THE TEMPORAL TOYBOX

Being a Compendium of Optional and Alternate Rules for the Doctor Who: Adventures in Time and Space RPG

Now In Its Sixth Regeneration (2021)

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Welcome, dear reader, to the sixth iteration of **The Temporal Toybox**, an unofficial collection of optional and variant rules for the fantastic **Doctor Who RPG** published by Cubicle 7. ***Allons-y!***

RADICAL RE-ENGINEERING

A Variant Approach to Dice Rolls and Story Points

Why the Changes?

While Story points are a great concept and work splendidly well for players, allowing them to emulate the unique logic and spirit of the TV show, they do not work as well as far as the GM is concerned: having to keep track of separate pool of Story points for each NPC or monster (even if you restrict them to the more important characters or creatures) can be quite tedious and often feel like an unnecessary mental burden for the GM, distracting him from his most important task: running the story!

This seemingly minor problem can become quite cumbersome in scenes involving many dice rolls, like action scenes – which is somewhat paradoxical since such scenes are supposed to be fast-paced

A Very Simple Idea

The variant approach detailed on this page is based on a single basic principle:

Story points and dice rolls are for players only.

With this system, the GM never has to roll a single die in play, nor does he need to spend any Story point during the course of the game.

Thus, the GM can concentrate exclusively on his storytelling and story-guiding duties, which are the very essence of his job. Actions and situations are *always* resolved from the player-characters' point of view, making the game more focused and emulating an important aspect of dramatic TV shows, where the heroes are almost always at the front stage.

In the official rules, an adversary's expenditure of Story points is almost always symmetrical to a player-character's own expenditures (i.e. the villain making his best to foil, counter or otherwise oppose the hero's actions). Making Story points the exclusive privilege of players will simply give their characters that extra bit of luck, edge or pizzazz that scriptwriters always grant to the *heroes* of the show.

A villain may have style, charisma, willpower, luck or genius – but the chance to turn the tables at the last minute will always belong to the heroes of the tale. Of course, there are exceptions – such as the "last-minute escape" ability of the Master (see below).

NPCs in Play

The GM never has to roll the dice for an actions or reactions of NPCs. These dice rolls are simply replaced with pre-calculated target numbers called **action totals**, based on average rolls.

When NPCs (whether they are allies or adversaries) act, do not roll dice. Simply assume that they rolled 7, the average sum for 2D6. Or in other words:

NPC's action total = 7 + Attribute + Skill

Thus, a Dalek (Coordination 2, Marksman 3) will have a shooting total of 12 (instead of rolling 2D6+5), while a Sontaran Trooper (Coordination 4, Marksman 5) will have a shooting total of 16 (instead of rolling 2D6+9).

In conflict situations, these action totals simply work as *target numbers* for the players' dice rolls.

Thus, if you want to shoot a Dalek with a blaster gun, you roll your Coordination + Marksman against a fixed target number taking into account the Dalek's defense total, with no roll for the Dalek itself. If the Dalek shoots at you, you roll your own defense (say, Coordination + Athletics or Awareness, depending on the situation) against a fixed target number based on the Dalek's Coordination and Marksman scores - again, with no roll for the Dalek itself.

When two NPCs fight or oppose each other, simply give the advantage to the one with the higher action total (taking into account circumstance modifiers) and break ties according to the interest of the story.

As mentioned above, unique NPCs – arch-villains like the Master as well as long-term, recurring allies like the Brigadier – do enjoy special advantages reflecting their special dramatic status.

Unique Characters

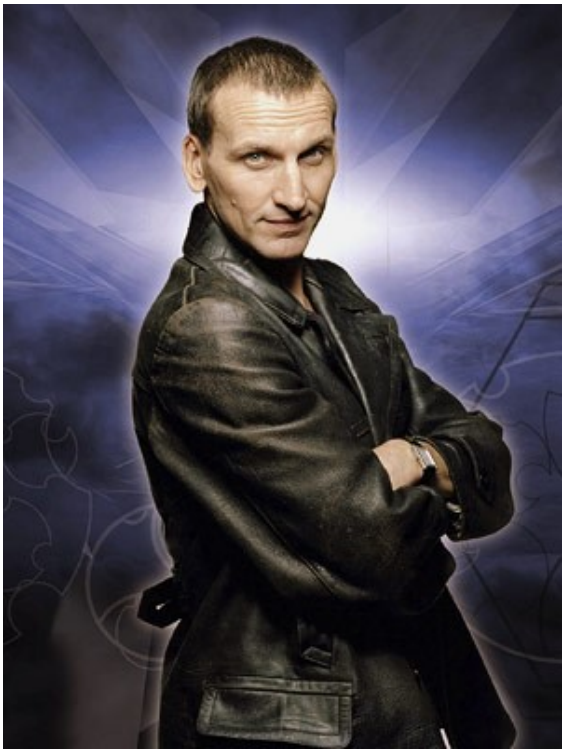
This category includes **arch-villains** like Davros, the Master or Magnus Greel and unique beings like Omega, the Racnoss Empress or the Destroyer, as well as **heroic allies** like the Brigadier or Madame Vastra. In addition to their usually high attributes and skills, such characters enjoy a *special dramatic status*, reflected in game terms by two privileges:

1) The action totals of Arch-villains and Heroic Allies are calculated with a basis of 12 (instead of the usual 7). Thus, the Brigadier (Coordination 4, Marksman 3) would have a marksmanship total of 19 (instead of rolling 2D6+7 with the possibility of spending Story points).

2) Once per story, an Arch-villain or Heroic Ally may perform a unique, one-off action. Such actions correspond to those exploits and amazing feats (or moments of improbable luck) that would normally require a massive expenditure of Story points - things like the Master's ability to cheat death or truly unique feats like the Brigadier single-handedly defeating the Destroyer in *Battlefield*. Such feats should always depend on the GM's discretion and the needs of the story – just like big Story point expenditures in the original rules.

SKILLS IN TIME AND SPACE

Some Thoughts on Skills in the DOCTOR WHO RPG



Skill Levels & Expertise

There seems to be some slight contradictions in the *Doctor Who RPG* rules regarding the exact meaning of skill levels. The original rules clearly state that a skill level of 2-3 reflects a *"quite confident"* degree of ability – yet, a few pages later, we learn that *"The average human attribute is 3, the average skill level is 2-3 and the average die roll is 7, so an average person should be able to accomplish something with a difficulty of 12 more often than not."*

This latter statement seems to imply that a skill level of 2 or 3 is the standard level for an "average person", which could explain why a fairly ordinary 21st century girl like Dona Noble has been given pretty impressive (or, depending on how you look at it, seriously inflated) skill levels of 2 in Fighting and 3 in Survival. Yet, it seems really more logical (and intuitive) to equate a skill level of 2 or 3 with a fairly confident degree of ability. Skill levels should thus be interpreted according to the following scale:

1 = Novice

2 = Amateur

3 = Proficient

4 = Seasoned

5 = Expert

6 = Genius

Unskilled Attempts

At first sight, the -4 penalty for unskilled attempts seems perfectly reasonable – but this penalty becomes somewhat superfluous when you check the probabilities of the system. Even with an excellent attribute score of 5, a character with an effective skill level of 0 already has to roll 10+ on 2d6 to succeed at a Tricky (15+) action and *has no chance whatsoever* to succeed at a Hard (18+) or really Difficulty (21+) task unless he spent Story points to boost his roll.

In other words, unskilled characters already have little or no chance of succeeding at actions where their lack of skill should logically hinder them (i.e. actions with an above-average difficulty), without having to add a -4 penalty on top of that.

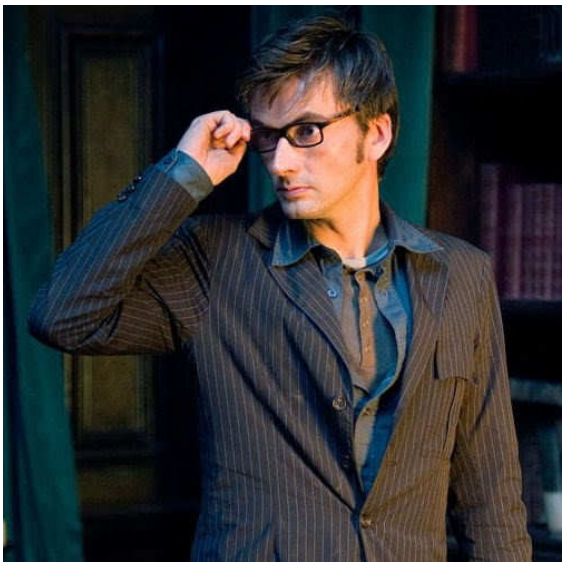
Dumping this penalty makes things far simpler in game terms – and if the Gamemaster really feels that an unskilled character should have absolutely no chance of succeeding at a task because of his lack of training, then all he has to do is to set the difficulty at Hard or higher.

The Twelve Skills

In my DW games, I have replaced Craft with a more general option (the 'Other' skill), keeping the list of skills at the very neat number of twelve:

ATHLETICS	**SCIENCE**
CONVINCE	**SUBTERFUGE**
FIGHTING	**SURVIVAL**
KNOWLEDGE	**TECHNOLOGY**
MARKSMAN	**TRANSPORT**
MEDICINE	**OTHER** *

* The 'Other' skill is a catch-all category for any skill the player or GM may wish to add to the character's repertoire. It can include the Craft or Artist skill (see page 6 for more details) or any skill which may add colour to a character (and come in reasonably handy during some adventures), such as Gambling, Finance or Animal Training but cannot really be covered (even indirectly) by any existing skill or attribute. The idea behind this catch-all category, however, is to give the possibility of adding a single, iconic skill to some characters' repertoire rather than turning the very neat and tightly-packed *Doctor Who RPG* set of twelve skills into a pointless mega-list of every imaginable field of experience or profession.



Knowledge & the Whoniverse

In the **Doctor Who RPG** rules, knowledge of the various alien species and cultures falls under the general **Knowledge** skill – an approach which is quite likely to raise some problems in play, right from character creation. This means, for instance, that characters with a high Knowledge skill (such as academics, scholars etc.) will always have a better instinctive grasp of alien cultures than characters who should logically possess such knowledge, like UNIT officers or Torchwood agents - unless we assume that such characters all have a very high Knowledge skill, which is obviously not the case.

Sure, the description of the Knowledge skill explicitly states that alien cultures should not be available as areas of expertise for novice characters – but if we follow the rules as written, the fact of NOT having a particular area of expertise does not give any sort of disadvantage (and let's keep in mind that areas of expertise are supposed to be optional anyway).

In other words, any character could, at least in theory, apply his Knowledge skill to alien matters, regardless of his actual experience or background; sure, the GM can always call on common sense here but wouldn't it better to have a simple, clean rule here instead of having to make arbitrary decisions – especially for a topic which may have such a significant incidence in play?

The simplest way to avoid this "Bookworm Paradox" is to adjudicate what a character's Knowledge skill actually covers on a case-by-case basis, depending on the character's background and life experience. Simply put, having a Knowledge skill of 5, for instance, does not mean the same thing if you are an Elizabethan scholar or a 21st century academic.

Thus, Knowledge is what we might call a "relative" skill, since its actual contents (in terms of information) and interpretation varies according to each character's background and culture.

Tech Levels & Skills

Tech Levels & Time Travel

The following section details some simple rules to make Technology Levels (or "Tech Levels") more significant in game terms (beyond the obvious equipment-related effects detailed on pp 65-66 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*).

The rules detailed below makes frequent reference to a character's "most advanced Tech Level". This normally refers to the Tech Level of the character's culture of origin (i.e. TL 5 for 21st century humans) – but for characters with the Time Traveller trait, this refers to the highest Tech Level their time travelling experience has allowed them to master. Thus, if a 21st century character acquires the Time Traveller trait for Tech Levels 3, 4, 7 and 9, his most advanced Tech Level will be 9.

Equipment & Vehicles

Although they mention no specific skill, the rules on p 66 of the *Gamemaster's Guide* obviously refer to the **Technology** skill, which governs the use and repair of most technological items.

While this is not explicitly mentioned in the game, it also makes sense to expand these rules to the **Transport** skill. Thus, a flying ace from WW1 (Tech Level 4) would incur a -4 penalty when trying to fly a Tech Level 6 spaceship, while a character from the early 21st century (Tech Level 5) would suffer a -2 penalty when handling a sailing ship from the age of exploration (Tech Level 3).

Weaponry

Following that same line of reasoning, it would also make sense to apply the same penalties to the **Marksman** skill – yet, one might also argue that the technological differences between missile weapons of different eras are less complex (at least in terms of use and operation) than between vehicles and other machines. In other words, a pistol is a pistol is a pistol, regardless of how many technological refinements you add to its basic working principles.

To reflect this, the penalty for using a missile weapon of a higher Tech Level than your most advanced TL should be reduced to -1 for each TL of difference (instead of the usual -2).

Thus, a pirate from the 17th century (Tech Level 3) would only incur a -3 penalty when using a Tech Level 6 energy blaster (instead of a massive -6).

The -1 penalty for each TL of difference for lower Tech Levels would, however, remain unaffected, so that a 21st century character (Tech Level 5) would suffer a -3 penalty to his Marksman skill when using a medieval English longbow (Tech Level 2).

Scientific Concepts

Since technology is a direct byproduct of science, a character's most advanced TL should also set the upper limit as to what his Science skill covers. Even the greatest scientists of our period (TL 5) would probably find the complexities of Time Lord science (TL 10) impossible to comprehend – at least without some hefty expenditure of Story points.

GMs who wish to reflect this in game terms may give each important scientific concept a minimum TL to reflect the point at which that particular concept becomes part of what the **Science** skill covers.

Taking the example of time travel, the Tech Levels chart given on p 32 of the *Gamemaster's Guide* identifies TL 8 as the first "time faring" level: thus, only characters whose most advanced TL is 8 or higher could apply their Science skill to time-travelling concepts – at least without incurring some penalties. Scientists whose most advanced TL is less than this minimum would suffer the usual -2 penalty per TL of difference.

Thus, a 21st century scientist (Tech Level 5) would suffer a -6 penalty to his Science skill when dealing with the basics of temporal science – meaning that a scientific genius with 5 or 6 in both Science and Ingenuity may actually have a chance here, especially if he has a few Story points in store: thus, under exceptional circumstances, historical scientific geniuses like Albert Einstein could have a pretty decent chance of working out the solution to some tricky temporal theory problem.

Science, Technology & Progress

Unlike equipment, however, scientific concepts available to lower TLs obviously give no penalties. Once a concept or discovery (such as Newton's law of gravity or Einstein's theory of relativity) becomes part of the established body of scientific knowledge, it remains there and does not constantly 'improve' the way equipment tends to.

In other words, as TL increases, the nature of Technology changes (reflected by the -1 penalty per TL of difference for using technology from a lower TL), while Science (which concerns itself with the basic truths of how the universe works) merely expands (no penalty for dealing with scientific concepts of a lower TL).

A meticulous Gamemaster could even decide to apply a corresponding bonus of +1 per Tech Level of difference in such cases.

If, for instance, we classify the basic principles of how planets and stars interact with each other as a Tech Level 3 concept (since that would be the Tech Level corresponding to characters like Galileo or Copernicus), a scientist from the 21st century (TL 5) would get a +2 bonus to his Science skill when dealing with such basic notions, while a scientist from a far more advanced culture (say, a TL 10 Time Lord) would get a massive +7.

Thus, a Time Lord from Gallifrey would not simply be someone with a high Science skill but would be able to take full advantage from the extraordinary scientific advancement of his native culture.

The Boundaries of Science

Under these rules, a character's Science skill no longer reflects an *absolute* measure of his scientific knowledge but a *relative* one, as defined by the conceptual boundaries of his home culture (which, in game terms, is represented by its Tech Level).
With this approach, a Gallifreyan student with 1 or 2 in Science will be able to comprehend and operate concepts which would normally be beyond the reach of the greatest scientists from 21st century Earth.

Penalties and bonuses for scientific concepts should only be used when such concepts have a major dramatic impact on the story – but in such situations, they give a more significant edge to characters who originate from technologically (and scientifically) advanced cultures, which is only fair.

This approach also means that Time Travelling scientists (i.e. characters with the Science skill and the Time Traveller trait) who have become familiar with cultures more advanced than their own (i.e. with a higher Tech Level) will have automatically broadened their "scientific horizons" in the process, by becoming familiar with a higher TL than their native one, without necessarily improving their Science skill itself.

Recrafting the Craft Skill

Definition & Relevance

Even for an *"all-encompassing skill"* which *"covers all manners of talents"*, the Craft skill does seem a bit too, well, all-encompassing. Regardless of how you try to justify things, it does seem very difficult to accept the idea of a skill covering anything from carpentry to guitar playing or farming. Yet, treating every possible craft as a separate skill would have little interest in a game like *Doctor Who* and would also overlap with the concept of Areas of Expertise.

It should also be noted that this skill tends to be far less useful on adventures than most (if not all) other skills – something that is directly reflected on the sample character sheets of the Doctor and his companions: most of these characters have a Craft skill of 0 but have a level of at least 1 in all other skills – and the Doctor himself only has a Craft skill of 2. This actually makes perfect sense, since this skill is the only one which clearly falls outside of the usual repertoire of time-travelling adventurers.

As previously noted, the Craft skill may be advantageously replaced with the new Aliens skill in the list of twelve basic skills used in the *Doctor Who RPG* system. That being said, GMs who still wish to include the Craft skill in their games may find the following optional rules interesting.

Artists vs. Artisans

The first step to rationalizing the Craft skill is to separate ARTS from CRAFTS. Let's face it: even if we follow a very broad, all-encompassing approach to these things, there is (or, at least, there should be) absolutely NO connection whatsoever between, say, guitar playing and basket weaving (or between painting and carpentry, for that matter).

Arts should fall under a general **Artist** skill, while the Craft skill should "only" include manual activities requiring, well, *craftsmanship*. In other words, if you want your character to be a painter, a guitar player or a ballet dancer, invest in the Artist skill (preferably with an appropriate area of expertise) and leave the Craft skill to blacksmiths, tailors and woodworkers.

Within each general skill (Artist or Craft), areas of expertise can be chosen to represent specific art forms (such as painting, poetry, singing or piano playing) or crafts (such as carpenter, blacksmith or stonemason). Note that the Artist / Craft division still leaves each skill as a very general, catch-all ability, in keeping with the spirit of the original rules.

Craft as Tech

Another potential problem (or, depending on how you look at it, interesting feature) of the Craft skill is its tendency to overlap with the Technology skill, which may raise various questions in the game.

At which point, for instance, "making and repairing things" ceases to be Craft to become Technology? Can low-tech "devices" be manufactured with the Craft skill instead of the Technology skill using the Jiggery-Pokery rules?

In my games, I have decided that Tech Levels 1 to 3 rely solely on Craft and that Technology as a skill only becomes available (and useful) at Tech Level 4 and above. Thus, a 21st century electronic engineer with a high Technology skill but no Craft skill would not be able to use his Technology skill (regardless of what *Time Traveler* traits he may have) instead of the Craft skill to repair a TL 3 item.

In addition, Craft does not evolve in the same manner as Technology does: where Technology constantly follows the march of scientific progress (as detailed above), Craft is all about the traditional transmission of tried-and-true techniques. In game terms, this means that a character using the Craft skill should never suffer TL penalties for working at a lower TL than his native TL. Thus, a Renaissance swordsmith (TL 3) would suffer no penalty when using his Craft in a TL 2 or TL 1 environment, provided he has access to his usual tools.

There are, of course, 'grey areas' – especially around Tech Level 4 (aka the Industrial Age), where the essentially manual nature of Craft and the more mechanical aspects of Technology seem to overlap. Some TL 4 occupations would definitely require a combination of both skills: a Victorian gunsmith or locomotive mechanic, for instance, would need both Craft and Technology skills to cover all the aspects of his trade. Since the Industrial Age can be defined as (among other things) the time of transition from craftsmanship to technology, this makes perfect sense. This would also makes technician characters from TL 4 cultures real jacks-of-all-trades, able to adapt their know-how to a wide variety of situations.

SOME PRETTY BASIC STUFF

Alternate Rules for Various Adventuring Situations

Perception

In the rules as they stand, the differences between active perception, passive perception and research can be somewhat confusing. Here are some variant rules for handling these situations in play.

Active Perception

This represents situations like searching a room for clues or hidden passages - or simply being on your guard, ready to spot anything weird or out of place.

For such situations, use **Awareness + Ingenuity**.

In situations where a specific skill (such as Survival or Subterfuge) may apply, characters may use this skill instead of their Ingenuity – but only if this gives them a better active perception total.

Also add bonuses for *Keen Senses*, if applicable.

Passive Perception

This represents your chances of noticing something weird or unusual while NOT paying attention to your surroundings – because you are focusing on something else, such as an activity requiring intense concentration or are distracted by something else.

For such situations, simply use the character's raw **Awareness** score, without adding Ingenuity or any skill. This will make things quite difficult – but hey, that's all passive perception should be all about: raw Awareness, no active application of Ingenuity or skill and far smaller chances to notice things than if you were actively trying.

Note that *Keen Senses* bonuses may also apply here, making them an even more important asset in passive perception situations.

Information Gathering

This mainly represents searching for clues in books, computer files and similar sources of information.

For such situations, use **Ingenuity** + relevant skill.

The relevant skill will vary according to the situation, with Knowledge, Science and Technology being the most frequently used skills for information-gathering but this procedure could also be extended to other skills, such as Convince (for collecting gossip, etc.) or Subterfuge (for more espionage-oriented forms of intelligence-gathering).

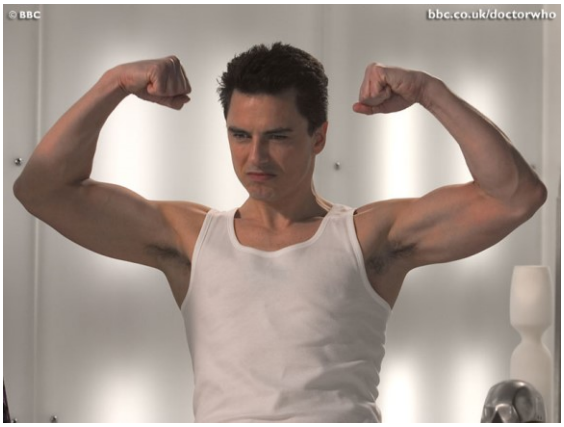
Feats of Strength

Strength in the Game

The *Doctor Who* rules do not include any system for resolving feats of strength - such as lifting or pushing heavy objects etc.

Since no skill clearly applies to such actions (unless you have a very broad interpretation of Athletics), using the sum of Strength and Resolve seems an obvious solution - but this would make Resolve as important as Strength, which does not feel quite right: even though willpower may be an important factor in such situations, it wouldn't feel right to give a puny but resolute character (Strength 2, Resolve 4) the same weightlifting abilities as a strong guy with a mediocre force of will (Strength 4, Resolve 2).

The following rules ensure that Strength remains the most important factor in such situations, while still taking into account the effects of Resolve. They also treat weight in a simple, abstract manner, using in-game units (attribute scores) rather than real-world physics or measurements – an approach already used for distances in the rules for Chases.



Testing your Strength

Rather than attempt to measure a character's lifting capacity in kilograms or pounds, the Gamemaster should simply determine the amount of effort needed to perform the feat on the scale given below. If the character has the required Strength, he can perform the feat automatically (no die roll needed). Thus, a character with a Strength of 4 will be able to perform Challenging feats of strength without needing to roll the dice.

Effort	Strength Required
Challenging	4
Spectacular	6
Colossal	8
Herculean	10

If the character's Strength is lower than the required score (which is almost always the case with Spectacular feats and beyond), the character will have to *push the limits* of his Strength to have a chance of success - which requires a dice roll.

Pushing the Limits

To *push the limits*, roll **Strength + Resolve** versus a difficulty of **18** (Hard). This may be adjusted by the GM to reflect particularly favorable or unfavorable circumstances.

Each level of success on this roll allows the character to boost his effective Strength score by 1 point for this particular feat: +1 for a simple Success, +2 if Good and +3 if Fantastic.

Thus, a character with an exceptional Strength of 5 could succeed at a Colossal feat by rolling a Fantastic result on his (Strength + Resolve) roll.

Since the highest possible Strength for a human is 6 and the boosting roll cannot add more than +3 to this score (for a maximum of 9), truly Herculean feats (which require an effective Strength of 10) are beyond the possibilities of human strength - and can only be attempted by aliens or other creatures with superhuman physical strength.

Resistance Rolls

Whereas most deliberate actions will be resolved using the standard (attribute + skill) combination, most 'resistance rolls' (i.e. rolls to counter, withstand or overcome various threats or hardships) combine two attributes - to reflect the more 'instinctive' or 'natural' aspect of such responses.

Since there are only six attributes, players will often end up rolling the same combinations of attributes when facing similar perils and dangers.

With this in mind, some GMs and players may find it useful to calculate some of the more frequently used resistance rolls in advance to make their use in the game easier and quicker.

Stamina = Strength + Resolve

Self-Control = Ingenuity + Resolve

Psyche = Awareness + Resolve

The usual modifiers from good or bad traits should of course be applied – such as +2 to Self-Control for Brave characters in most situations or bonuses to Psyche for being Indomitable or having Psychic Training when defending against psychic attacks.

Conversely, these resistance rolls will be affected by any damage suffered by the relevant attributes. An injury causing a loss of Strength, for instance, will also reduce a character's Stamina total.

Note that, in all cases, the Resolve attribute is part of the equation, emphasizing its importance as the main 'resistance' attribute of characters.

A reflex or evasion roll based on Coordination and Awareness could also be added to this list, unless you use the variant combat rules detailed in the next section (in which case evading bullets and laser blasts no longer depends on this attribute combo).

Lastly, keep in mind that these three pre-calculated scores only represent situations which tend to crop up frequently when adventuring in time and space and that any other combination of attributes may be used to reflect responses to more unusual or special situations, as per the official rules.

FLASHING BLADES & BLAZING GUNS

Alternate, Simpler & Faster Rules for Combats and Damage

Fighting Combat

Let's get things straight right from the start: combat should never be the focus of a *Doctor Who* episode. So when combat *does* happen, you want it to be dynamic and dramatic.

These alternate rules make combat scenes quicker to resolve, with fewer dice rolls involved, while keeping genre emulation and fast-paced action as top priorities. They are based on the variant approach detailed on p 3 but can easily be re-adapted to the standard system.

Attacking & Defending

Forget about defensive reaction rolls. Melee combat should simply be resolved as a series of conflicts based on **Coordination + Fighting**, using the usual roll for player-characters and a pre-calculated action total for his opponent (see p 3).

This total represents an overall combination of offensive and defensive maneuvers.

Thus, the Fighting skill represents how well you can attack, as well as how well you can dodge or parry during a hand-to-hand fight.

Since a single roll is used to resolve a whole turn, there is no need to compare Coordination scores to determine who goes first.

The result is interpreted as usual (i.e. the loser suffers damage based on the winner's Strength, weapon and degree of success), unless the winner was going for a special trick or maneuver.

Dodging & Parrying

Characters have the option of **fighting defensively**, focusing exclusively on dodges, parries and other defensive maneuvers rather than attempting to harm their opponent; in this case, they gain a +2 bonus to their Fighting total but will not inflict any damage if they beat their opponent (unless they get a Fantastic result, as detailed below).

When **fighting defensively**, a simple Success ("*Yes But…*") means that the character successfully dodges or parries his opponent's attacks but will not be able to attack during the next round (i.e. he must continue to fight defensively). A Fantastic result ("*Yes And…*") means that the character's swift defensive maneuvers allowed him to deliver a quick *riposte*, inflicting the same amount of damage to his opponent as on a simple Success. Alternatively, the character may choose to forfeit this riposte and use his Fantastic result to break away from melee.

Multiple Opponents

When a single is facing **multiple opponents** in Fighting combat, simply make a single Fighting roll, using the highest combat total among them, with a +2 bonus for each extra opponent.

Note that, in many cases, NPCs and creatures who make group attacks will have the same combat total, making such calculations fast and easy.

Thus, a guard with Coordination 3 and Fighting 3 will have a combat total of 13 (see p 3 for more details) but three similar guards acting together will have a combat total of 17 (+2 for each extra guard).

If the group wins the conflict, their opponent will only suffer a single injury, again corresponding to the deadliest damage total in the group.

In other words, a single character heroically facing two or three opponents at the same time is far more likely to get hurt than if he was facing a single opponent, but if this does happen, he will not be hurt significantly more (which seems perfectly in keeping with the spirit of the game and its source material).

Combat Stunts

Special maneuvers (like disarming etc.) should be handled by the GM on a case-by-case basis. Such actions should require a Good result to succeed or even a Fantastic one for the most acrobatic tricks. In most cases, attempting such stunts will prevent you from dealing the usual damage for your attack.

Surprise and Reflexes

Under these variant rules (which take initiative and "acting first" out of the equation), attacking with an **element of surprise** gives you a +2 or +4 bonus for the first combat round, depending on the situation.

Characters with the **Quick Reflexes** reduce their opponent's surprise advantage by 2 (to 0 or +2), while those with **Slow Reflexes** will *always* be caught off-guard by an opponent's first attack (+2).

Marksman Combat

Marksman combat can also be made quicker and simpler with a few changes and adjustments here and there, using the same basic principles as for Fighting combat above, unless otherwise noted. Just keep in mind that the goal of this system has nothing to do with 'tactical realism' and everything to do with fast-paced drama and genre emulation.

Gunfights

When two opponents are shooting at each other, each action round can be resolved as a conflict based on **Coordination + Marksman**, as per the variant rules for melee combat given earlier and with the same consequences for damage, ties etc.

As for melee combat, the Marksman roll represents a combination of offensive and defensive movies, i.e. firing your weapon while trying not to get hit by using evasive actions. Shooting while moving (including in a vehicle) incurs a -2 penalty.

The rules for **multiple opponents** and **defensive fighting** can also be applied to marksman combat. In this case, defensive fighting represents what is known as **suppressive fire** (i.e. firing your weapon to keep your opponents at bay, prevent them for firing etc.): the effects in game terms are *exactly the same* as for Fighting combat (see previous page).

Likewise, the rules for combat stunts, reflexes and surprise should have the same effects on marksman combat as on fighting combat.

Targets

Characters facing enemy fire may also try to run away. Runners are assumed to make themselves as hard to hit as possible, using their **Coordination + Athletics** against the shooter's Marksman skill.

If the shooter wins the conflict, the runner is hit. If the Runner is being chased, this Athletics roll will also serve as his chase roll for the round.

Sniping or firing at inanimate objects or other **static targets** requires no conflict: the GM simply sets the Difficulty for the shot, based on distance, visibility and the other usual factors.

Cover

With these variant rules, cover no longer takes the form of a "to hit" penalty but reduces the shooter's degree of success by 1 to 3 levels:

1/3 (low boxes or kneeling)…….. **-1 level**

2/3 (head & shoulders)…….....**-2 levels**

Completely behind cover……..…**-3 levels**

Thus, a character with 2/3 cover can only be injured by a Fantastic result (reduced to a simple Success).

This makes cover far more effective than in the official rules, since full cover will now always prevent you from being hit – unrealistic, sure, but true to the spirit of the source material, where characters often escape enemy fire merely by ducking behind cover. Note, however, that cover can be blown to bits by explosives, energy blasts etc. In such cases, cover should only be effective for a single round.

Damage & Injury

Why New Rules?

The *Doctor Who* injury rules appear quite simple in theory but can be a bit unwieldy in actual play, especially during combat, where allocating attribute losses on the fly can be a bit tedious and tends to slow down the action. So here is a variant approach to damage in DW – a simpler, no-nonsense « hit points » system, which works really well in play.

Vitality Points

Each character, creature etc. is given a Vitality total equal to the sum of Strength and Resolve.

Vitality = Strength + Resolve

When damage points are sustained, they are simply subtracted from this total.

If Vitality reaches 0 (exactly), the injured being is out of action – but still able to speak and act, as long as the action does not require any form of roll. If Vitality falls below 0, the being falls unconscious.

If *negative* Vitality falls below Strength, the being will normally die before the end of the current scene.

Example: *Lady Penelope has a Strength of 3 and a Resolve of 5. This gives her a Vitality total of 8. If she suffers 5 points of damage, her Vitality will drop down to 3. Another injury like this and she will be down to -2, very close to the death threshold!*

The Effects of Shock

If a character or creature loses more Vitality points than his Resolve or Strength score (whichever is higher) in a single injury, then he goes into shock and is unable to act for the remainder of the scene, unless the player spends Story points to recover rapidly (see *Just a Scratch!* below).

Example: *Lady Penelope has a Strength of 3 and a Resolve of 5: thanks to her high Resolve, she would have to suffer 6 points of damage or more in a single go to fall into shock.*

Just a Scratch!

Injured characters who happen to have Story points left (or have regained them since being injured) may spend Story points to recover a number of Vitality points equal to one-half (rounded up) of their lost Vitality points – just like in the original rules.

Example: *So, Lady Penelope has lost 5 Vitality points and is down to 3. If she spends 1 Story point for a quick, dramatic recovery (as described in the rules), she will recover one-half of her lost Vitality points (2.5, rounded up to 3), bringing her back to 6. A second Story point would only allow her to recover a single Vitality point (one-half of her lost points).*

Psychic Combat

Psychic combat represents an escalating battle of minds, in which each character is trying to overcome the other's force of will.

Think, for instance, of the Fourth Doctor's struggle against Sutekh in *Pyramids of Mars* or his famous mental duel against Morbius.

Such psychic conflicts are based on **Awareness + Resolve**, with various modifiers for relevant traits. They can (and often do) occur in multiple rounds, like physical combat.

And just like physical combat, such psychic battles can cause intense pain and make you lose Vitality.

At the end of each round, the winner of the conflict simply causes a number of damage points to his opponent: the basic damage of a psychic attack is equal to the attacker's Resolve (just like Strength governs hand-to-hand damage):

Success = Resolve / 2 (rounded down)

Good = Resolve

Fantastic = Resolve x 1.5 (rounded down)

Thus, a character with a Resolve of 5 would cause 2 points of damage on a Success, 5 on a Good result and 7 on a Fantastic result.

The battle ends as soon as one of the characters' Vitality is reduced to zero: the exact consequences will vary according to the nature of the conflict. In all cases, a character or creature who has lost all his Vitality will be unable to enter a psychic conflict until he has regained at least one point of Vitality.

Any character engaged in a psychic conflict can make the usual Story point expenditures before the roll (provided he has had time to brace himself, collect his mental force etc.). As with any other type of conflict, if the player-character loses, he can shift the scales in his favour by spending Story points after the roll to regain the upper hand.

RUN FOR YOUR LIFE – FASTER!

Alternate, Fast-Paced Chase Rules

Chases in Play

These variant chase rules were designed for GMs and players who find the current system a bit too clunky and slow-moving (ah!).

They are based on the principle of *direct conflict* – or, in other words, rolling to beat your opponent, as opposed to the official chase rules which make each character or vehicle involved "roll against the terrain" without comparing their respective results.

This variant system also does away with the two major specific features of the official chase rules: Speed (which is no longer measured as a separate characteristic per se, except for vehicles, as detailed below) and Areas, in favour of a direct conflict between the involved parties.

For the sake of clarity, the two parties involved in a chase will be hereafter referred to as the *fugitive* (the one being chased) and the *pursuer* (the one chasing the fugitive).

The following rules reflect the most basic (and usual) type of chase in *Doctor Who*: running through corridors! Special rules for vehicles, stunts and traits can be found next page.

Each action turn is resolved as a **Coordination + Athletics** conflict.

If the Fugitive Wins

Success / Yes But (0-3): You put some distance between you and the pursuer. If you get a second Success in the next chase round, you manage to outrun him and the chase is over.

Good / Yes (4-8): You manage to outrun the pursuer. The chase is over.

Fantastic / Yes And (9+): As above, but the pursuer also suffers some kind of mishap (left at the discretion of the Game Master, depending on the situation) which puts him out of action at least for the remainder of the scene (or permanently if the GM deems it appropriate).

If the Pursuer Wins

Success / Yes But (0-3): You're closing in. If you get a second Success in the next chase round, you catch up with the fugitive and the chase is over.

Good / Yes (4-8): You catch up with the fugitive. The chase is over.

Fantastic / Yes And (9+): As above, but the fugitive also suffers some kind of mishap (left at the discretion of the Game Master, depending on the situation) which puts him out of action at least for the remainder of the scene (or permanently if the GM deems it appropriate).

Special Situations

Traits

Run For Your Life: This good trait you +2 to your chase total *when you act as the fugitive*.

Slow: It only takes a normal Success to outrun a Slow pursuer or to overtake a Slow fugitive. These two cases obviously cancel each other out.

Actions

Shooting: When shooting at a *fugitive*, the target's Coordination + Athletics total also acts as a reaction against the shooter's Marksman total (see p 11), which also incurs a -4 penalty (-2 for the extra action, -2 for shooting while moving). Shooting at a *pursuer* incurs an extra -2 penalty (for a total of -6).

Stunts: These should now simply be interpreted as the expenditure of Story points to affect chase rolls, as per the regular rules (either before the roll to get extra dice or after to turn failure into success).

Terrain

Terrain modifiers now simply come into play as per the usual rules for *complications*, giving bonuses or penalties to the characters' rolls.

Group Chases

Although you may (as in the official rules) require each character involved in a chase to make his own roll, this might prove quite cumbersome in actual play – just imagine the sequence of rolls involved if, say, four or five characters are running away from six or seven Daleks or Cybermen!

For simplicity's sake, it is much more convenient to have each group make a single collective roll, using the *lowest* (Coordination + Athletics) total in the group for fugitives or the *highest* total in the group for pursuers: when running away from something, you tend to be slowed down by your less-athletic companions, whereas, in a group of pursuers, the faster-moving member tends to 'lead the pack'.

If the players wish to spend Story points after the roll to affect its outcome (i.e. turn a failure into a success), then *every character* involved should make the expenditure; if this is not possible, then the ones who could not afford the expenditure will be left behind, keeping the original result of the roll.

The same logic should be applied to Stunts (see above) and spending Story points to escape from harm: only characters who make the required expense of Story points will benefit from its effects.

Thus, thanks to the fine-tuning allowed by the use of Story points, the simplicity of a collective roll can be combined with different individual outcomes.

Vehicles & Mounts

Vehicular chases should be handled with the same mechanics, except for the following two differences:

The conflict is based on **Coordination + Transport** and the relative **Speeds** of the vehicles involved is taken into account.

Unlike characters, vehicles retain their Speed rating in this variant system, but this rating does not have the same effects on play: simply give the vehicle with the highest Speed a bonus on chase rolls equal to the Speed difference. Thus, a car (Speed 8) chasing (or speeding away from) a truck (Speed 5) would give a +3 bonus to its driver's chase rolls.

What about chases involving vehicles AND people on foot? In this case, use the vehicle's Speed rating as a straight bonus (i.e., +8 for a car chasing people on foot); in most cases, this will mean automatic victory for the vehicle – *unless* stunts and Story points are involved (see above) and that's precisely why such things exist. In other words, you cannot a car by simply running away, unless you come up with some daring or clever stunt.

When using **mounts** (horses etc.), the same rules apply, except that Athletics is the relevant skill. Riding animals who are able to gallop (or move in a similar, very fast manner) should be given a Speed rating (e.g. 4 for a healthy horse). Thus, a horseman will get a +4 bonus against people on foot.

FEAR FACTOR, REVISITED

Alternate Fear Rules for the Doctor Who RPG

Fear in the Game

In the DW rules, potentially frightening aliens and creatures have a "passive" Fear score equal to the sum of their Resolve and Presence, which is supposed to be rolled against the characters' **Ingenuity + Resolve** according to the usual conflict rules – and beings with the Fear Factor trait add +2 per trait level to this basic Fear score, but only when (and I quote) *"actively trying to strike fear into people's hearts"*. At first glance, this approach seems to be a smooth and elegant application of the usual DW mechanics; in actual play, however, I found it didn't work that well, for a variety of reasons. The purpose of this article is to identify these problems and present a simple alternative.

The Scale of Fear

The first problem lies with the Fear Factor given to some creatures; in several cases, this really seems to be completely arbitrary and creates some annoying inconsistencies when you compare some creatures to others. Cybermen, for instance, have a massive Fear Factor bonus of +6, while neither the Saturnynians nor the Weeping Angels have even a single level in this trait. When adding these various creatures' Presence and Resolve scores, we get the following active Fear scores: 11 for Cybermen, 8 for Saturnynians and a lousy 6 for Weeping Angels. Regardless of one's personal interpretation of these creatures, this really does not feel right.

Another example: the Gelth and their gas-animated zombies are given the same formidable Fear Factor of 4 – which puts these creatures in the same league as the Beast or the Jagrafess and also means that Gelth zombies are far, far more frightening than Jagrafess zombies or Nanogene zombies (with their very unsettling flesh-sculpted gas-masks), who have a Fear Factor of 1.

As shown by these examples, the Fear Factor of some creatures should simply be revised, taking into account their inherent scaring power, as well as what we might call their relative frightfulness (compared to other frightening creatures). The simplest manner to ensure that creatures are given the right Fear Factors is to rank their Fear Factor according to what we might call the Pyramid of Fear, starting with the most terrifying creatures, such as the Beast (Fear Factor 4, bonus +8) and climbing down through each lower level.

We should also examine the question of "Fear Factor 0", i.e. creatures who were not given any Fear Factor in their game descriptions but whose **Alien Appearance**, regardless of should be enough to scare some humans – creatures like the Tritovores and the Ood.

But before we break down the system, let us take a closer look at how it distributes Fear Factors among the various creature types. As the rules now stand, the "Pyramid of Fear" includes the following levels:

Fear Factor 1

Carrionites, Sycorax, Nestene Consciousness and Autons, members of the Family of Blood, Jagrafess Zombies, Nanogene Zombies, Infected New Human Flesh, The Wire and Davros.

Fear Factor 2

Judoons, Krilitanes, Slitheen, Hoiks, Scarecrows, Vastha Nerada, Futurekind, Smilers and Spacesuit Zombies.

Fear Factor 3

Cybermen (including Controllers, Leaders etc), Cybershades, Daleks (but see above) and big nasties such as the *Tooth & Claw* Werewolf, the Lazarus creature or the Macra.

Fear Factor 4

The Beast, the Jagrafess and, yes, the Gelth and the Gelth Zombies. Also note that, in the 11th Doctor rules, Daleks have been upgraded from a Fear Factor of 3 to this supreme Fear Factor of 4.

We should also take into account "Fear Factor 0" (creatures which may not want to frighten you but who have a frightening appearance – fear of the unknown and all that) and "Fear Factor X" (beings which SHOULD have been given a Fear Factor but were oddly forgotten by the rules).

Fear Factor 0 = Ood, Tritovores, Silurians.

Fear Factor X = Weeping Angels, Swarm, Saturnynians, Pyroviles, Vespiform, Racnoss.

The Presence Problem

Another problem with the Fear rules is their use of a creature's Presence – and the rather ambiguous way it defines what this attribute actually represents in the case of creatures (especially monstrous or artificial ones).

Let us take the example of zombies and other unnaturally animated creatures. Most of them are given low or mediocre Presence to reflect their lack of personality, inability to express themselves, blank appearance etc. This is obviously why Autons and the Scarecrows of the Family of Blood have a Presence of 1 and Nanogene Zombies have a Presence of 2. Since the rules define Presence as charisma and force of personality, this does make sense – but as far as the Fear system is concerned, this approach also has the weird side effect of making such creatures less frightening, since the Fear effect is based on Presence.

And then we have the other extreme of the problem, reflected by the Gelth Zombies, with their insane Presence of 6 (!) – more than the Beast itself! The only explanation here is that the Gelth Zombies' Presence comes from their Gelth masters, as if the possessor's disembodied Presence somehow transpired through the walking corpse it inhabits… but as far as the Fear effect is concerned, this seems quite odd - especially since Gelth zombies look and behave much like other zombies and do not become inherently more terrifying (at least not in such proportions) as soon as you realize they are actually possessed corpses.

This internal contradiction must be solved if we want the system to work in a reasonably logical manner; either we change the way Presence works for of zombies and zombie-like creatures or we simply disconnect the Fear effect from Presence and rule that zombies and zombie-like creatures have an effective Presence of 0, which would be perfectly logical if you define Presence as charisma, force of personality and command. This latter approach would also dispense us from bothering to define what the Presence score of a Dalek or Cyberman actually means or entails.

Be Afraid, Be Very Afraid!

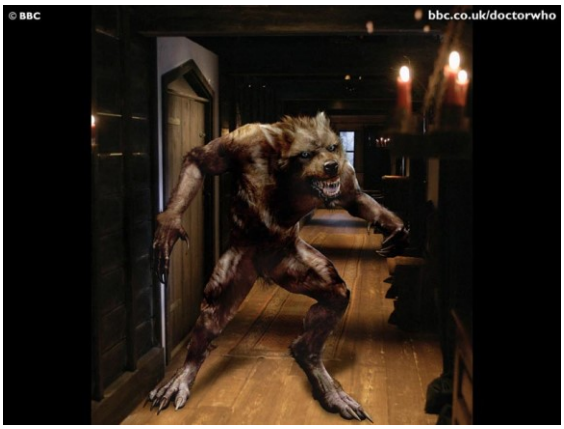
My final issue with the Fear rules as they now stand is the difference they insist on making between *'actively trying to strike fear'* and a supposedly more 'passive' attitude. While it is true that some creatures become more frightening when they purposefully choose to intimidate their foes or victims, making this distinction such an essential aspect of the system (and the necessary condition for putting the Fear Factor bonus into play) doesn't really work for me: it conjures up images of aliens and beasties going on "fright mode", making menacing noises and gestures while the characters watch them do their Fear Factor routine. In a weird, not entirely rational way, this idea strikes me as the in-game equivalent of actors in bad rubber suits trying really, really hard to convince the audience that they are, indeed, very frightening monsters.

The Mechanics of Fear

In my games, I find it far simpler (and more dramatic) to treat Fear as a passive and inherent (i.e. always on) feature of creatures, with a Fear total used as a fixed target number for the characters' Ingenuity + Resolve roll.

Creatures which can cause Fear are simply given a Fear total which has nothing to do with its Presence or Resolve but is rated on the same scale as difficulty levels: we start at 12 (Normal) and each level of Fear Factor increases this total by +3 (rather than +2), so that each increment matches the scale of fixed difficulty levels given in the game. Thus, a creature with a Fear Factor of 2 would have a Fear total of 18 (Hard), while one with a Fear Factor of 4 would have a Fear total of 24 (Very Difficult).

Creatures which qualify for this Fear effect obviously include all those which were given a Fear Factor in the original rules, as well as all creatures with the Major version of the Alien Appearance trait: a creature like an Ood or a Tritovore, for instance, has no Fear Factor (i.e. no extra Fear bonus) but its Alien Appearance may well frighten some humans, giving them the basic Fear score of 12.



For characters, failing their roll against the creature's Fear total will usually mean running away, panicking or (more probably) having to spend Story points to avoid such undesirable effects. A "Yes but…" result could mean that the character can attempt any action except attack the creature, while a "Yes and…" result could mean that the character will never have to make Fear checks again when encountering this specific type of creature.

Scary Monsters

Now that the nuts and bolts of the system have been established, it is time to rework the Fear Factors of various creatures, according to their relative frightfulness, starting at the top with Fear Factor 4 (the Beast and other eldritch entities), all the way down to Fear Factor 0 (Ood, Tritovores etc), according to our "pyramid of fear" principle. In order to make things easier to adjudicate, I have given each Fear Factor level a general descriptor.

Fear Factor 0: Disturbing (Fear total= 12)

Creatures with this Fear Factor simply have a frightening Alien Appearance (at least to human eyes). This includes Oods, Silurians, Tritovores etc.

Fear Factor 1: Menacing (Fear total = 15)

Creatures with this Fear Factor include most highly-aggressive (or intimidating) humanoids such as Judoon, Sycorax, Carrionites, Futurekind or the Family of Blood,. This category also includes those beings which can only act through controlled creatures or some technological interface, such as the Wire or the Nestene Consciousness.

Fear Factor 2: Fearsome (Fear total = 18)

Creatures with this Fear Factor include most "big & bad monsters", such as the Werewolf from *Tooth & Claw*, Vespiforms, Saturnynians, Giant Pyroviles, Slitheen, Krilitanes, Hoix, Racnoss as well as beings who display a completely emotionless form of aggression, such as Cybermen and Daleks. This level should also include non-corporeal, ghost-like or shadow-like menaces such as the Gelth or the Vashta Nerada, as well as all Zombies and zombie-like beings such as Autons, Gelth Zombies, Scarecrows etc.

Fear Factor 3: Nightmarish (Fear total = 21)

Creatures with this Fear Factor include enormous monsters like the Macra or warped, unnatural aberrations like the Lazarus Creature and (quite obviously) beings which qualify for both categories, such as the Jagrafess).

Fear Factor 4: Infernal (Fear total = 24)

This supreme level should be restricted to the most terrifying entities in the universe, such as the Beast or Abaddon – entities which radiate a preternatural aura of sheer, primal evil or terror.

So, where do our dear **Weeping Angels** fit into all this? In their case, I'd be tempted to give them a variable Fear Factor, starting at 0 (Disturbing) for characters who simply find these strange statues unsettling, increasing to 1 (Menacing) when you realize that, yes, they must have moved and then to 2 (Fearsome) once you realize that *they are after you* (or if you already know what you are facing – the "don't blink" stuff and all that).

DESIGN NOTES

Fifth Edition

The use of the ***Radical Re-Engineering*** variant will obviously change quite a few things in the way GMs handle the game. It was not written with "change for change's sake" in mind but as the result of more than 10 years of GM-ing the *Doctor Who RPG* (or DWAITAS as it was originally known…) on a regular basis. For those interested in the whys and wherefores of this variant system, I posted a longer version of it on my ***Journal of Impossible Things*** blog, where the reasons for these changes are examined in greater (and slightly tedious) detail.

Let me just say that, as far as I am concerned, these variant rules work at least equally well as the original system in actual play; in the end, they are simply *another way* to use the Vortex engine – and one that keeps *genre emulation* and *fast-paced play* as its top priorities, according to the spirit of the game.

As discussed in this blog post and, to a lesser extent, on p 3 of this document, making Story points an exclusive players' resource will greatly simplify the task of the GM, without reducing the enjoyment of the players.

That being said, using this approach may also require a few special adjustments here and there – as in the case of monsters who use Story points to fuel their special powers, such as the Weeping Angels. In such cases, simply give such creatures a special reserve of **Power points** to fuel their unique powers, using the amount given in their description for Story points. Thus, an Angel will have from 6 to 8 Power points to fuel its *Lights Out* special ability and will gain extra Power points when using *Temporal Exile* on a victim - a simple and elegant solution.

The variant *Combat* and *Chase* rules were originally written with the official, 'everybody rolls' game system but proved extremely easy to adapt to the Re-engineered approach. That being said, nothing prevents you from using them with the standard game engine: simply replace the idea of static target numbers with opposing rolls.

The other chapters have been left pretty much as they were in the previous editions of the *Toybox* – let's say they've been time-locked!

Will there be a Sixth Edition of *The Temporal Toybox*? Well, only Time will tell!

Olivier Legrand (July 2020)

Sixth Edition

Well, Time *did* tell – and quite soon, too, since this sixth edition was put together roughly six months after its predecessor! A quick regeneration…

So what are the big differences between TOYBOX 6 and TOYBOX 5?

- The variant combat and chase rules have been re-given their own specific section.

- There are new rules for injury and damage.

- The rules on psychic combat have been modified and streamlined, thanks to the new damage variant rules.

See you in the Near or Far Future, for the Seventh Edition!

Olivier Legrand (January 2021)