

Issue 5

CONTEST ANNOUNCEMENT: POST-APOCALYPTIC PHOTO CONTEST 1

# Excavator Monthly™

Official magazine for The Mutant Epoch™ milieu

TME Role Playing Game • Fiction • Art

In this issue...

## RUIN ECOLOGY

ARE YOU HUNTER OR PREY?

EVOLUTIONS:

- PONY SAPIEN
- BOTAMORTO
- GASWING

GM'S BUNKER:

- The PRICE of a BULLET
- USING NAME TAGS and TENT CARDS at YOUR TABLE
- TURN TIME LIMITS

TREASURE  
TABLE EM-4

PLAYER'S PERSPECTIVE:

- CAMPING IN THE RUINS: TOO RISKY?
- NEW SKILL: ARCHERY

PC GENERATION VAT:

## GENERIC EXCAVATOR

INHABITANTS:

- LILLABI THE BLUE
- TYRONE THE RUTHLESS

ADVENTURE BOUND:

## TERRORIZE THEM

HORROR IN A POST  
APOCALYPTIC SETTING

RELICS RECOVERED:

- ENERGY SHIELD
- MEDUSA STUN STAFF
- TACTICAL KNIFE
- RECON CARBINE

Outland  
Arts .com

www.mutantepoch.com

William  
McAusland  
OUTLAND  
SYSTEM



# Excavator Monthly<sup>2</sup>

Official magazine for **The Mutant Epoch** milieu

*TME Role Playing Game • Fiction • Art*

## Issue 5

Publisher: Outland Arts™

[www.mutantepoch.com](http://www.mutantepoch.com)

Created by William McAusland

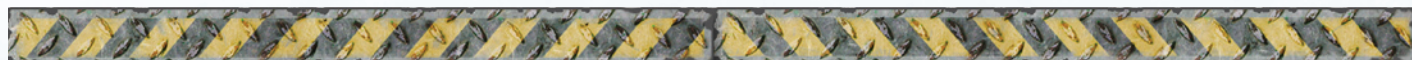
ISBN 978-0-9782585-8-0

© Copyright 2012 Outland Arts

Contact and submissions: [info@outlandarts.com](mailto:info@outlandarts.com)

Front Cover: 'Retreating Excavator', digital over graphite, prints and posters available at [zazzle.com/outlandarts](http://zazzle.com/outlandarts)\*

Looking to Advertise in Excavator Monthly? Email us at [info@outlandarts.com](mailto:info@outlandarts.com) for prices and details.



## In This Issue

- Contest: PA Photo Contest** page 3
- GMs Bunker: The Price of a Bullet** page 4/
- Turn Time Limits** page 5/
- Using Name Tags & Tent Cards** page 8
- PC Generation Vat: Generic Excavator** page 10
- Players Perspective: Camping Out in the Ruins** page 12
- Evolutions: Ponysapien** page 16/ **Botamorto** page 18/
- Gaswing** page 21
- Inhabitants: Lillabi the Blue** page 23/
- Tyrone the Ruthless** page 25
- Relics Recovered: Energy Shield/ 'Medusa' Stun Staff** page 27/
- Tactical Knife** page 28/ **Recon Carbine** page 29
- Adventure Bound: Terrorize Them: Horror in a PA Setting** page 30
- Articles: Ruin Ecology** page 35/
- Treasure Table EM-4** page 37/
- New Skill: Archery** by Danny Seedhouse page 39

## Last Round

Issue 4 was robust, covering tons of useful material for both players and GMs alike. It opened with an article on Adversaries Encountered which offered advice for GMs on determine how many foes to send against characters based on their rank. A brief article on speeding up game play through dice rolling techniques was followed by an extensive section on creating

intriguing player handouts. The article came with links to dozens of ready to use texture sheets and handouts for game play or inspiration. Yet another PC Generation Vat system was included: The Bonus Offer System, along with articles for players such as Agreed Upon Rendezvous and the enormous 50 Goals, Drives and Obsessions feature. New creatures in issue 4 were the Waste Grazer, Pus Worm and Hackoid, while NPCs included Velocia Clawhands

- shown on the cover - and Colonel Bajink. The relics in last issue offered readers the Grenade Mat and Laser Tipped Bullets. Closing articles covered a long ago meeting with Mel Gibson by W. McAusland when serving as a barista at a Vancouver Starbucks, the Have Your Character Drawn contest announcement, Causes of Factional Warfare by G. Hallett and closing the issue was the new Acrobatics Skill by D. Seedhouse.

## Next Round

Issue 6 starts off with a GM's Bunker article about player controlled NPCs, followed by a massive PC Generation Vat feature on Stereotypes and Character Generation. PC stereotypes allow players to take on the rolls of various pre-devastation iconic personas or cliches, inspired by either old world media or some



Cover of EM issue 4



new era cultural drive. Some of the 20 stereotypes include the Cowboy, Barbarian, Ninja, Super Model, and Stealthy Agent.

Other articles include Outrunning Your Comrades, the difference between Scavengers and Excavators, along with new relics: Survival Pistol and Over-Armor Tac-Harness, and NPCs: Graydon the Mad and Zako the Dealer. Evolutions offers the second huge feature in issue 6 and covers 12 Tiny Terrors. These diminutive monsters include the following: Black widow spiders of both normal and mutant variants, Spike Worms, Barbed Minnows, Jumping Ticks, Grass Leeches, Acidic Mushrooms, Gliding Spiders, Razor Tailed Skinks, Nine Spiked Snails, Ruby Clawed Finches and the nasty Saw Jawed Newt.

It's going to be a great issue, and the last of the Excavator Monthly Magazines as we will be switching to the larger format Excavator Quarterly Magazine from then on.

## Contest

### Post Apocalyptic Photo Contest

This contest is sure to be interesting and a bit alarming since the scenes you capture are from the current world of today, and not some blasted, genetically altered future. How does it work? Take a photo of a real place, object, skyline, critter, plant or texture that implies a post apocalyptic, dark future, mutated or even high tech feel... something a person living in The Mutant Epoch era might come across. This contest is open to anybody, not just Society of Excavators Members and no purchase is necessary.

All photos must be unmanipulated and as seen through your camera lens in their actual state, however, for us to publish the imagery, any recognizable products in the scene must have their insignia or logo blurred, so too, any individuals shown in the picture must sign a model release allowing you and Outland Arts, to publish the work, but if not, we can blur out any logos or faces. In addition, by sending us an entry, you certify that the photos are your own, that you are legally allowed to use them in this contest.

While digitally enhancing and merging photos would make for some excellent imagery, we are after unaltered pics for this contest, but will certainly do a retouched PA photo contest shortly. Yes, personnel serving in war zones or other troubled places in the world are welcome, and encouraged, to participate in this contest.

The best twenty photos will be posted on our web site, while of these, the finest will also be included in issue 1 or 2 of Excavator Quarterly, the evolved, more robust, mutated descendant of Excavator Monthly Magazine. Plus, the winner will get a free copy of MQ issue 1 as well as a PDF copy of Pitford, Gateway to the Ruins as soon as it released, mailed to you at the address specified with your entry. Judging the contest will be a group of 8 creatives including writers, illustrators, photographers and designers.



Cover of EM issue 6

All entrants authorize Outland Arts to post their entries on the site, in our newsletter, any Blog or forum posts made by Outland Arts staff and freelancers and, of course in Excavator Quarterly. All photos will remain the property of their contributor and photo credits noted with each image for every use, plus a link back to the photographer's website if he or she wishes.

Please send us jpegs (no bigger than 2mb) to info@outlandarts or mail prints to our design office at: Outland Arts 1860 Lodgepole Drive, Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada V1S 1X8. Please include your mailing address and full name to be eligible to win. There is no limit to the number of entries an individual can send in. The winner will be announced in issue 1 or 2 of Excavator Quarterly, but prior to that, on twitter, our blog, by newsletter and on the TME website. We will also remind readers of the contest in the next EM issue, and other outlets.

Good luck and we look forward to seeing the results.

AW

## Media Chatter

**History Channel's Sniper: Deadliest Missions FULL** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ggg4RGAlpDM&feature=related>

This hour long true-life documentary is a great resource for both game masters and those players who have characters trained with the sniper skill. This History Channel special covers actual combat engagements in Iraq, Vietnam, and Alaska, and not only illustrates the tactics and physics of sniper combat, but delves into some of the mind-set of actual veteran snipers... which is invaluable stuff for those of you who want to get more deeply into your character's role.

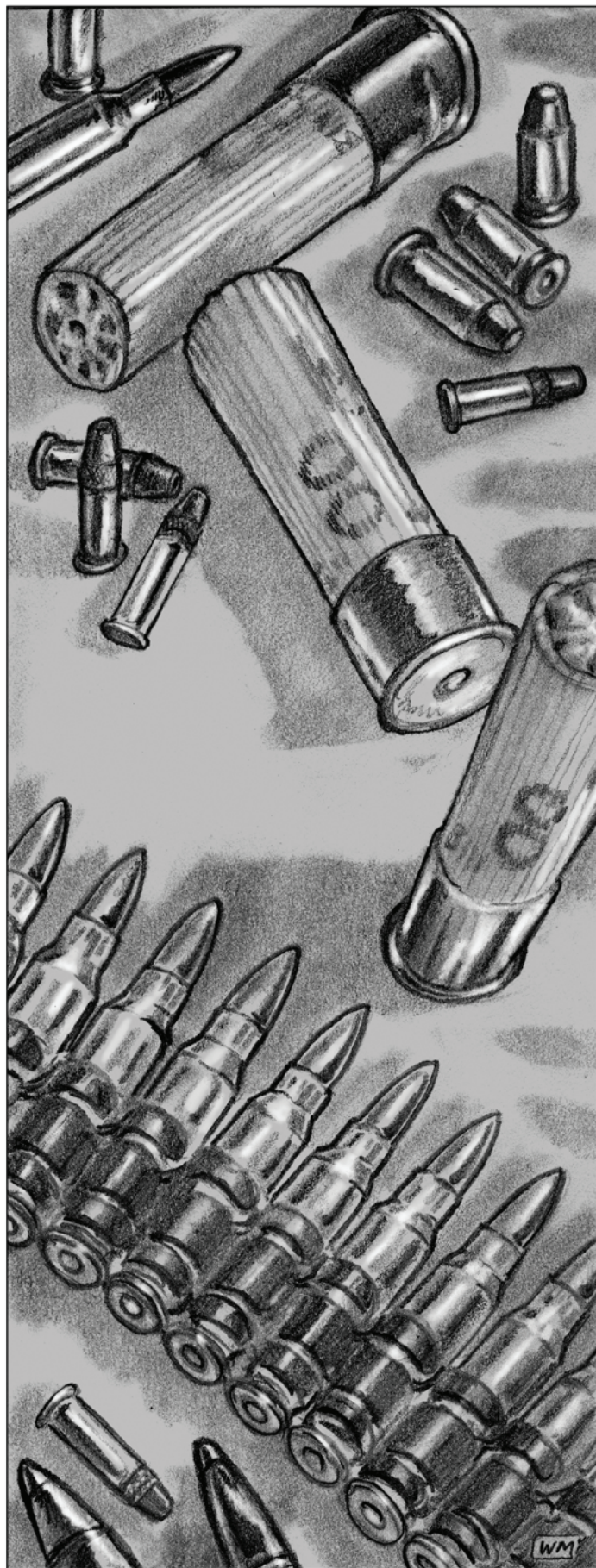
Check out all the other youtube sniper related videos on the right hand thumbnail bar, as there is a ton of great stuff here, including the history of snipers and sharpshooters from the American War of Independence, to World War One and beyond.

**Barter, Post-TEOTWAWKI: The Micro Store** from the [www.SurvivalBlog.com](http://www.SurvivalBlog.com) at [http://www.survivalblog.com/2011/12/barter\\_post-teotwawki\\_the\\_micr.html](http://www.survivalblog.com/2011/12/barter_post-teotwawki_the_micr.html) This in depth blog entry is just one of hundreds of posts of interest and potential use to post apocalyptic genre gamers. Here you will find a list of trade goods from our modern age along with an explanation of their value and reason for being so highly prized when the poop hits the fan. Again, like so much content on the web, it is aimed at a near future survivalist or zombie apocalypse scenario. Such scenarios are playable using The Mutant Epoch if a GM and players want to strip the advanced technology, mutations, implants and mutated creatures out of the game and set the collapse in the present day or very near future.

**Romantic Ruins "The Sweet Lure of Decay Daeath and Destruction"**, found at <http://romantic-ruins.blogspot.com/> is a blog which seems to focus on ruins in art, sculpture and photography, along with those who both inhabit and explore these devastated structures, streets and cities. You could spend hours exploring this vast blog and begin to feel the grit under your nails.







## GM's Bunker

### The Price of a Bullet

By Alexander Waby

Illustrated by William McAusland

GM's should bestow the knowledge to their players that a single bullet in The Mutant Epoch is a precious treasure valued at about sixty silver pieces; often enough to buy a saddle horse or a heavy crossbow. While it is true that many well established towns have facilities for reloading spent shell casings, or even making complete bullets, the costs involved in such endeavors are extremely high and place bullets well out of the reach of most shooters. Just as gold coins, precious gems and jewelry are condensed wealth, as opposed to livestock, plastic, land, buildings or even silver coins, ammo cartridges are often used as currency and highly prized even by those who own no gun capable of firing the rounds they possess. In the darkest times of the collapse, when even gold and silver were worthless in the back street barter markets, bullets could always find welcome at a trader's booth. The tradition of ammo as trade currency has never faded, its incredible value recognized for both what one can get by using them for trade, or in discharge.

For most new era warriors, ammo is a more precious than food or water, and expending it done so with great inner debate and anxiety. Oftentimes, excavators, mercenaries, and elite troops who do have guns, carry a loaded assault rifle, shotgun or chain gun around on their backs, and in a fight ignore these relics and instead employ their crossbow or axe, conserving their last one or two bullets for a serious threat, or a long range, carefully aimed shot. Likewise, many relic users are armed with lethal looking but empty guns, especially pistols, which while bulky and seemingly useless are actually valuable threat displays to intelligent beings. From even a meter away, potential enemies can't tell if the magazine fed, pump, lever or bolt action gun a person is aiming at them is loaded or not, and this bluff is often enough to dissuade attackers from following through with their malicious intentions. Only a revolver can reveal how many rounds are in the cylinder, and then if the viewer is very close to the potential shooter, looking down the barrel from the business end, the light is good and the armed gunner not moving about too fast.

False shows of strength by way of toting empty relic weapons only works on creatures that know what a gun is all about. Such a tactic, however, is pointless when dealing with animals and programmed robots, who charge after intruders or prey regardless of the target's outfitting and relic armaments. In such cases, the weight of a huge, useless weapon could slow one down, likely leading to an excavator's gruesome demise.

AW





## Turn Time Limits

By Otto Toms

Illustrated by William McAusland

Keeping the pace of the game moving along is important, whether it is a dialog the player characters are having with NPCs, rapid movement through a detailed terrain area, or combat. In computer games, both real time and turn based time can be at play. Real time is when a gamer acts as soon as he can, as do his opponents, and simultaneous actions are taking place, often off-screen. Turn based games, instead, plays more like familiar board games where each player gets to look over the board and ponder what to do next, what is the best course of action... taking as long as each player likes and disregarding any in-game laws of time before making his or her move.

In a tabletop RPG, especially The Mutant Epoch, which is meant to be played intensely and at a steady pace, it is a good idea to apply bits of both 'real time' and 'turn based' play into the session. The way to simulate this is for the game master to let the players know that unless a rules issue, bathroom break or other unavoidable interruption occurs, the game will play as close to real time as a dice based game can allow. No breaks other than a scheduled half time break, where in eating pizza and calling significant others, discussing real life issues or other RPG hobby related subjects, will be allowed. Let the players know that once the game starts, its live, and any NPCs, critters, weather conditions or other GM controlled elements will be in near constant motion and action, and that if the player is stuck for a decision on what to do, then his or her character is also standing their and indecisive, losing his or her turn to speak, fight, run or even leap for cover to avoid being spotted.

This method may seem ruthless, especially to anyone not familiar with the rules or how an RPG is played. It is, nevertheless, guaranteed to get the focus on the game at hand. Anyone not paying attention as a player is instead conducting his or her character as if the PC is day dreaming, not listening, frozen with fear or not sure why the rest of the team is six meters behind, running away at full speed.

The best way to get players used to the fast pace of a game is to apply a turn time limit, either by using a kitchen timer set to one minute, or an hourglass with a one or two minute limit. Even a minute, however, may be too long to let a player or group decide on a course of action, but this really depends on the in-game circumstances and how many players are at the table. For example, say the adventurers are wading across a wide, slow moving stream and they are five meters from either the far bank or the shoreline they just left, and suddenly, the GM declares: "Coming from upstream your way, traveling quite fast by oar, is a large canoe with a canopy on it, the sun

is directly behind the craft so you can't see the identity of the five or six man-like figures you see silhouetted on the craft, but can see they carry bows and are busy loading arrows as they approach. Also, you can't see who or what might be at the rear of the craft under the canopy, but it appears bulky. The canoe is 23 meters away, and is moving 5 meters per round. What do you do?"

Most of the players at the gaming table are likely to regard each other and break into a hasty discussion of what to do, while a few might react out of experience or habit; one may say their character lowers his weapon away from the canoe and waves in a friendly manner while the next player over says her character sights on the archers with her assault rifle, electing to fire on her next round. In the game, the characters in the water have thus split into three actions, most are talking to each other about what to do, one is preparing to unleash a volley of Teflon coated rounds, and the other is smiling and waving to the strangers.

In the above case, it is actually quite realistic that in a band of explorers, individuals will respond to things differently, and it does seem plausible that unless clearly identifying friends or foes, many travelers will ask others what they think the team should do. As it turns out, the canoes doesn't reach the wading characters for a few rounds, but after being shot upon, the surviving mystery archers do unleash their arrows, and all the PCs are now resolved to return fire, or break for the far shore and avoid the non-mission specific fight.

In real life, one has a fraction of a second to act to the unexpected, perhaps choosing not to act at all if he or she feels that is the best course. In a tabletop game, it is far more exciting and a little nerve wracking to get your players used to responding with haste, as the players themselves would do if dropped into the middle of The Mutant Epoch setting. Doing so will sometimes lead to cases of errors, friendly fire tragedies, and lost opportunities to interact with strangers; however, again, that is sadly realistic, and in a dangerous world such as the one presented in the game, shooting at sounds or a shoot first and ask questions later policy might be justified.

Letting your players know that they can't sit about and discuss something for more than a sentence or two before the NPCs or creatures act, is essential to intense, on the edge game play. They will come to expect that if they deliberate or are unable to reach a decision, the game world won't wait in frozen limbo, and you, the game master, will roll for 'wandering monsters', pronounce that the robot they see coming their way is still moving directly at them, or the beast described is suddenly standing in front of the PCs, unleashing a flurry of attacks.

The following examples give you, the game master a few instances of how to illustrate when NPCs or other in-game elements don't hesitate when the players do.

The bar tender gets bored with the PC group's private discussion and walks away to serve some drunks at the far end of the bar, feeling disrespected because the characters ignored him for too long. When approached again, he will not divulge any further information, unless paid 10 silvers and apologized to.

As the adventurers discuss what to do, (players are looking at their character sheets to see if they have anything to deal with the situation, taking more than a minute) the strange blinking machine they saw 200 meters away, suddenly fires a bright purple beam at a random character (a very powerful stun beam, SV 01-78/ DMG 3d10+30 stun), prior to the hovering robot advancing rapidly, red and blue flashing lights now blinking furiously on the thing's top.

The lazy eyed, half conscious hooker gets distracted while the characters argue about what to do next, and she drifts off into sleep, mumbling to herself about giant snakes and cherry pie. All attempts to revive her are fruitless, as she is thoroughly beyond reach for the time being. The head mistress of the seedy brothel comes and carries the slumbering jezebel to a back room and tells the adventurers to leave unless they'd like to pay for another floozy.

The armed band of warmorts, far below in the junk strewn streets, have as yet not spotted the characters on the roof above. As the players discuss what to do, taking more than a minute, but at no time saying their characters drop down behind the edge for the roof to hide, the GM interrupts the players to announce. "The lead warmort spots your team standing on the roof, and shouts to his band of

twenty two brothers, removes his sniper rifle from his shoulder and bring it up to aim at you. What do you do now?"

The characters have been asking questions of a dying water trader they find in the old roadway; the fellow has a crossbow bolt through his chest and is spitting blood as he speaks. After revealing some information, the players decide to speak among themselves about various plots they suspect this dying man is associated with. The Game master cuts in with. "As your characters stand around talking to each other the dying man coughs up something and nods once before dying." Had the characters spent their time asking questions of the casualty, they may have gleaned far more information than they would have had they wasted time in inter-party discussion.

The players are told that as they march across the blasted wasteland, passing the rusted, half buried wrecks of ancient tanks and APCs, twisted robots, and crashed aircraft, they notice a vast dark stretch in the sky ahead, about a kilometer away, stretching for as far as they can see in either direction left and right. The horizon is hidden from view in the dark brown blanket which roars their way. Within minutes, anyone with exposed skin starts to feel the prick and peck of bits of fine sand as the wall looms up, blotting out the sky. If the players pause to discuss the event: Player A: "It's a stampede! It must be. Maybe we can shoot us something to eat finally!" Player B: "I doubt it. I think its a sand storm." Player C: "Maybe its radioactive. Perhaps we should do something." The Game Master: "Thick, choking sand envelops your whole squad where you stand,





*blinding those who don't have goggles or helmets with visors or built-in masks. You can't see each other and are knocked back and from side to side, characters not in proper desert robes or in full plate, combat armor or better, all suffer 2d6 damage from the sand's eroding affect. The naked prisoner, meanwhile, suffers worse, and you hear his screams as his flesh is flayed from his bones. Either he soon dies or you simply can't hear him over the deafening roar of the storm. After the storm passes, in twenty minutes, you are each alone, partially buried in the fine sand, looking about in a graveyard of rusted machines of long forgotten wars, you see a concrete cylinder protruding from the ground, a closed rusty access hatch on top with a short ladder leading up to it. This portal recently exposed by the passing tempest. What do you do now?"*

*The game has just started for the evening. The GM has just described a lumbering, spiked covered shape moving in the PC's direction down a narrow passage in the ruins. The thing is in the darkness, however, only its shape visible as it is backlit by glowing blue lights from the room behind it. The thing is growling low and moving 4m per round toward the team, being only 8m away at this point. The players turn to each other and start to discuss what sort of critter this might be, and what weaponry might be best. As this is a serious threat, and killing PCs so early in the session is not conducive to an evening's fun, at least not in some side plot encounter, the GM gives a subtle hint during the player's discussion. "The monster is now only 4m away, you can see that it has gleaming amber eyes, and already smell the foul breath emanating from its huge shark-toothed mouth." If the players continue to discuss what to do, instead of propelling their characters into action, then the huge mutant creature, a Devi-bear, is upon the first two characters in the passage, and the GM states: "Boxer and Crimp, roll for initiative, the thing is reaching for you two with its meter long head and enormous, clawed paws."*

Turn Time Limits, then, can speed up almost every circumstance and encounter, not merely ones involving combat. After a few screw ups, the players will realize the real time urgency of the game in play, they will sit up, lean closer and follow your descriptions more closely. The additional benefit of employing this system is to get the players talking to each other about pre-arranged strategies for dealing with things when not already in the action. For example, going back to the canoe encounter, the players decide that whenever their PCs meet unidentified, human sized travelers outside of town, they will have their weapons drawn but not aimed, and assign a certain character to step forward six meters and wave and call 'hello friends'. If the strangers go for their weapons, take cover or don't respond in a friendly manner, then the whole PC team will flee for cover themselves if outnumbered, other-

wise, blow away the strangers, investigate the bodies to see who they were, and take their stuff.

Other examples of player pre-planning in order to deal with GM time limits, uses pre-arranged responses to in-game events. Such a response might be having only one character, the smartest or best looking, to approach interesting NPCs in a town or among a caravan to ask them questions, and then report back his or her findings to the other characters. Also, when seeing anything coming at the team, that has clearly seen the adventurers and is obviously hostile, the characters will automatically fire on it, no questions asked.

Using previously arranged excavation team tactics for various encounters speeds up game play and unit efficiency, greatly increasing the odds of survival and of achieving whatever mission the party is on.

As mentioned above, the only real exceptions to this turn time limit technique is when dealing with new gamers, either those who are unfamiliar with The Mutant Epoch setting, the Outland System rules, or have never played an RPG before and don't even know what the different dice are for. Likewise, new players are often uncertain of how many things their PC can do in their turn or what is a logical action; such as, can the character speak and draw their machete simultaneously? Can the PC run while shooting? Can a PC give a belligerent monster some of his rations and make friends with it? Can a character reload a magazine while going up the stairs and watching the door behind her? Does a character in the game world get more than one life? If a PC accidentally shoots an innocent person by mistake, can the scene be re-done? If the new player uses a wrong dice and it affects the outcome of a pivotal scene in the game, can the sequence be edited or replayed with the proper dice? What if the new player forgets that his or her character had some mutation, skill or implant a few scenes back which would have made all the difference; can time be rolled back and the game started over at that point? And So on. Some of these seem silly to experienced RPGers, but might be thought provoking game elements, perhaps leading to a new house rule.

If new players are at the table, give them a few sessions to get used of the way the game works before introducing a timer or the pressure and pace of a time limit on a turn. Keep in mind that beginners may want to have a rule explained, or don't understand the setting or objective of play. They may not know what is possible for their character, how combat works, and finally, how the hell is one supposed to play a game without a board or figures or even a winner and many losers? Stressing out new players will only alienate them, and if they can't pause the action to ask a rules or general RPG 'play concept question', they will remain silent, and never properly learn the game, perhaps consider tabletop games too difficult and time consuming and go watch TV, instead.

AW







## Using Name Tags and Tent Cards

To help players get into their roles as mutants, cyborgs, mercenaries, ex-gladiators, synthetic humans or beastial humans, the game master can encourage in-character dialogue. A further break from reality could be to have players either wear name tags, which have their character's name (and gender symbol) stuck to their shirt, or use tent cards with the character's names on them, possibly even a few notes in smaller writing underneath, such as their gender, type, any remarkable relics or mutations they may have, and whatnot. Of course, only obvious or visible mutations and relics should be noted, as it is sometimes advantageous to hold something back from fellow players, just in case in-game con-

flicts arise among the personas or the player wants to reveal some item or power later on to make a dramatic, character defining difference in a scene.

If the player is lucky enough to have a portrait drawn of his or her character, a photocopy of the drawing could be attached to the tent card. (Note: A large selection of character and NPC portraits are available for free download at [mutantepoch.com](http://mutantepoch.com) for SOE members. Have your GM, or whoever is a member of the society of excavators, download the entire set and email it to you to review and print.)



# COMIC STORE WEST

COMICS GAMES CARDS MINIATURES

York PA's first and still most popular pop culture hangout.  
Come check out our spacious gaming area:

2111 Industrial Highway  
York, PA 17402

[www.comicstorewest.com](http://www.comicstorewest.com)

717-845-9198