

CHAPTER 5

EQUIPMENT



I saw bellows, a wooden box, and a soft and hideous throat that seemed to twist and pucker on its own. Then the Mechanical Turk did something that I do not believe will ever fully leave my thoughts no matter how fervently I might wish it.

It stood up.

It had no legs and made no secret of it, yet still it stood, stepping away from the table that was its very being, and it began to dance. As it did so, the bellows left upon the bleeding table started to pump, and I heard again that mournful wail of Wolfgang's "speech machine" as the end of it flailed and bulged until at last it shrieked its words to the audience. I do not know what it said, and I thank almighty God that I speak no Hungarian.

—MAG 116: "The Show Must Go On"

What equipment do characters begin with, and what else can they get during the game? This chapter addresses those questions.

That said, the equipment listed in this chapter is by no means comprehensive or exhaustive. GMs should feel free to use the various tables, price lists, and examples as a jumping-off point to provide additional options for players. Comparing those prices to what can be found with a quick search of online shops should provide useful comparisons. Anything a regular person can get in the real world should probably also be available to PCs in *The Magnus Archives* Roleplaying Game.

CURRENCY AND PRICES

Dollars, yuan, pounds, pesos, euros, cryptocurrencies of various sorts—lots of different currencies might be used in your game, depending where in the world it's set and where the PCs go. Specifying a single currency isn't important, because we can establish reasonable ranges for equipment prices rather than nailing prices down to the last dollar and cent. Not unlike saying "immediate" or "short" distance rather than giving precise numbers, we talk about goods and services in terms of inexpensive, moderately priced, expensive, very expensive, exorbitant, or priceless items.

If a GM really wants to, they can assign specific value ranges for each price category. For example, an inexpensive item might be £8/\$10, a moderately priced item around £80/\$100, and so on, as the examples in this chapter demonstrate. The exact amount varies depending on country, inflation, and local circumstances.

To keep things simple, the GM can use the price categories described here to determine PC resources. Only indicate a particular currency (pounds, pesos, dollars, or whatever the GM is most familiar with) as flavor now and then. For example, if PCs working for a paranormal institute are given a discretionary fund to purchase equipment for an especially important mission, their supervisor might caution them to “keep it under a few thousand to keep the bean counters happy.” That, depending on how you translate it to the price categories, might allow the PCs to choose three additional expensive items for their mission.

PRICE CATEGORIES

There are six price categories for goods and services.

An **inexpensive item** is something that common people buy. A simple meal or a drink in the bar. A pen and some paper. A book or magazine.

A **moderately priced item** is something that common people buy, but not too often and not in great quantities. A small piece of furniture. A major entertainment. An expensive meal. A new outfit.

An **expensive item** is something that would strain a common person’s finances. Rent on a simple apartment. A major piece of furniture. A very nice outfit. The cost to travel a long distance (if appropriate to the setting).

A **very expensive item** is probably out of the reach of most people except in very special circumstances. Jewelry. Luxury furnishings. Non-luxury vehicles.

An **exorbitant item** is something only the very rich can afford. A very nice house. A ship. Extremely expensive jewelry or art.

A **priceless item** is one that even the very rich can’t afford, requiring the resources of a multinational corporation or nation-state to acquire or build.

Think of the escalating categories as powers of 10. That is to say, a moderately priced item is ten times more costly than an inexpensive item. An expensive item is ten times more costly than a moderately priced item, and thus 100 times the cost of something inexpensive. A very expensive item is ten times the cost of an expensive one, 100 times the cost of a moderate one, and 1,000 times the cost of an inexpensive one. An exorbitant item is priced ten times beyond that.



USING THE PRICE CATEGORIES

Regardless of how precise you want to be with prices and currency, price categories are useful in a variety of ways.

It's easy for a GM to tell the players to use the guidance presented under PC Starting Equipment to get things rolling, which includes guidance for "two moderately priced items." The player can look on the list and pick two moderately priced items without worrying about their cost. Plus, this approach makes it clear that they get two items, not twenty inexpensive items or one expensive item that perhaps would not be appropriate for a starting character. The categories make it easy to lump similar items together.

The GM can also say "You can have whatever inexpensive items you want, and don't worry about the cost." At higher tiers, when the PCs have more wealth, authority in their organization, and so on, the GM can do this with moderate or even expensive items. This allows the group to skip over playing through a shopping trip to get supplies, and players don't have to track prices down to the last coin.

Finally, the categories can be shorthand when evaluating valuable objects (of a non-paranormal sort) that PCs find during the course of their investigations, and in resolving other story-based expenses that crop up in the game without dealing in the minutiae of exact prices.

PC STARTING EQUIPMENT

A character's starting equipment is nearly as important as their starting skills and abilities.

Every character starts with appropriate clothing, three expensive items, two moderately priced items, and up to four inexpensive items. They very likely have access (at home, for example) to up to ten useful inexpensive items.

STARTING PC SAMPLE EQUIPMENT

A character might have the following starting equipment.

Basic Equipment: Everyday clothing, purse or wallet, smartphone, and multitool. Easy access (in car, apartment, home, office, etc.) to the following: flashlight, gloves, journal and pen, handful of energy bars, duct tape, case of light tools.

Provided by Organization: Vehicle (for entire group), laptop, briefcase.

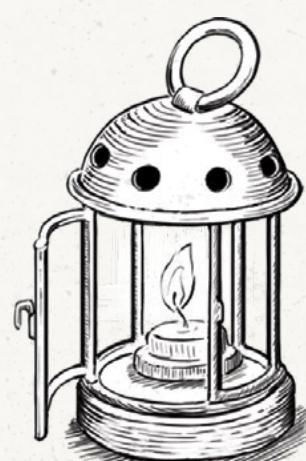
PC MONEY AND INCOME

The price categories suggest that this game isn't about money. Characters working for the Magnus Institute or a similar organization likely don't get paid too much. Assume that, after paying for monthly expenses and whatnot, an average PC earns enough to purchase four moderately priced items in a month.

Similarly, the average PC has enough in savings to purchase a single expensive item, and enough credit to purchase three such items. However, a character with zero savings and maxed out credit cards will very likely regret it later.

EQUIPMENT LEVEL

Mundane equipment is about level 4—less if of inferior quality or materials, more if of superior quality or materials.



If a PC works for an organization, that body might provide additional items to the character on a case-by-case basis, or a stipend they can use to buy additional items.

WEAPONS

The Magnus Archives RPG is not a game about weapons and combat, even if it is, as Jonny would put it, “surprisingly easy to pick up an axe in central London.” PCs who regularly engage in combat probably don’t last very long. Even more important, shooting one’s way out of a situation isn’t very appropriate to the types of stories being told in this game.

Not all characters are familiar with all weapons. Protectors know their way around most varieties, but Investigators, Elocutionists, and Occultists prefer light or medium weapons, assuming they pick up a weapon at all.

Unfamiliarity: If a character uses a weapon they have no experience with, an attack with that weapon is hindered. Having experience with a weapon is called being practiced with the weapon.

WEAPON CATEGORIES

Many of the weapon examples noted below can also be found on the equipment list.

Light weapons inflict only 2 points of damage, but attacks with them are eased because they are fast and easy to use. Light weapons include unarmed strikes (punches, kicks, elbows, etc.), knives, batons, slingshots, very small pistols, and so on. Weapons that are particularly small are light weapons.

Medium weapons inflict 4 points of damage. Medium weapons include bows, typical handguns, light rifles, sawed-off shotguns, hand axes, and so on. Most weapons are medium. Anything that could be used in one hand is a medium weapon.

Heavy weapons inflict 6 points of damage, and you must use two hands to attack with them. Heavy weapons are rifles, regular shotguns, large-caliber handguns, katanas, and so on. Anything that must be used in two hands is a heavy weapon.

Weapon	Damage
Light	2 points (attack eased)
Medium	4 points
Heavy	6 points (two hands needed)

Improvised weapons—like kitchen pans, umbrellas, keys, big flashlights, and so on—are light weapons, but most people are not practiced with them, so an attack with an improvised weapon is not eased.

Most thrown weapons, such as throwing knives or explosives, can be thrown a short distance.

Tough, page 39 and 78

Any weapon’s listed damage is only used to determine the damage inflicted on creatures and NPCs by PCs. PCs don’t take damage—they suffer Stress and serious injuries determined by their attacker’s level or damage rating.

Keep in mind that in many locations, it’s not acceptable to run around carrying dangerous weapons, at least not without proper licenses and authorization, and sometimes not even then. This is especially true if your game is set in the UK!

EXPLOSIVE WEAPONS

Generally speaking, PCs in this game are unlikely to gain access to grenades and similar explosives, at least normally.

But in the corner case where they do, sticks of dynamite, grenades, and other explosives operate differently than other weapons. They affect all targets within an area (usually an immediate area) and inflict damage to all of them. A separate attack roll is required for each target (or a Speed defense roll if the PCs are the targets of such an attack), although to simplify, the player can make one attack roll and compare it to the difficulty to attack each target. The downside of simplifying is that one bad roll means none of the targets are fully affected. Usually, even if the attack roll fails, the targets still suffer a smaller amount of damage, often 1 point. (PCs subject to such a weapon take a serious injury, and even if they succeed on a Speed defense roll, they take 1 point of Stress.)

Explosives like grenades can be thrown a short distance. Otherwise, another launcher weapon is needed to project them a long distance (or farther).

ARMOR

PCs in this game are not kitted out with military vests or police Kevlar. If they do get hold of such gear, treat those wearing it as though they had an extra step in their damage track, similar to the **Tough** ability (available to Protectors and with the Never Says Die focus). All of their Speed-based tasks, however, are hindered, and the armor does not apply in some situations that might otherwise cause serious injury, such as falling or fire.

WEAPONS AND THE MAGNUS ARCHIVES

Just because your character *could* use a particular weapon doesn't mean they necessarily have one when the game begins. For instance, your Investigator could theoretically wield a light weapon—such as a baton or improvised chair leg, or maybe even a light pistol—when the chips are down. But prior to the game's start, they probably didn't have any, unless their background specifically indicates otherwise.

Lack of weapons is all the more likely if the game is set in a place like the United Kingdom, which has starkly contrasting approaches to weapons and firearms than, say, the United States.

In the UK, guns are heavily regulated through stringent licensing, background checks, and storage protocols. Other weapons are similarly restricted. For instance, batons are usually only allowed for police officers, and knives are only legal if they have nonlocking blades of less than 3 inches (8 cm). Which means that characters who want to acquire a firearm need to go through the requisite process to gain one legally, or find a way to get one illegally. Either way, a character with a weapon would want to keep it under wraps, lest they draw attention from both the general public and officers of the law.

All that said, if a character whose game is set in the UK is a Protector or might otherwise be expected to have access to a weapon, work with the GM to come up with a solution. The GM will guide you on where they'd like to see their game go.

Civilian gun ownership is allowed much more broadly in the United States. Though regulated, firearms are far more common, as are other weapons such as knives and batons. Of course, that doesn't mean a starting Magnus Archives character in the USA begins with a weapon either. But they might, and if they don't, they'll find acquiring and carrying one much easier.

MISCELLANEOUS SERVICES

Although the types of items for sale vary greatly depending on whether the PCs are in a small town or a large city, a few services can usually always be found, like food and lodging. However, these services can span the price categories.

Food: You can get an inexpensive meal, a moderately priced meal, an expensive meal, and so on, depending on the restaurant. An inexpensive meal is light and probably not very nutritious. An expensive meal is available only in nice restaurants in certain locations. An exorbitant meal is probably a feast for a crowd, with the finest foods and drink available.

Lodging: Nightly lodging is similar, although the bottom end starts out worse. An inexpensive night's lodging is probably a youth hostel filled with other guests. Typical lodging (a private room with a decent bed) is probably in the moderately priced range. Very expensive lodging might be a suite of rooms with delicious meals and personal services (such as massages and grooming) included.

Repairs: The cost to repair a damaged item is one category lower than the item's value.

The price categories are, by definition, very broad. Items in the same category can technically be priced quite differently in actual currency, but don't worry about such things in this game. It's also possible that the PCs find a discounted item that is a price category lower than normal or an extremely fancy one in the range of a category higher. But these can be part of the ongoing story and are not part of the base assumptions in this chapter.

I remember, it was as I began to talk about the Justice, the fifth age of man, that I saw it. It was a mask, a theatre mask, not one of the happy/sad ones you might associate with the stage, but like an old Greek chorus mask: neutral, with a faint aspect of mourning about the mouth and eyes. It sat on the top of a thick black cloak, draped to completely cover whoever might be wearing the mask. But I knew it was empty. It was a hollow shape of a man that had no life, no presence to it. And I saw it in the middle of the third row, as clearly as if it were lit by a second spotlight.

—MAG 108: “Monologue”

EQUIPMENT BY PRICE CATEGORY

The following items (and anything else appropriate to the real world) are usually available.

INEXPENSIVE ITEMS

Weapons	Notes
Ammo (box of 50 rounds)	
Knife	Light weapon (prone to breaking)
Pepper spray	Immediate range, hinders target's tasks for one round
Other Items	Notes
Car or rideshare fare	
Duct tape roll	Useful and ubiquitous
Energy bars, handful	Feeds a person for one day
Flashlight	
Gloves	
Journal and pen	
Lockpick set	Asset for lockpicking tasks
Multitool	
Padlock with keys	
Purse	
Secure briefcase	Level 5 lock
Sunglasses	
Thrift clothing	
Wallet	

MODERATELY PRICED ITEMS

Weapons	Notes
Baton/nightstick	Light weapon
Hand axe	Medium weapon
Hunting knife	Light weapon
Machete	Medium weapon
Slingshot	Light weapon, medium range
Other Items	Notes
Backpack	
Bee suit	Prevents wasp and bee stings
Binoculars	Asset for perception tasks at range
Bolt cutters	
Budget cell phone	
Case of heavy tools	Suitable for plumbing, electrical work, construction, and similar
Case of light tools	Suitable for electronic repair, watch repair, lockpicking, and similar



MODERATELY PRICED ITEMS (CONTINUED)

Other Items	Notes
Chainsaw	
Climbing gear	Asset for climbing tasks
Crowbar	
Digital audio recorder	
Disguise kit	Asset for disguise tasks
Electric lantern	
EMF detector	
Everyday clothing	
First aid kit	Asset for healing tasks
Handcuffs	Level 5
Professional clothing	
Rope	Nylon, 50 feet (16 m)
Sleeping bag	
Survival kit	Includes emergency blanket, 2 flares, flashlight, 50-ft. (16 m) rope, rubber gloves, sewing kit, cheap knife
Tent	
Train ticket	

EXPENSIVE ITEMS

Weapons	Notes
Bow	Medium weapon, long range
Extendable baton	Light weapon, collapses to size ideal for a pocket/purse
Handgun	Medium weapon, long range
Pocket handgun	Light weapon, short range
Rifle	Medium weapon, long range
Shotgun	Heavy weapon, immediate range
Sawed-off shotgun	Medium weapon, immediate range (can be used one-handed)

Other Items	Notes
Airline ticket	
Camera designed to be concealed	Transmits over wifi
Cold weather camping gear	
Hazmat suit (with respirator)	
Laptop	
Microphone designed to be concealed	Transmits over wifi
Nightvision goggles	See in darkness, but perception tasks are hindered
Scuba gear	
Smartphone	
Straightjacket	
Stylish clothing	



Those carrying a sawed-off shotgun should be warned that in almost any jurisdiction, the weapon is illegal, and having one could be punished by a few years in prison.

VERY EXPENSIVE ITEMS

Weapons	Notes
Assault rifle	Heavy weapon, rapid-fire weapon, long range
Heavy rifle	Heavy weapon, 300-foot (90 m) range
Katana	
Large-caliber handgun	Heavy weapon, long range
Submachine gun	Medium weapon, rapid-fire weapon, short range
Other Items	Notes
Designer/bespoke clothing	
Modest vehicle	Level 3
Small boat	Level 3

EXORBITANT ITEMS

Other Items	Notes
Luxury vehicle	Level 5 or 6
Private plane	Level 5
Yacht	Level 5

PRICELESS ITEMS

Other Items	Notes
Orbital space station	Useful for running experiments in weightless, isolated environments

