand each other in their native languages.

Universal Translator: Comprehend 2 (languages, speak and understand) • *4 points*

ALIEN INFILTRATION

A common alien invasion scenario is the "They Are Among Us!" conspiracy, where a "silent invasion" of aliens, concealed to look like ordinary human beings, is already happening. Aliens may want to visit Earth incognito for a number of reasons, ranging from scientific research (with care not to contaminate or influence human culture) to scouting parties or saboteurs preceding an invasion force.

CHAMELEON CLOAK

Since most aliens cannot easily pass amongst humans without being noticed, this technology is useful for scouts and infiltrators. It creates the realistic illusion of a human appearance, even allowing the wearer to imitate specific humans. A chameleon cloak changes appearance and voice to create an effective disguise, but will not fool other sensors, so some caution is still needed. Damage to

> ### ALIEN ADVANCEMENTS
>
> While alien technology may be initially unfamiliar (see the **Unfamiliar Technology** sidebar) it is not necessarily going to stay that way, especially if some intrepid Earthlings get their hands on it. What happens to all of the tech alien invaders and visitors leave behind on Earth and what impact does it have on human technology?
>
> The simplest option is not to worry about it: The tech is simply too advanced for humans to even begin to understand it, like Neanderthals trying to figure out a smartphone. We might be able to get it to work (for a while, at least) but any effort to take it apart or replicate it likely wrecks it, and might have dire consequences, leading to another adventure hook. The super-geniuses likely able to figure the stuff out have reasons to keep their insights to themselves: the heroes to keep technological advancements away from a world not yet ready to handle them, the villain to keep technological advantages to themselves.
>
> Another option is to allow for some alien influence on human technology. After all, most comic book worlds have super-science of one sort or another available to governments, megacorporations, and other organizations with sufficient resources. Who's to say some of that didn't come from studying and reverse-engineering alien tech? Those factions are still likely to keep their inventions top-secret for as long as possible to retain their advantage, and some alien-derived tech may be considered too unstable or dangerous for widespread use.
>
> Lastly, samples of alien technology could revolutionize human society as we know it, creating tremendous leaps forward in scientific understanding and technical capabilities. A few years after acquiring a working FTL drive, for example, some human nations might have their own hyperspace ships, capable of visiting (and colonizing!) other planets! Take this step carefully, as it changes the style of the setting, but it can make for an exciting and dynamic one as humanity encounters new opportunities and challenges afforded by such advancements.

the cloak (the equivalent to a stunned condition) can also cause it to "flicker," revealing the wearer's true appearance.

> **Chameleon Cloak:** Morph 3 (humanoids), Limited to visual and auditory • *12 points*

CLOAKING DEVICE

Rather than disguise, some alien infiltrators may simply go completely unseen. Alien technology may allow them to vanish from sight. A cloaking device can be a personal item (for scouts and spies) or installed in a vessel, allowing it to escape detection even while in orbit above the Earth or "parked" in the middle of a field or clearing! Ship-based cloaking devices often add additional senses—particular radio—to their Concealment to hide from the sensor sweeps of other vessels.

> **Cloaking Device:** Concealment 4 (visual) • *8 points*

MIND MASK

Given the presence of telepaths amongst some species, alien infiltrators lacking psionic abilities of their own may use technological means to mask their unique thoughts and brain patterns from detection. The mind mask either makes the wearer mentally "invisible" or else provides an unremarkable mental "façade" to fool mind-readers. A mind mask is often incorporated into a chameleon cloak to enhance its concealment.

> **Mind Mask:** Concealment 2 (mental) • *4 points*

TELEPORTER

In addition to small vessels like scout ships and troop landers (see **Alien Vehicles**, following) alien visitors are most likely to have technology capable of instantly transporting them from distant orbiting vessels to a planet's surface, eliminating the need for landing craft and reducing the potential that their arrival will be discovered. Such teleportation technology may also allow aliens to move quickly and covertly around a planet, using either a ground-based installation or their ship as a relay station.

An alien teleporter needs a minimum rank of 15 to operate from geostationary orbit above the Earth (a bit over 22,000 miles) but a rank as low as 11 is capable of operating from low-Earth orbit (around 2,000 miles).

> **Teleporter:** Teleport, Extended, Limited to Extended • *2 points per rank*

A similar technology for some aliens is a teleportal: a "gateway" defined by a technological framework which creates a warp in space or even between dimensions, allowing aliens to travel simply by stepping through it. A teleportal might simply add the Portal modifier to a teleporter or it could be Dimensional Travel technology for aliens from another universe to enter our own. Portals of various sorts are common for preternatural alien species.

ALIEN VEHICLES

In order to visit Earth from whatever distant planet they call home, aliens need some form of transportation. In many ways the space-ship, from the classic "flying saucer" to a city-sized mothership, is a staple of alien technology.

Many alien vessels are armed. For some potential weapons, see the **Heavy Weapons** and **Vehicles Gadget Guides** as well as **Chapter 7** of the *Hero's Handbook*.

HOVER SLED

A simple one- or two-person craft consisting of an open platform about five feet long, with a raised control and steering column in the front (which also provides the pilot with partial cover) and anti-gravity pods underneath, providing lift and propulsion. Hover sleds are common patrol and combat vehicles for planetary surfaces, and may be equipped with forward mounted weapons, or a second crew person standing behind the pilot, able to fire weapons in any direction to the sides or rear of the craft.

HOVER SLED — 30 EP

Size: Medium **Strength:** 2 **Speed:** 8 (air) **Defense:** 6 **Toughness:** 7 **Features:** Autopilot (+4), Communications, Navigation System

HOVER PLATFORM

A larger version of the hover sled, designed more as a troop carrier for a cluster of a dozen or so medium-sized personnel, usually with a low raised edge the soldiers can easily step or jump over to disembark. Like the hover sled, a platform may be armed, typically with heavier weapons, such as a blaster cannon operated by two or more of its crew.

HOVER PLATFORM — 30 EP

Size: Huge **Strength:** 8 **Speed:** 8 (air) **Defense:** 4 **Toughness:** 9 **Features:** Autopilot (+4), Communications, Navigation System

TROOP LANDER

An enclosed "drop ship" designed to quickly move troops from an orbital mothership to the surface of a planet, or from place to place on a planet. The troop lander is comparatively bulky and difficult to maneuver, but well armored. It lands in a "drop zone" and opens large bay doors to quickly off-load troops and even smaller vehicles (like hover sleds), then usually withdraws to a safe distance or returns to its mothership to transport additional troops.

TROOP LANDER — 38 EP

Size: Gargantuan **Strength:** 12 **Speed:** 10 (space) **Defense:** 4 **Toughness:** 11 **Features:** Autopilot (+4), Communications, Computer, Navigation System

SCOUT SHIP

A scout ship is a relatively small interstellar vessel, capable of extended missions to other star systems on its own, and intended to explore alien systems and planets. Some scout ships are useful for peaceful exploration, while others are military scouts, intended to learn as much as possible about a civilization's technology, defenses, and potential value for conquest. Given its purpose, a scout ship may be equipped with a cloaking device or a chameleon cloak, modified for different vehicle or object forms (see **Alien Infiltration**, previously)

SCOUT SHIP — 46 EP

Size: Gargantuan **Strength:** 12 **Speed:** 12 (space) **Defense:** 6 **Toughness:** 11 **Powers:** Movement 2 (Space Flight) **Features:** Autopilot (+4), Communications, Computer, Navigation System

SPACE FIGHTER

A space fighter is a sleek and fast ship intended for ship-to-ship combat in deep space or (often) in planetary atmospheres. Space fighters come in a wide range of configurations, some with a crew of one or two (a pilot, plus a possible copilot or gunner) while others are automated and run by robots or remotely piloted from another location (such as a control ship). Some space fighters have their own faster-than-light drives, but most are intended to be deployed from larger interstellar mother ships.

SPACE FIGHTER — 48 EP

Size: Huge **Strength:** 8 **Speed:** 14 (space) **Defense:** 8 **Toughness:** 9 **Features:** Autopilot (+4), Communications, Computer, Navigation System, Remote Control

ALIEN VEHICLES

NAME	SIZE	STRENGTH	SPEED	DEFENSE	TOUGHNESS	COST
Hover Sled	M	2	8 (air)	6	7	30
Hover Platform	H	8	8 (air)	4	9	30
Troop Lander	G	12	10 (space)	4	11	38
Scout Ship	G	12	12 (space)	6	11	46
Space Fighter	H	8	14 (space)	8	9	48

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