Dead Cities

Release 2

Based on
The Simple Game System

Release 2

Introduction

You are reading **Dead Cities**, a simple, fast-play post-apocalyptic role-playing game set in 2072, thirty-five years after the majority of humanity was killed by a terrible plague. The players are survivors of that plague or their descendants trying to eke out a living, or, hopefully, rebuild their own pocket of civilization (or even their own empire) out of the vine-choked ruins of the old one.

Dead Cities is based on Chris Gonnerman's excellent **The Simple Game System** rules.

These rules have been written without a lot of RPG jargon, but -they are still probably not terribly easy to read for a non RPG gamer. If you are just starting out playing traditional paper, pencil, and dice RPG games, I recommend you visit:

http://www.dragonsfoot.org/forums

where you can meet (virtually, of course) and interact with fans of truly classic role-playing games. Design and discussion of this game takes place in the Workshop, Dragonsfoot's game development forum.

The Plague of '37

The first half of the twenty-first century was marked with increased instability, both ecological, economical and political. The rapidly-accelerating climate change, combined with a growing population and ever-dwindling resources, gave rise to many forms chaos and violence. Many people in the late 2020's and early 2030's put their faith in biotechnology - a field of science enjoying unprecedented growth in that period - as a solution for Humanity's many problems, from food shortages through reducing the dependency on non-renewable resources to guaranteeing personal and national security. And thus, the Biotech Bubble was born: a rush of corporations, speculators, private citizens and even governments to invest in biotechnology and, hopefully, reap massive profits in the process.

There were some great advances, especially in the field of genetic engineering; modified organisms were created in large numbers, and some humans were modified either at the germ line, or, using retro-vial vectors, during adulthood, for various reasons ranging from cosmetics to adaptation to partially-hostile environments. But nonetheless, the majority of the new biotech companies produced little tangible results in the direction of solving the critical issues faced by Humanity, and many of these companies were little more than empty stock-market speculations, riding the high tide of investor euphoria. Eventually, in 2032, the bubble burst. And it could not have chosen a worse time to burst in.

While the world-wide economy was suffering from the worst collapse in modern history, the rising sea levels reached a critical point. Many coastal cities were partially or fully flooded, sending millions of refugees to seek higher ground. Food production fell to a new low due to an unstable climate and the collapse of many agricultural corporations. The five following miserable years were excellent breeding-grounds for new diseases, flourishing in the poor sanitary conditions and the virtually non-existent medical care of the new refugee camps and shanty-towns.

In 2037, a new plague spread through the world like wildfire. No one knows where it came from - a bankrupt laboratory closed without enough precautions, a terrorist plot or simply the dirty, over-crowded shanty-towns. Regardless of the plague's origin, 99% of the world's population was dead at the end of this fateful year. And most of the modern civilization died with it.

A World Reborn

Nature recovers. It has survived mega-volcanoes and meteor strikes and it was more than capable of surviving Humanity's activity and Humanity's fall. Without many humans imposing the artificial order of the city, Nature crept back through the cracks in Humanity's once-great monuments. First grass, then vines, trees and wild animals, returned to the cities and used them as their own. The countless dead bodies and heaps of organic trash left behind by the Plague of 37' fueled Nature's rapid rebirth from Humanity's ashes.

But Humanity, too, recovered, albeit at a much slower pace. The few survivors - either those who were immune to the Plague or people who hid away in sealed, protected locations - formed tribes, gangs and villages. Without the social and technological infrastructure of civilization, however, many of the achievements of the pre-plague world were impossible to regain - at least until civilization as a whole will recover, a process which, if it will happen at all, will take centuries to happen.

The year now is 2072 and the world has changed. The city - a new living jungle - is home to wild plants and animals, escaped genemodded organisms and the remnants of Humanity. The latter tend to form semi-nomadic tribes scavenging through the wreckage and hunting or stealing for their living or villages growing food in primitive agricultural ways amongst the city's ruins; others gather into criminal gangs living at the expense of others. A few, retaining simple industrial capabilities, live in "Tin Castles" - walled, armed hybrids between a scrapyard and a factory, typically ruled over by a so-called Iron Lord and his flunkies called the Brass and guarded by thugs or paramilitary types usually referred to as Coppers. Owing to his industrial

and military might, an Iron Lord can usually force one or more villages to become his serfs, paying him a tax in food and toiling at his workshops.

No central authority exists anymore. In the 2050's, various military groups emerging from bunkers tried to re-establish the government. They failed. Not only did they lack the manpower to recreate a truly modern state and reign in the lawless new wilderness, but the old world, with all of its institutions, was dead, along with the survivors' faith in it. Those soldiers who did not die in the urban wilderness either joined or formed tribes, settled down to form their own villages, became gangsters or, as often happened, created Tin Castles with their commanding officers becoming yet another set of Iron Lords.

The world is dangerous but wide-open. The remnants of modern civilization litter this wilderness, and great treasures of knowledge and technology still remain to be found. There are many battles to be fought, tribes and nations to build, and a whole wide world to shape. In short, this is a fertile environment for brave (or villainous) adventurers to seek fame and fortune.

The City

The default setting of this game is a generic urban area called the City; if you want, you may substitute any real-world or imagined city for it. Nevertheless, the central elements would probably remain the same. After all, modern cities become more and more alike, and their decay would probably, likewise, be similar.

Many other post-apocalyptic games are set in a Wasteland. This game is set in a Wilderness. An Urban Wilderness to be precise. Wastelands are barren and, for the most part, devoid of life. Wildernesses are the opposite: teeming with untamed, rampant life. Both pose dangers, though the dangers are different: the Wasteland encompasses the threats of hunger, thirst and exposure, while the Wilderness is home to all sorts of wild beasts (and, in our case, wild humans) ready to beset the unwary traveler.

Humanity is mostly dead. Nature has worn, and her tentacles slowly but surely intrude on the former turf of man and erode it, making it more and more natural. 37 years after the fall of Civilization, most streets became weed-gardens; most parks became wild bunches of shrubbery; and plant life has invaded most buildings. Herbivores now use these newly-developed areas for pasture; predators use them as hunting grounds.

The City is everywhere: crumbling walls, dilapidated buildings, rusty metal parts jutting from the ground, railroads partially covered by grass, wrecked cars thrown in odd angles on streets which were eroded into grassy fields. Trash is also everywhere: the rotten or rusted pieces of civilization thrown together with nearly undegradable plastic and bent stainless steel littering the landscape, used by animals and human survivors alike to serve their new needs.

The remnants of humanity now lead a quasi-medieval life in the crumbling City. Old factories or concrete buildings are sometimes commandeered and turned into forts; old parks, empty lots and eroded streets are farmed; and squatter villages occupy the lower stories of vine-choked residential towers or junkyards. Underground, in the endless network of sewage and service tunnels, live the scavengers often called Gob(lins), Ratlings or Mole-Men: often dirty and smelly, often small-framed (as larger people have greater chance of dying in the tunnels), but skilled in navigating this wet urban dungeon. There, they feed on rats and cockroaches and look for salvageable parts for their own use or for sell to the surface-dwellers.

Large tracts of the City are uninhabited and stand between the surviving islands of humanity as oceans of rust and decaying concrete. Merchants risk the hazards of these areas to make profitable trade between the few inhabited locations, and on these traders prey the highwaymen and bandits of this post-apocalyptic age.

Character Generation

Each character in the game is described by a number of abilities and disabilities, chosen from the list below. For each ability, the equivalent disability is listed in parentheses beside it. No character may have both an ability and its associated disability.

Ability	Disability
Strong	Weak
Tough	Sickly
Clever	Dense
Wise	Foolish
Dexterous	Fumbling
Agile	Clumsy
Fast	Slow
Charming	Unpleasant
Attractive	Ugly
Advanced	Primitive

Beginning player characters may select three abilities from the list. Choosing a disability allows the choice of another ability. If an ability is chosen twice, it is noted as "Very *X*" (for instance, Very Strong) or "V. *X*" for short.

Advanced and Primitive Characters

The Advanced (primitive) ability deserves special mention and some additional details. This ability represents the character's familiarity with pre-Plague civilization in general and with its technology in particular. Advanced has a special third level of Ability (E.Advanced); player characters (PCs), however, usually can't have the E.Advanced Ability, though the GM may allow it if they are Sleepers (or old people) who were tech-oriented professionals before the Plague. Primitive characters are also illiterate.

Every man-made item or device has one of the five following ratings:

Primitive (simple stone-age items or versions of them improvised from the scarps of the dead civilization).

Normal (medieval-type technology). An item with no Advance rating listed is Normal.

Advanced (early industrial technology).

Very Advanced (V.Advanced) (modern technology equivalent to the turn of the millennium).

Extremely Advanced (E.Advanced) (high-tech of the 2020's and 2030's).

A character understands the function of any object of his Advance Level or lower, and, given the appropriate skills and equipment, may use, repair or even build such an object. Characters with neither an Ability nor a Disability in this field belong to the "Normal" level. Figuring out equipment above the character's Advance level usually requires an Advanced roll. Clever may be used instead to figure complex pre-Plague stuff, but with a -1 penalty; a character with a Science+ skill (see below) may ignore this penalty.

Nonetheless, it is advisable to assume that all adventurers know what simple, common items are and how to use them (i.e. even a Dense Primitive will know what a high-quality pre-Plague knife is and how to use it). Use Advanced checks only when dealing with complex things such as books, technical writings, complicated machinery (or other technological contraptions) or computers.

Once a character has figured out an item, he or she may use it as if it was of his or her Advance level. However, building or repairing items above one's Advance level is always subject to a -1 penalty per level of difference. For example, a Normal character trying to build a radio transmitter, which is an Advanced item, is subject to a -1 penalty; if he or she tries to repair a helicopter (V.Advanced), the penalty would be -2. Note that building and repairing requires the appropriate skills, tools and supplies.

Skills

Skills define things the character knows about. Some things are known by everyone, or almost everyone, as determined by the GM; for instance, anyone can speak his or her native language, and in some places reading and mathematics are universal skills. Other things must be studied, such as medicine or science, or even driving a car or flying a plane.

At game start, every character has 5 points to distribute across his or her skills. Assigning two points to a single skill brings it to a "+" level, which means that it will give an additional dice for tasks using this skill. ; this includes choosing a universal skill once (so that, for instance, a character who would normally know how to read for "free" might choose Reading as a skill in order to speed-read). Skills taken twice are marked with a plus sign (+) after the name (so, "Reading +" is what the aforementioned character would have marked on his or her sheet).

The GM is the final arbiter of what is or is not an acceptable skill in his or her campaign. The only hard-and-fast rule is that no skill should always give a bonus to any given ability (so there is no "Thinking" skill which would always improve Cleverness).

Dead Cities Skill List

Administration - Allows the character to administer organizations and understand bureaucratic procedures and documents.

Agriculture - Allows the character to run a farm, raise food and perform related work.

Biotech - Allows the character to understand and perform biotechnological procedures and use and modify biotechnological substances and facilities.

Bow - Allows the character to attack using bows or crossbows.

Craft - Covers various types of small-scale production such as pottery, carpentry and metalwork. Building any industrial-era (or later) item usually uses Mechanical or Electronics instead.

Computer - Covers advanced computer use, programming and hacking.

Electronics - Covers the repair, use and construction of electronic devices such as radios or electronic locks.

Explosives - Allows the character to create, place and disarm bombs and explosive charges.

Handgun - Allows the character to attack using pistols and submachineguns.

Heavy Weapons - Allows the character to attack using support weapons such as machineguns, rocket launchers, vehicle cannons and so on.

Mechanical - Allows the character to repair, operate, modify and sometimes even construct mechanical devices such as locks, valves, engines, plumbing, simple electrical systems and even firearms.

Medical - Allows the characters to treat wounds, illnesses and poison.

Melee - Allows the character to attack in hand-to-hand combat, both armed and unarmed.

Persuasion - Covers fast-talking, oratory, diplomacy, bartering and other skills used to convince other people to see things your way.

Science - Covers applied sciences such as chemistry and engineering.

Stealth - Allows the character to sneak and hide effectively.

Streetwise - Covers shady activities such as gambling, forgery and bribery as well as an understanding of how the criminal world works.

Survival - Covers fieldcraft techniques necessary for living in the wilderness away from Human settlements.

Rifle - Allows the character to attack using longarms such as assault rifles and shotguns.

Vehicle - Allows the character to operate vehicles such as bikes, cars and trucks. The GM may require additional skill points to be invested in this skills in order to allow the use of exotic vehicles such as aircraft.

Universal Skills

Every character has Handgun, Melee, Survival and Rifle as Universal Skills - investing a skill point in them brings them to the "+" level.

Genemods

Genetic modifications - either at the germ-line or using a retro-virus on an adult human - were very common during the Biotech Bubble. In the rich countries they were fashionable; in the poorer countries, corporations used to hire people to serve as guinea-pigs in testing new genemods. Either way, Genemods are very common in 2072, especially since most genemods were inherited by children of those who received the initial modification.

In game terms, each character starts with a single Genemod. Alternatively, a character may be a 'Baseline' - unmodified - human, with no Genemods, who start the game with one extra skill instead. Characters may start the game with an additional Genemod, at the expense of having a Defect; a Disability may also be taken as a Defect.

Additional Genemods may be acquired during the game by using Retroviral Serums. These Serums can no longer be manufactured and thus can only be found in pre-Plague ruins; even there, they are very rare. Applying a Serum requires a Biotech 6, 3 roll, followed by a period of sickness as the retrovirus infects the subject's cells and inserts the modified genes to them. Note that at the GM's discretion, a Serum may also cause Defects.

Genemod List

Bone Augmentation - Allows the character to re-roll one die of any Tough test performed to resist injury.

Cat's Eyes - Allows the character to see in the dark like a cat.

Chameleon Skin - Allows the character's skin to change color to a certain degree to fit the environment and thus adds a +1 bonus to Stealth tests to avoid visual detection. However, it may only be used if the character is naked or wearing clothes which blend well into the environment.

Clawed Hands - Allows the character to make lethal attacks without a weapon. Also adds a +1 bonus to climbing rolls.

Nutritional Augmentation - Allows the character's body to produce some of the vitamins by itself. Among other things, it allows the character to survive on plant material alone.

Pan-Immunity - Makes the character immune to a multitude of diseases. Does not confer immunity to the Plague of '37 or to Neo-Rabies.

Prehensile Tail - Adds a tail which could be used as an extra limb (though it is incapable of fine manipulations).

Scales - Makes the character's skin more resistant to heat, dry climate, sunburns and chafing.

Thermal Sense - Allows the character to sense infra-red (heat) radiation the way pit vipers do.

List of Defects

Albino - The character has flawed pigmentation in the skin, hair and eyes, and is very sensitive to strong light - causing a -1 penalty to all rolls when exposed to bright light.

Bioluminescent Skin - The character's skin glows slightly, making him or her very visible in the dark. Any stealth roll done by the character in the dark is subject to a -1 penalty, and any ranged attack against him or her in darkness gains a +1 bonus.

Body Deformation - The character's body has a strange shape and/or has additional, useless limbs in strange places. This makes wearing tightly-fitting armor (such as most HAZMAT suits) difficult. Also, at the GM's discretion, the character's deformity might incur a penalty on certain social interactions.

Color Blind - The character sees the world in black-and-white.

Distinctive Appearance - The character looks, sounds and/or behaves in a bizarre way and thus is easily recognizable and finds it difficult to blend in.

Night Blindness - The character can't see in the dark (may not be taken together with the Cat's Eyes Genemod).

Nutritional Requirement - The character must include a certain component (such as raw meat) in his diet in order to remain healthy (May not be taken together with Nutritional Augmentation).

Short Sighted - The character's eyes can only focus well on near-by objects. All rolls related to distant objects are subject to a -2 penalty. Wearing custom-made glasses reduces this penalty to a mere -1.

Strong Odor - The character emits a strong, easily-detectable odor, making it difficult to hide from dogs or other creatures that locate their prey by scent and, potentially, attracting predators. At the GM's option, this odor might also incur a penalty to certain Attractive rolls.

Example Characters

"Lizard" Nejala, Scavenger, Genemodded
Prehensile Tail, Scales, Distinctive Look
Clever, Foolish, Dexterous, Agile, Fast
Persuasion, Stealth, Mechanical, Electronics, Streetwise

"Big" George, "Copper", Genemodded
Bone Augmentation
V.Strong, V.Tough, Ugly
Administration, Melee+, Handgun+, Streetwise+

"White Tiger", Tribal, Genemodded
Cat's Eyes, Clawed Hands, Albino
Strong, Tough, Agile, Fast, Primitive
Bow+, Survival+, Stealth+

Lena Kirovsky, Street Scientist, Baseline
Weak, V.Clever, Wise, Advanced
Science+, Computer, Biotech, Medical

Jason Mirch, Caravan Merchant, Genemodded
Pan-Immunity
Wise, Agile, Charming
Administration, Persuasion+, Streetwise+

Mark H. Durnhal, Sleeper*, Baseline
E.Advanced
Biotech, Computer, Electronics, Science, Vehicle, Persuasion

"Mother" Elena, Farmer, Genemodded
Nutritional Augmentation
Wise, Dexterous, Charming
Agriculture+, Craft, Mechanical, Vehicle

"Pretty Face" Harry, Bandit, Genemodded
Pan-Immunity
Strong, Dexterous, Attractive
Explosives, Melee+, Streetwise, Rifle+, Vehicle

* Someone who spent the last 35 years in induced hibernation in a bunker.

Core Mechanic

To resolve any action in the game where there is a significant chance of failure, or any action opposed by another character, dice are rolled. This game uses only standard six-sided dice. There are two main types of rolls: rolls made against a static difficulty number, and rolls made against another character's roll (called **opposed rolls**).

Static Rolls

Suppose a character wishes to force a door. Obviously, this is a function of the Strong ability; but no other character is resisting the action, so it is not an opposed roll. Instead, forcing the door open requires a roll against a fixed difficulty rating, assigned by the GM.

If the door is just stuck, the GM might rule that the difficulty is 4 (as if a single roll of 4 had been made by an opponent). The character trying to force the door then must roll 5 or higher to force it. A locked door might have a difficulty of 5, or even 6; if the difficulty is 6, the character forcing the door will need to roll a 6 AND have an additional die in the pool in order to succeed. A high-security door, or perhaps one that has been secured with a heavy oaken bar, might be rated 6 3, requiring the character forcing the door to have two or more dice and to roll at least 6 4 (or 6 3 1) to succeed.

In some cases, a difficulty number will be calculated; numbers higher than 6 must be converted, by subtracting 6 (possibly repeatedly). For example, a calculated difficulty of 7 is equivalent to 6 1; 9 is equivalent to 6 3; 13 is equivalent to 6 6 1.

Opposed Rolls

Rolling against another character is resolved by each player (or the player and the game master) rolling one or more dice. The abilities of the characters will determine how many dice are rolled. If the character does not have the ability which he or she is rolling against, a single die is rolled. Having the ability grants another die, and having the ability twice (Very) grants a third die. A character with a disability in the relevant category has no dice (and thus will likely fail, though skills or other bonuses may grant additional dice, as described below).

The dice are rolled, and the highest rolls are compared; whoever has the highest single die roll wins the contest. If the highest rolls are ties, compare the second-highest rolls, and so on until a winner is determined. If one player exhausts his or her dice "pool" before the other while doing this, the one with fewer rolls loses. If, after all rolls are compared, no winner is determined, the roll is a tie; resolving a tie is done in different ways for different circumstances.

Bonuses and Penalties

The GM may decide that, for a given roll, a bonus or penalty applies to one or the other character. A bonus simply adds a die to the pool, while a penalty subtracts one. The pool may never have less than zero dice, obviously, but there is no limit to the number of bonuses that might apply.

Die Rolling Examples

White Tiger and Pretty Face decide to arm-wrestle. This is obviously a contest using the Strong ability, and both men are Strong, so each rolls two dice:

> White Tiger: 5 1
>
> Pretty Face: 4 4

White Tiger wins, since his 5 is higher than Pretty Face's highest roll. If it went this way:

> White Tiger: 6 5
>
> Pretty Face: 6 3

John still wins, but this time, since the highest for both is 6, the second rolls are compared.

Suppose Mother Elena wishes to join in. She's not Strong, so she rolls just one die. She wrestles Barney:

> Mother Elena: 6
>
> Pretty Face: 6 2

Mother Elena rolled quite well, tying Pretty Face's top roll, but since she has no second roll to compare to his, he wins. He was a bit worried, though...

Equipment

This chapter includes a short list of useful equipment useful for survival in the Dead Cities. Other items are also possible (subject to Game Master approval, of course).

Encumbrance

All man-portable objects in the game are either classified as Light (such as matches, pills and so on), Heavy (such as rations, medkits, gas-masks and so on) or V.Heavy (such as portable generators). Furthermore, they are classified according to their Advance level, given in parenthesis after each item's name.

Any character can carry as many Light items as the player desires (subject to Game Master discretion, of course). Weak characters may carry 3 Heavy objects; normal characters may carry 6 Heavy Objects; Strong characters may carry 9 Heavy objects, and V.Strong characters may carry 12. Any character may also carry a single V.Heavy objects, except for V.Strong characters who can carry two at once.

Characters are also assumed to carry a backpack and a full canteen and wear appropriate clothes, holsters, pouches etc; all of these are considered Light Items. Additionally, each character may wear a single suit of armor and carry two melee weapons and two firearms as well as a certain amount of ammunition (which, for the sake of simplicity, shouldn't be tracked).

Starting Equipment

Each character starts the game with normal clothes, a backpack, a canteen, a suit of Light Armor, one weapon (including ammunition) as well as any five items (Light or Heavy). Characters may only choose items of their Advance level or lower.

Light Items

Antibiotics (V. Advanced) - Broad-spectrum anti-bacterial drugs.

Anti-Toxin (E. Advanced) - High-tech biologically-engineered broad-spectrum toxin antidote.

Anti-Rad (E. Advanced) - A biotech agent capable of repairing DNA damage caused by radiation or mutagens.

Binoculars (Advanced) - Modern light-weight optical binoculars.

Bio-Tester (E. Advanced) - A hand-held miniaturized sensor-pack capable of detecting toxins and pathogens.

Cigarette Lighter (Advanced) - Produces a small flame.

Electronic Tools (V. Advanced) - A few tools used to work with electronics, such as a screwdriver, pliers and a small, rechargeable welder.

Electronic Binoculars (V. Advanced) - Digital binoculars including a low-light mode and an infra-red capability.

Flashlight (Advanced) - A compact rechargeable light-source.

Flint and Steel (Primitive) - A flint stone and scrap metal used to produce sparks to start a fire.

Geiger Counter (V. Advanced) - A modern miniaturized electronic radiation counter. Requires electric recharge from time to time.

Grappling Hook (Primitive) - Used to make a rope cling to various surfaces.

Hand Mirror (Normal) - A small mirror.

Healing Accelerator (E. Advanced) - A high-tech drug that doubles the character's healing rate for 1d6 days.

IR Visor (V. Advanced) - Allows the wearer to see in infra-red.

Lockpick Set (Normal) - A set of files, probes and other tools used to pick locks.

Matchbook (Advanced) - A set of 20 matches.

Military HUD (E. Advanced) - An integrated data environment for combat purposes. Provides a +1 bonus to attack rolls.

Water Purification Tablets (V. Advanced) - Drop one into a container of water and it'll kill the germs.

Heavy Items

Crowbar (Normal) - A metal bar used to pry open crates or doors.

EMP Bomb (E. Advanced) - Emits a strong electro-magnetic pulse when it explodes. Uses high-intensity radio waves to fry electronics. Does 3 damage to robots and similar objects, but is harmless to organic beings.

First-Aid Kit (Normal) - A basic set of medical tools and supplies. Using the Medical skill without it suffers a -1 penalty.

Field Cooking Set (Advanced) - A small, portable gas burner to cook on as well as a pot and a frying pan and some utensils.

Flare (Advanced) - A disposable signal flare.

Gas Mask (Advanced) - Protects the character from airborne toxins or pathogens.

Grenade Pack (Advanced) - Six grenades in a portable bag. Each does 3 damage and may attack several targets if they're bunched up.

Inflatable Boat (Advanced) - A collapsible boat large enough to hold six people when it is inflated. Includes a hand-pump.

Lantern (Normal) - A hand-held oil or gas lamp.

Medkit (V. Advanced) - A high-tech first-aid kit; gives a +1 bonus to Medical rolls.

Molotov Cocktail (Advanced) - An improvised fire-bomb named after a long-dead Russian politician. Much bulkier than a grenade. Does 2 damage and may attack several targets if they're bunched up.

PDA (V. Advanced) - A hand-held computer. Requires electric recharging from time to time.

Power-Tools (V. Advanced) - A set of modern rechargeable work-tools. gives a +1 bonus to Mechanical rolls. Requires electricity to recharge.

Radio (V. Advanced) - A hand-held, battery-powered radio transceiver. Requires electric recharging from time to time.

Rations (Primitive) – Dried or canned food for a week.

Rope (Primitive) - A 30m-long length of rope.

Scout Drone (E. Advanced) - A compact, rechargeable, electric rotor-drone controlled by an electronic remote-control and carrying a camera.

Shovel (Normal) - A folding shovel useful for digging.

Sleeping Bag (Normal) - Makes sleep much more comfortable, especially when it is cold.

Spyglass (Normal) - An improvised telescope.

Toolkit (Normal) - A set of generic mechanical tools. Using the Mechanical skill without it suffers a -1 penalty.

Torch (Primitive) - A piece of wood with a rag soaked in a flammable liquid wrapped over one of its ends. Burns for about an hour.

V. Heavy Items

Canoe (Primitive) - A small boat large enough to carry two people.

Engine (Advanced) - A portable motor. Some models burn biogas (or ethanol), others run on electricity.

Generator (Advanced) - Burns biogas or ethanol to produce electricity.

Tent (Primitive) - A collapsible tent.

Weapons

Assault Rifle (Advanced) - An automatic rifle. Does 2 damage and attacks with a +1 bonus to hit.

Axe (Primitive) - A simple axe, be that a fire axe, an old tool or an improvised one.

Battle-Axe (Normal) - A big axe made specifically for combat. A Large weapon.

Black-Powder Pistol (Normal) - A hand-crafted flintlock. Has a VERY short range.

Black-Powder Long-arm (Normal) - A hand-crafted flintlock long-arm. Does 2 damage. Has a short range.

Bow (Primitive) - Launches arrows; a basic ranged weapon.

Broadsword (Normal) - A particularly big sword. A Large weapon.

Club or Staff (Primitive) - A heavy shaft or stick used to beat people with.

Crossbow (Normal) - Similar to a bow but fired with a trigger.

Hammer (Normal) - A sledgehammer, which is a Large weapon.

HERF Gun (E. Advanced) - Uses high-intensity radio waves to fry electronics. Does 3 damage to robots and similar objects, but is harmless to organic beings.

Knife (Primitive) - A versatile knife, useful for combat as well as a plethora of other tasks. May be thrown. A Small weapon.

Laser Gun (E. Advanced) - A man-portable laser weapon fed from a heavy backpack power-source. Does 2 damage and can hurt even V.Tough vehicles.

Missile Launcher (V. Advanced) - An RPG or similar disposable weapon. Does 3 damage and may attack several targets if they're bunched up. Can damage even V.Tough vehicles.

Pistol (Advanced) - A typical handgun. Attacks normally.

Rifle (Advanced) - A non-automatic large-caliber rifle. Does 3 damage.

Shotgun (Advanced) - A scattergun. Does 2 damage and attacks at a +1 damage to hit but has a very short range.

Sniper Rifle (Advanced) - A non-automatic large-caliber rifle with a scope and a very long range. Does 3 damage.

Spear (Primitive) - A long shaft with a sharp point. A large weapon.

Submachine Gun (Advanced) - A small automatic weapon using pistol ammunition. Attacks with a +1 bonus to hit.

Sword (Normal) - A long-bladed weapon.

Basic Combat

When in combat, actions are resolved in terms of rounds of combat. Each round, each character may attempt one attack, as well as defending against any attacks directed at the character. Characters act in order of Initiative.

Initiative and Actions

To roll for Initiative, each player makes a standard roll against the Agile or Fast ability (whichever is better), or, at the GM's option, against the Clever ability with a penalty. The character with the highest dice pool attacks first, then the character with the next best pool, and so on. Ties result in characters acting simultaneously.

Each time a character rolls attack or defense dice in a round, he or she suffers one penalty for each such roll already made in the round. Thus, a character who has already attacked suffers a penalty when defending, and a further penalty if he or she must defend again. This is called the subsequent roll penalty. When two characters act simultaneously, each must choose whether to apply the subsequent roll penalty to the attack or defense roll.

Movement

A normal character can move 30' in a single combat round. Fast characters can move 40', while Very Fast characters can move 50'. Slow characters can move just 20' in a combat round. Movement occurs on the character's Initiative, either before or after any attack roll.

How To Attack

In general, attacking with melee weapons, or barehanded, may be done with either the Strong or Dexterous ability (at the player's option). Characters trained in martial arts (if such are allowed in the campaign) may use the Agile ability for unarmed attacks. Attack rolls with missile weapons are generally made with the Dexterous ability, though the GM may allow the use of the Clever ability for some weapons, possibly at a penalty.

Defense rolls are usually made using the Agile ability. A running character may be allowed to use the Fast ability instead. Against melee attacks, it is sometimes possible to use the Strong ability for defense rolls (the character pushes the attacker away by main force).

If the attacker succeeds (rolls better than the defender), the attack is successful and the defender suffers one wound point. Small melee weapons

wielded by a Strong character do an additional wound point, and large melee weapons wielded by Very Strong characters do two additional wound points; this only applies if the Strong ability is used to make the attack roll. Similarly, small melee weapons or hand-thrown missile weapons employed by Dexterous characters do an additional wound point, provided that the Dexterous ability is used to make the attack (which would almost always be the case for the missile weapon, of course).

Armor

There are two types of armor - Light (such as a thick leather jacket or a bulletproof vest) and Heavy (such as a ceramic vest). Light Armor adds a +1 bonus to Defense rolls; Heavy Armor adds a +2 bonus instead, but incurs a -1 penalty to all non-combat Agile rolls due to its heft. Light Armor is common; Heavy Armor is rarer.

Ranged Combat and Firearms

All ranged weapons are usually used at their default range and thus suffer no penalties. However, if a ranged weapon is used at a range which is somewhat too long or two short for it to be used comfortably (such as a long rifle being used in close quarters), the attacker will suffer a -1 penalty. If it is used at a range in which it is very difficult to hit with (say, a pistol at a very long range or a rifle in melee), the attacker will suffer a -2 penalty. Similarly, firearms are assumed to always attack using their default firing mode - pistols use semi-automatic fire and SMGs and assault rifles use automatic fire.

Pistols attack normally; SMGs gain a +1 bonus to hit; assault rifles do 2 damage and gain a +1 bonus to hit; shotguns do 2 damage and gain a +1 bonus to hit but may only be used close to their target; non-automatic large-caliber rifles do 3 damage and attack normally. Primitive muskets do 2 damage and attack normally but may only be used at a (relatively) short range; Primitive flintlock pistols attack normally but are VERY short-ranged. Grenades and other small bombs do 3 damage and may attack more than one target at once if they're close together (GM's discretion); missile launchers and similar weapons are handled like grenades but have a much longer range.

Bows, crossbows and slings attack normally but usually have a shorter range than most firearms. Thrown weapons such as knives, shurikens or axes use the Melee skill and attack normally - though their range is typically very short.

There is no need to track ammo precisely, though the GM may rule that a clip runs out after several round of combat. Characters behind cover are either impossible to hit (if they're completely covered) or may be shot with a penalty (if parts of their body are exposed).

Effects of Being Wounded

Immediately upon being wounded, a character must roll a Tough roll against the total number of wounds he or she has accrued. Failing this roll renders the character unconscious and possibly dying. If the defender was injured by a barehanded or blunt weapon attack, he or she will merely be rendered unconscious for a number of rounds equal to the total of two dice; if the attack was with a lethal weapon (sword, handgun, etc.) the defender will instead perish in a number of rounds equal to the roll of one die.

A dying character may be tended by another character, who must roll a Clever roll against the victim's total wound points. Success at this roll results in the character remaining unconscious as above.

Wounded characters always suffer a penalty on any roll involving physical activity, particularly Strong, Agile, Fast, Dexterous, or Tough rolls. The exception is Tough rolls against the wound point total, which suffer no further penalty. The penalty to the Fast ability affects the victim's movement rate as if the Fast ability were lowered one level.

Healing

After receiving a normal amount of sleep, an injured character may attempt a Toughness roll against the number of points of injuries he or she has accrued. Success at this roll results in the removal (healing) of one wound point.

In addition, such a roll may be made after receiving treatment from a qualified nurse, doctor, or other properly trained medic. This sort of roll may be made at most once per day *plus* once after each incident (fight, accident, etc.) in which the character is injured.

Holding an Action

A character who has the Initiative may choose to hold his or her action, waiting until a later moment in the round to attack. If the character waits until another character takes action, and that other character attacks the character holding an action, they act simultaneously. A character who wishes to hold an action may move normally on his or her Initiative, OR may move later before or after taking the held action, but may not move at both points in the round.

Alternate Rolls

The rules above make specific statements about what abilities are used, and when they are used; but ultimately it is up to the players and the GM to decide what ability to apply to any given situation. The player should describe what his or her character is attempting to do; if the player can come up with an interesting and plausible reason why the character should be able to use the Charming ability to defend against an attack, and the GM agrees, then the game should proceed exactly that way.

Character Advancement

At the end of each session, the GM should award from 1 to 3 Experience Points (XP) to each character, based on that character's performance (i.e. level of success).

Experience Points accrue from session to session. At the end of a session, a player may spend 10 XP to purchase a new skill pick.

A character may only acquire new skills in this fashion if he or she had an opportunity to learn from a tutor during play. Existing skills may always be improved in this way, including acquiring the second "level" of a universal skill.

A character may improve his or her Advanced Ability, though this requires a lot of studying and a very knowledgeable teacher. In game terms, each additional level of this Ability requires 50 XP to increase.

Advanced Options

Non-player characters (NPCs) run by the GM may be allowed to have abilities beyond the normal levels. Specifically, beyond Very is Extremely, then Super, then Ultra. Dice rolled are as follows:

0	Disability
1	Average
2	Ability
3	Very
4	Extremely
5	Super
6	Ultra

NPCs may also have higher than normal skills, if the GM so desires. This is represented by a plus sign and a number, signifying the number of dice to add to the pool. Thus, a normal "Swordsman +" skill would be considered "Swordsman +1" and an NPC might have "Swordsman +2," or even more as the GM rules. Such characters should be rare, representing the top 1% of the population in terms of their ability.

Advanced skill levels may be allowed to player characters also, if the GM wishes; it is recommended that some limits be placed on this. For instance, the GM might decide to allow characters to have a single skill at +2 level, but never more than one such skill. Advanced skill levels should never be allowed to beginning characters.

Nonhuman creatures ("monsters") might have abilities not available to normal characters, or special rules appropriate to their natures. Such decisions are, as always, left to the discretion of the Game Master.

Vehicles

Vehicles have three abilities (disabilities): Tough (Flimsy), Agile (Clumsy), and Fast (Slow). High-tech robots are treated as normal characters unless they are very different in size than Human beings. Vehicles can also have Light Armour (+1 bonus to the Defense roll), Heavy Armor (+2 bonus to the Defense roll), a Machinegun (+1 to hit; does 1 damage to vehicles and 4 to people) or a Cannon (does 3 points to vehicles and kills people if it hits them).

Vehicles are handled in the same way as characters in combat, though most small-arms won't damage a Tough vehicle, and you'll need a very big gun (or missile or bomb) to damage a V.Tough one. Actions performed by vehicles (such as racing, dodging, pursuing another vehicle and so on) use the vehicle's abilities with the driver's skills; Drones have their own skills.

Gasoline is very rare, and jet fuel even more so. Most internal combustion vehicles run on biofuels which could be produced locally. Of these, biogas is the most common, as it can be very easily produced from organic waste and sewage; it is, however, only usable in vehicles adapted to it (requiring a workshop, a Technical roll and some spare parts), especially in its common, unscrubbed form and usually gives poor performances (-1 penalty to Fast and Agile rolls) unless it is scrubbed (and scrubbers are rare). Biodiesel and ethanol are less common since they require crops to be grown specifically form their production, but give better performances. Aircraft other than balloons and zeppelins require jet fuel which is extremely rare.

(Relatively) Common Vehicles:

APC (Tough, Advanced, Light Armor, Machinegun)
Armored Car (Advanced, Light Armor, Machinegun)
Big Truck (Advanced, Tough, Clumsy)
Car or Small Truck (Advanced, all normal)
Hot-Air Balloon (Clumsy, Slow, flies)
Horse-Drawn Cart (Clumsy, Slow)
Inflatable Boat (Flimsy, Clumsy, Slow, used on water)
Military Motorboat (Advanced, Agile, Fast, Light Armor, Machinegun, used on water)
Motorboat (Advanced, Agile, Fast, used on water)
Motorcycle (Advanced, V.Agile, V.Fast)
Scooter (Advanced,Flimsy, Agile)
Tractor or Bulldozer (Advanced, Tough, Clumsy, Slow)
Raft (Primitive, Clumsy, Slow, used on water)

Rowboat (Primitive, Slow, used on water)

Rare Vehicles:

Attack Helicopter (V.Advanced, Agile, Fast, Light Armor, Machinegun, Missiles[as Cannon], flies)
Gunboat (Advanced, V.Tough, V.Fast, Heavy Armor, 2x Machineguns, Cannon, used on water)
Helicopter (V.Advanced, V.Agile, flies)
Propeller Airplane (Advanced, V.Fast, V.Agile, flies)
Tank (Advanced, V.Tough, Clumsy, Heavy Armor, Machinegun, Cannon)
Zeppelin (Advanced, Clumsy, flies)

Robots (very rare; usually found guarding bunkers and ruins):

Cargo Bot (E.Advanced, Tough, Slow, Dense, Melee skill)
Security Bot (E.Advanced, Agile, Clever, Melee Skill, Firearms skill, Pistol, hovers)
Military Bot (E.Advanced, Clever, Melee Skill, Heavy Weapons skill, Light Armor, Machinegun)

Wild Animals

With Humanity almost gone, there is very little preventing wildlife from returning to the areas previously inhabited by human beings. While many species were extinct by humanity's activity in the 250 years prior to the Plague, many others survived, and many managed to recover once the human population shrunk to a near zero.

Bovine
Tough, V.Strong (a horned ox gores for 2 damage)
Melee

Humanity grew cows for their milk, meat and hides. Now, with far less farmers to keep them behind fences, many bovines returned to the wild. These large herbivores are typically peaceful, though males tend to be hot-tempered and easily angered, especially in the mating seasons. Cows exist throughout the world.

Bear
V.Tough, V.Strong (3 damage per bite)
Melee+, Stealth

After the Plague, these clever and powerful animals quickly recovered from their state of near-extinction and exploited the many opportunities present in the decaying cities and their resurgent ecosystem. They are now the upper predators in many cities in the colder parts of Earth, competing in some places with great cats such as pumas and leopards.

Deer
Agile, V.Fast
Melee

The new vegetation growing in the cities has attracted herbivores, among them many wild and semi-wild hoofed animals. Deers, stags, elks and gazelles roam the decaying cities in herds, serving as prey to the local predators (animal or human).

Great Cat
(2 damage per bite)
Tough, Strong, Agile, Fast
Melee+, Stealth+

Great cats such as leopards and pumas were another set of predators exploiting the new urban ecosystem, competing with bears and with wild dog packs for the choicest kills.

Hog
Tough, Strong
Melee

Once raised in enormous numbers to sate Humankind's appetite for meat, many pigs adapted well to the post-Plague conditions, growing back their hair and tusks which were previously cut away by farmers. These hot-tempered animals are adaptable omnivorous, but attack aggressively when threatened. Boars are similar but are V.Strong and have a Melee+ skill. Hogs are common almost everywhere.

Rat Swarm
Agile, Dexterous
Melee, Stealth

Ordinary rats were common before the Plague and they remain to be common after it. These opportunistic rodents can live almost everywhere and eat almost anything. The stats above are for a large swarm of rats; a single rat is less of a threat unless it carries disease. Rats exist in large numbers in any place humans once lived.

Wild Dog
Agile
Melee

Canines were the first animals to be domesticated by Humankind, and countless numbers of dogs were around when the Plague came. While many breeds were unadapted to life in the wilderness and died off in the absence of their masters, a countless number of other dogs survived. Now, cross-bred with wolves but lacking the wolves' fear of humans, they roam the dead streets in large packs, looking for prey and/or scavenging. Wild dog packs are common almost everywhere on Earth.

Transgenics

Large-scale genetic tampering - far beyond the scope of any single Genemod - were attempted by various biotech companies during the Biotech Bubble. Many died before, during or after the Plague; others survived and escaped into the wild.

"Halfling"
V.Agile, V.Dexterous
Mechanical+, Melee, Stealth

These 120cm-tall, furry creatures are the result of an attempt to "uplift" raccoons, increasing their size and intelligence and freeing their hands for useful work. While the experiment overall was declared a failure (as the modified raccoons were almost impossible to control), many specimen escaped into the wild and thus avoided termination. Now, many of these short, plump creatures, possessing dexterous hands and almost-human intelligence, roam the dead cities in small bands, stealing and hunting for a living.

War-Rat(TM)
V.Agile, Fast
Melee, Stealth

A genetech corporation before the Plague tried to develop rats into biological weapons, capable of sneaking into enemy compounds, carrying spy equipment and chewing important power and data cables. The rats were enlarged up to the size of medium dogs in order to improve their strength (as well as the strength of their bite), and their intelligence was slightly improved as well. Capable of rapid reproduction like their *Rattus norvegicus* ancestors, these giant rats are a common scavenger in the dead streets - and a common source of protein for the surviving humans who can catch it.

Giant Spider
Agile, Web, Poison

Spider-silk is a substance with extremely high tensile strength with many technological applications, from surgical wire to body armor. Spiders, however, are aggressive and even cannibalistic to each other, and thus, unlike silk worms, cannot be kept together in large numbers. While attempts were made to produce silk by transgenic organisms such as goats given the relevant spider gene, an attempt was also made in the early 2030's to create particularly large spiders who can, each in its own cage, create large amounts of silk. When the Plague came, many of these spiders escaped. Now, these monstrous spiders, slightly larger than tarantulas, use their webs to catch prey in the ruins.

Neo-Rabid Dog
Tough, Strong, Dense, Foolish
Melee+

Neo-Rabid Human
V.Tough, V.Strong, Dense, Foolish

Melee+

The Neo-Rabies virus was developed as a sophisticated bio-warfare agent designed to overload and paralyze the target's medical and law-enforcement systems by spreading violence and chaos. This modified virus reaches the brain much faster than the wild-type, but kills its victim much more slowly. Within 24 hours of the initial infectious bite, the subject must make a Tough 5 check or become increasingly insane; within an additional 48 hours he or she is reduced to no more than a rabid animal, viciously biting any uninfected organism and thus spreading this virus. Given enough victims to eat, the rabid victim is usually able to survive up to a year or so before dying from the disease.