

# **An Ultimate's Guide to Combat**

What comes to your mind when you think "Ultimate"? Most of you readers probably conjure up images of some mercenary, fighting on some blasted rock on the outer system. Some of you will come up with an image that is much less pleasant. Ultimate ideals are much, much different than that. We are more than simply an order of militants.

Ultimates have been associated with mercenaries since the movement's inception, simply because most of us do it at one point or another to make money. I've signed contracts with Ultimate Security, Direct Action, Gorgon, and a half-dozen smaller outfits over the course of the last twelve years. I died on New Mumbai (but you should see the other guy), and in two or three places I'm probably legally obligated not to talk about in print.

The whole sum of the Ultimate philosophy is self-improvement, however. A lot of people fear us because of the fact that we have a perceived penchant for violence, but there are two good reasons for that. First, we simply are capable of delivering better violence because of our training and familiarity with augmentations. Second, we know what's coming. About 80 percent of ultimates died in the Fall, and that's considered a victory. The TITANs aren't dead, and they're hardly even gone.

— Exemplar Harmony "Harm" Cho

The world of Eclipse Phase is wrought with danger and intrigue. The purpose of *An Ultimate's Guide to Combat* is to provide players with more tactical options, and it provides additional opportunities for combat, adding in new systems to give a combat-heavy campaign more variety.

Another of the focuses of this supplement is to provide players with a resource for a more responsive combat system, complete with new and expanded rules for weapon qualities, melee combat, and explosives. *An Ultimate's Guide to Combat* includes some theoretical battlefield tech, as well as additional general use military theory and tactics to improve battlefield simulation in the Eclipse Phase system.

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## The After-Fall Armory

The Fall taught transhumanity a number of things. First, you can't count on massive decentralized AI tactical networks in place of boots on the ground. Second, sufficiently nasty things can suborn your gear. Third, most battlefields are pretty unsurvivable for even well-prepared transhumans.

I'd say that about half of the things that I encountered during the Fall were things that could only be dealt with using specialized gear or external support. At New Mumbai we had to deploy nukes to stop the TITANS' advance, and we didn't have enough time to get everyone out (civilians and soldiers both).

So, with that in mind, here are a few things that anyone going into combat in this day and age should expect. I'm going to take a moment to remind everyone that the best force multiplier in existence is the transhuman mind, unless the Factors do something particularly shocking, so do enough reading to set yourself apart from the genetrash.

## Weapon Qualities

A lot of people overlook the vagaries of various weapons. Each weapon has its own unique upsides and downsides, and you should be making an intelligent and informed decision about each of your tools as you prepare for battle.

Some weapons are renowned for their ability to consistently put out damage against a variety of targets. These reliable weapons are a mainstay in many peoples' arsenals.

**Reliable** weapons roll each damage die twice, taking the higher result as the final outcome for the die. Reliable applies not only to the weapon's base damage, but any damage added by automatic fire.

A handful of weapons are capable of causing damage to a large area; these blast weapons can hit multiple targets at once.

**Blast** weapons are not content merely to damage a single target, but also cause damage to additional morphs. Targets standing within a number of meters equal to the Blast rating of the weapon fall victim to the same effects as the original target of the weapon.

There are some weapons capable of functioning radically differently, to the point where different skills are used with various modes of the weapon.

**Multi-Mode** weapons are capable of being used in multiple different configurations. The skills used will vary from weapon to weapon.

Some rare weapons do damage directly through radioactivity (x-rays, gamma rays, neutrons, or other energetic particles). These are highly illegal, and go by a number of names; they are generally lumped together as enhanced radiation weapons. Some nuclear weapons, typically referred to as enhanced radiation weapons, yield primarily radiation instead of blast and heat, and have this quality as well.

**Radioactive** weapons ignore a target's armor, though special radiation hardening applies. They also expose targets to a number of millisieverts equal to their rating.

On the other hand, not all of the special qualities that weapons can have are good.

Some weapons are dependable for a low-grade damage output. These unreliable weapons tend to let you down when you most depend on them, though by some fluke it's possible to get good hits out of them now and again.

**Unreliable** weapons roll each damage die twice, taking the lower result as the final outcome for the die. Unreliable applies not only to the weapon's base damage, but any damage added by automatic fire.

Older weapons, and some post-Fall weapons made in a pinch to use fewer resources, suffer from recoil. I like to keep an old anti-materiel rifle from Earth that I've had since I left for New Mumbai in a locker. It packs a real kick, but it's as hard-hitting as any gun you'll see today.

Firing a weapon with the **Recoil** quality imposes a -10 penalty to future attacks with that weapon during the remainder of the combat turn, unless the weapon has been deployed or the character takes a complex action to recover from the recoil.

One thing you don't hear about firearms that often is how many of them are total lemons. Especially if you're buying from scum tinkerers or the Jovians, you can expect a lot of low-end cheaper firearms to be unreliable at best.

When firing a weapon with the **Lemon** quality, the weapon jams (kinetic, seeker, or spray weapons) or overheats (energy weapons) if the attacker rolls a 1 on any of the damage dice rolled on account of the weapon's DV. Melee weapons with the Lemon quality break entirely; they lose any

other qualities and do  $1d10+SOM\div 10$  damage. A jammed projectile weapon requires a Complex Action to unjam, while an overheated energy weapon cannot be to attack again until the end of the next turn. Broken melee weapons may be repaired; the Game Master decides what processes this entails.

## Kinetic Weapons

### Shotguns

Shotguns are not as effective as battlefield weapons as their depiction in the media would indicate. Mercenaries and soldiers will not typically be outfitted with shotguns, but there are times when the weapons are useful for one of two purposes: light, unarmored targets (such as biomorphs or cases), or when fighting threatens to breach a habitat.

Modern shotguns fire caseless ammunition with integrated flechette rounds. Flechettes can have a number of modifications applied to them. Shot and slug projectiles are also available; slugs tend to turn shotguns into very short range rifles (remember that the velocity of projectiles from a shotgun is much lower), and shot functions like flechettes, but tend to have less armor penetration. Shot is available in plastic, flux, and regular varieties, while slugs are available with the full spectrum of ammunition modifications, including smart ammunition (flak cannon slugs are limited to the types of ammunition appropriate for railgun ammunition). Flechette rounds are not customizable with ammunition types.

Shotguns tend to have a lower muzzle velocity than other kinetic weapons. For the past two decades, the same advances that mitigated recoil in other firearms have been applied to shotguns, so you don't have to worry about the kick of a 12-gauge taking out your shoulder.

Likewise, smart materials allow for the choke (which changes the pattern of shot impact) of a shotgun to be

configured for appropriate distances on the fly; a user with a smartlink can do this automatically, while old-school users can use a quick action to change the range of a shotgun's choke.

Most shotguns are kinetic weapons, but there is a railgun variant. Popularly called flak cannons, these weapons fire a cluster of magnetic projectiles, and can have their spread adjusted similarly to a traditional shotgun. They can fire slugs, but the normal railgun ammunition type restrictions apply. As an added feature, a flak cannon can fire grenades (with range increments equivalent to a conventional SMG). Flak cannons are only available in a two-handed configuration, and tend to pose a much higher risk of hull breach than their chemical propellant utilizing brethren.

Each type of shotgun has its own ranges; an underbarrel shotgun or flak cannon, or a shotgun in a pistol form factor uses light pistol ranges, while full sized shotguns use submachine gun ranges. Flak cannons use conventional firearm assault rifle range increments (for flechettes, slugs, and grenades). Shotguns firing flechette or shot lose  $1d10$  damage for firing at long range and  $2d10$  damage for firing at extreme range. Shotguns firing flechette or shot suffer reduced accuracy penalties for firing at long ranges (no penalty at medium range,  $-10$  at long, and  $-20$  at extreme).

Although many weapons are multi-integrated after the fall, underbarrel shotguns and flak cannons remain in use due to their utility and their ability to be attached to other weapons without requiring attention from a professional armorer.

**Underbarrel Shotgun:** The underbarrel shotgun has been a staple of counterterrorism and military forces for many years, and its utility combined with its quick stopping power makes it ideal. As a complex action, an underbarrel shotgun can be attached to any two-handed weapon. It can also be used as a standalone weapon, but requires two hands

### Shotguns

Firearms	DV	AP	Average DV	Firing Modes	Ammo	Qualities
Underbarrel Shotgun	2d10	—	14	SA	1	Reliable
Shotgun Pistol	2d10	—	14	SA	2	Reliable
Hunting Shotgun	3d10	—	21	SA	5	Reliable
Assault Shotgun	2d10	—	14	SA/BF/FA	20	Reliable
Railguns	DV	AP	Average DV	Firing Modes	Ammo	Qualities
Underbarrel Flak Cannon	3d10	-2	21	SA	1	Reliable
Flak Cannon	4d10	-4	29	SA	4	Reliable

All ratings given are for flechette ammunition.

to use in this manner due to the awkward design of the firearm. [**Moderate**]

**Shotgun Pistol:** The variety of sawn-off shotguns and other highly portable shotguns manufactured by transhumanity is exceptional, but the one common trend that shotgun pistols have is being neat single-handed weapons that fire normal shotgun rounds. [**Moderate**]

**Hunting Shotgun:** Hunting shotguns fire larger cartridges than most of the other shotguns that are available, and are favored by those who need to do a lot of damage and make a statement. With a pump-action or semiautomatic firing method, they are capable of shooting quickly and accurately in a wide variety of conditions. The hunting shotgun is a two-handed weapon. [**Moderate**]

**Assault Shotgun:** The typical drum-fed assault shotgun is a mean looking weapon that can clear a room in seconds. Capable of being used in a variety of roles and purposes, the assault shotgun has a reputation as a terrifying weapon. The assault shotgun is a two-handed weapon. [**High**]

**Underbarrel Flak Cannon:** The underbarrel flak cannon provides incredible power and range compared to its traditional brethren, and maintains its larger counterpart's grenade launcher functionality, though its range is pitiful due to the short length of the weapon. They are commonly favored as grenade launchers, as they function almost identically to their larger parent weapon when launching grenades. As with an underbarrel shotgun, it can attach to any two-handed weapon, but requires two hands to use effectively if it is detached. [**High**]

**Flak Cannon:** The flak cannon has a reputation as a truly fearsome weapon. Capable of doing massive damage, the flak cannon has the ability to chamber grenades or microgrenades as well as flechettes and slugs. The flak cannon is a two-handed weapon. [**Expensive**]

### ***Shot, Flechette, and Chokes***

Shot and flechette projectiles utilize a shotgun's choke to change the spread pattern of the projectiles. Modern smart materials mean that this can be done on the fly, both manually (quick action) or automatically with a smartlink (no action required). Chokes are rated for distance; starting at 0-10, then continuing up to 10-20, 20-30, and so forth out to the end of Medium Range for the shotgun (shotgun pistols have access to a 20-30 meter choke, full-length shotguns have

access to a 70-80 meter choke, and flak cannons can emulate a 240-250 meter choke).

A shotgun attacking a target that is closer than its choke's optimal distance loses the Reliable quality. Targets within the choke's optimal distance take normal damage from the shotgun. Targets beyond the choke setting of the shotgun take 1d10 less damage from the shot, which is cumulative with shotguns' damage loss at long and extreme range.

### ***Shotgun Ammunition Types***

Shotguns typically use flechette ammunition. This allows them to do consistent damage to targets. However, it is also possible to use slug and shot ammunition, which each have their own special rules.

Firing a shotgun or flak cannon with slugs increases its AP by 4, adds +2 to its DV, and makes it lose the Reliable quality. Additional ammunition type modifications can be applied on top of this, including smart ammunition if appropriate.

Firing a shotgun or flak cannon with shot reduces its AP by +4. Against unarmored targets, a positive AP value has no effect. Shot is typically considered inferior to flechettes, but is favored for its ability to be used with materials that render it less lethal.

In addition to the standard ammunition types, shotguns can fire frag rounds (treated as slugs), which are available in regular and zap configurations. Frag rounds add the Blast (2) quality to the weapon, and their damage is resisted as energy damage. Otherwise, they function like their parent rounds (either regular slugs or zap slugs). [**low per 100 rounds**].

## **Beam Weapons**

### **Enhanced Radiation Weapons**

Enhanced radiation weapons are terrifying and dangerous, as well as highly illegal in most places. They set off radiation detectors unless they are incredibly well made, and they tend to be the tools of assassins, rather than soldiers.

Radiation has potentially lethal effects against synthmorphs, biomorphs, and nanites, but leaves most things intact. In some cases, enhanced radiation weapons may be favorable due to the fact that they do not cause physical damage (i.e. they won't put a hole in the habitat wall).

That said, they have their purposes; ER weapons can penetrate almost any armor, and only things intentionally designed for radiation exposure tend to have any sort of resistance against them. They will decimate nanoswarms, so I've heard people argue for them as backup weapons against TITANS.

One of the advantages of ER weapons is their ability to have late-onset effects; hitting someone with a full graser array may not cause meaningful instantaneous harm other than some burns that would be unpleasant though not particularly concerning. Minutes later, the target will be dead. Synthmorphs tend to fall foul of the effects quicker, though they generally have a greater tolerance.

If you plan on entering a battlefield with ER weapons, have backups—they can toast cortical stacks entirely.

## Exotic Weapons

### Exotic Ranged Weapons

#### Archery

Archery is a tried and true martial discipline, often overlooked. The bow and crossbow are simple designs that can be made in a pinch with readily available materials, and with smart materials and clever designs you can nanofabricate a bow that would make Odysseus look like a slouch.

Archery is a little difficult, though. You will want a smartlink on your bows to help you adjust to environmental factors, and the motions are different enough that you need to learn archery as a separate skill. Bows tend to fare poorly against modern armor, and they're not as good at putting holes in things as a firearm. In addition, most bows are pretty large; a compound bow can be more than five feet long, easily matching a sniper rifle in dimensions. Smartbows and

advanced bows may have mechanisms to allow them to either retract parts to decrease size or be disassembled. Disassembling a bow takes two complex actions, and unless stated all bows can be disassembled (smartbows disassemble themselves once ordered to, requiring no additional effort).

Arrows, however, tend to carry a meaner payload than firearms do. Able to be equipped with everything from full sized nanite hives to microgrenades, archery can be a clever way to deliver payloads without detection. Bows lack the same firing signature that firearms and energy weapons have, making them stealthy without the need for (often illegal and only marginally effective) silencers and flash suppressors.

It is a quick action to grab an arrow and draw a bow, and a complex action to reload a crossbow with more bolts. Defenders being attacked with archery weapons use their full Fray score to dodge, as if they were being attacked in melee.

**Bow:** Bows are available in a number of different configurations, including smartbows and compound bows that would make turn-of-the-century warriors very jealous. That said, a run of the mill bow is cheap and easy to fabricate, even in habitats with more tough arms restrictions. [**Trivial** (unfinished parts), **low** (assembled bow)]

**Compound Bow:** Compound bows use advanced composite materials and manufacturing techniques to create a set of pulleys and simple mechanisms to allow a user to leverage their strength and fire arrows with a surprising amount of force behind them. [**Moderate**]

**Smartbow:** Smartbows use smart materials to transform from an inconspicuous cylinder into a moderately sized bow; somewhat shorter in length than a normal bow, they have just enough complexity to perform similarly. They

#### Bows

Bows	DV	AP	Average DV	Firing Modes	Ammo	Qualities
Bow	1d10 + (SOM ÷ 10)	-2	5 + (SOM ÷ 10)	SS	1	Reliable
Compound Bow	1d10 + (SOM ÷ 5)	-4	5 + (SOM ÷ 5)	SS	1	Reliable
Smartbow	1d10 + (SOM ÷ 5)	-3	5 + (SOM ÷ 5)	SS	1	Reliable
Automatic Bow	1D10 + 8	-4	13	SS	1	Reliable
Crossbows	DV	AP	Average DV	Firing Modes	Ammo	Qualities
Crossbow	2d10 + (SOM ÷ 5)	-3	11 + (SOM ÷ 5)	SS	5	Multi-Mode*
Automatic Crossbow	2d10 + 8	-6	19	SA	5	Multi-Mode*

\* These weapons can be used as kinetic weapons if the user is meshed to an attached smartlink (purchased separately).

are integrated with a smartlink by default, and are subject to more legal controls than other bows. **[High]**

**Automatic Bow:** A cross between a bow and crossbow, the automatic bow is a compound bow with a self-powered mechanism that allows it to emulate the effects of being fired by a stronger morph, even if the user is not particularly strong. The limbs of the bow partially retract when the bow is not in use, giving it the same carrying profile as a carbine. **[High]**

**Crossbow:** Crossbows have the unique ability to function as kinetic weapons with the aid of a smartlink. Crossbows come in both automatic and manual forms. Manual crossbows leverage a transhuman's strength, and are generally built with adjustable poundage to let anyone use them without too much exertion, while automatic crossbows require either a token effort or will cock themselves without any effort on the user's behalf. Crossbows fire bolts that are functionally similar to arrows (but are not interchangeable), and may be attached to a magazine for rapid shots. **[Moderate (manual), High (automatic)]**

## Combat Maneuvers

Combat maneuvers are special abilities unlocked when a character hits a certain rank with the appropriate weapon skills.

## Kinetic Weapons

### *Combat Maneuvers and Recoil*

After Fall weapons provide great benefits to a practical shooter due to their lack of recoil. As a general rule, weapons with the Recoil quality suffer a -10 penalty on all shots that occur after the first in a combat maneuver. The maximum distance that a recoiling weapon can perform combat maneuvers at is equal to the upper end of the weapon's Medium range. Typically, most of these drills are intended to be done with weapons that only require one hand, but recoilless

weapons mitigate many of the concerns with using these with larger weapons.

## Mozambique Drill

Two shots in the body, one in the head. The Mozambique drill originated with a mercenary fighting in Mozambique. The practice is simple; aim twice for center of mass, and then once against another point on the target that looks particularly squishy (the forehead or neck on most biomorphs, for instance). A Mozambique drill can only be attempted with a weapon with the semiautomatic firing mode, and consumes three rounds of ammunition. The attack is treated as if the weapon had the Reliable quality (if the weapon has the Unreliable quality, it loses it instead of gaining Reliable), and gains a +10 accuracy bonus as if it were a normal burst. All three shots are treated as a single attack.

## El Presidente

The "El Presidente" drill was intended for bodyguards on earth to master and use in defense. Consisting of six shots against three targets, the El Presidente drill is typically practiced using two six-round magazines and doing two of the maneuver back-to-back. It requires a one-handed weapon with a semiautomatic firing mode, used with both hands. Each target must be within one meter of the prior target, and all targets must be within short range. Each attack against each target is rolled separately.

*The El Presidente maneuver has two variants: one for less-skilled shooters that only allows one attack against three targets, and then one for more-skilled shooters that repeats the attacks and allows the shooter to reload between the two separate barrages. Shooters capable of using the El Presidente II maneuver may use the original El Presidente maneuver as a Simple Action. Reloading is optional, if the user has a full magazine, though choosing not to reload does not confer bonuses.*

Kinetic Weapon Maneuvers			
Technique	Effect	Minimum Skill	Action
Mozambique Drill	Add Reliable or lose Unreliable, + 10 Accuracy, consume 3 rounds	25	CA
El Presidente	Make single attacks against three targets, consume 6 rounds	30	CA
El Presidente II	Make double attacks against three targets, consume 6 rounds, reload, consume 6 rounds.	40	CA
Dozier Drill	Make single attacks against five targets, consume five rounds.	35	CA

## **Dozier Drill**

The "Dozier" drill was created as a counter-terrorism training technique; it requires users to take down five targets in the time it takes for a simulated terrorist to ready a sub-machine gun. The Dozier drill requires five rounds, and results in five separate attacks made against five different foes. Each attack against each target is rolled separately.