

Atomic Men & Mad Scientists



By Ed Green © 2010

For Swords & Wizardry Whitebox Edition

Atomic Men

Atomic Men (and women, as shown above) are cybernetic organisms. A living humanoid brain is removed from its original body and placed into a small, hardened tank of nourishing liquid and life-support equipment. This 'brain tank' is then placed into a robotic body, granting near immortality, though at a hefty price. The tank is connected to the body's artificial sensors, allowing it to 'see' and 'hear' (though not smell). The entire construct is maintained by an atomic heart, a near limitless source of energy.

Attributes: Roll ability scores for Atomic Men as you would for any character. Atomic Men have no prime attributes.

In their prime, Atomic Men have very high physical abilities (effectively all 18). However, over the decades and centuries, wear-and-tear, battle damage and lack of proper maintenance take their tolls. Atomic Men effect ad hoc repairs as they are able, but even their best efforts are not enough to repair themselves to full functionality. The result is that they can have physical ability scores that are just as random as any fully biological being.

Their brain cases are well protected, but this doesn't prevent their brains from sloshing around a bit when knocked hard enough. Virtually all Atomic Men have experienced amnesia at least once. It is not uncommon for them to lose all memory of their former selves, rebuild their lives as a new person, then

suffer amnesia again and have to start over. Thus, even a 1st level Atomic Man may have lived for centuries, having little, if any, memory of their prior lives.

Character Advancement: Atomic Men use the fighting men advancement chart. Though they can read scrolls, their metal bodies are not capable of channeling the arcane energies of mages, nor can they wield divine magic as the gods view them as abominations against the natural order of things.

Weapon/Armor Restrictions: Atomic Men are not articulate enough to use bows, but may use any other weapon. Their metal bodies give them a natural Armor Class of 5 [14]. They may wear superior armor to improve their Armor Class, but worn armor is not cumulative with their natural armor.

Keen Detection: The visual sensors of Atomic Men have inbuilt infra-vision with a range of 60 feet. Torches and other heat sources will ruin their infra-vision.

Saving Throw and Immunities: Their bodies being almost entirely mechanical, Atomic Men are virtually immune to most poisons (unless it can somehow be delivered directly to the brain case). Having living brains they are as susceptible as anyone else to fear, charm, illusion and other mental effects and powers as any other person. Atomic Men receive a +4 to save versus paralysis, petrification, polymorph and similar physical effects. Atomic Men incur a -4 penalty on saves against any type of electrical attack, effect or power.

Social Reaction: People tend to have negative reactions when they first encounter Atomic Men. Also, having your brain encased in a metal tank and implanted in a robotic body tends to make it difficult for Atomic Men to relate to the travails and turmoil of ordinary mortals, so they have a tendency to say inappropriate things in social situations, and often fail to pick up on subtleties.

Sustenance: Atomic Men do not require food. They do require a small amount of water. At the GM's discretion they may also require lubricants, coolant and spare parts for their mechanical bodies.

Healing: Hit Points are often described as an abstract representation of a character's experience, morale and luck. Atomic Men benefit just as much as anyone else from experience, morale and luck. What physical damage they take is gradually self-repaired by their mechanical bodies (though their bodies may retain scars and dents). Essentially, Atomic Men heal at the same rate as other characters. Being reduced to zero hit points kills Atomic Men, as it would any character.

Mad Scientists

These men and women push weird science to its ultimate limit, no matter the consequences. Sometimes this means they cross certain lines...lines that were not meant to be crossed, in pursuit of knowledge that was not meant to be known.

Attributes: Mad scientists benefit from having a high Intelligence score.

Character Advancement: Mad scientists use the magic-user advancement table, though they are not able to cast spells as such.

Weapon/Armor Restrictions: Mad scientists may wear light armor and use any advanced weapon. The only melee weapons they can use are knives and daggers. They may also use crossbows.

Gadgets: Mad scientists devote their energy and resources to the creation of gadgets and devices, which usually can only really be understood by the scientists that created them.

Gadgets replicate the effects of arcane and divine spells, but are in fact scientific in nature (bizarre, gonzo science, but science none-the-less). To create a gadget, the mad scientist must know a schematic for the desired effect. There is no limit to the number of schematics a scientist may know. Schematics are obtained through study and research, reverse engineering other scientist's gadgets or tutelage. Each 'spell' is treated as a separate schematic. Scientists start play knowing one Level 1 schematic.

Creating a gadget costs a base of 100 GP per 'spell level' of schematic. This is further modified by the size of the gadget. Design and construction of the gadget requires 1 week per 'spell level', as well.

As mad scientists gain levels, they'll be able to learn more complex schematics (i.e. higher level spell effects, per Wizard spell advancement). They'll also be able to create smaller, though more expensive, gadgets. Players are free to outline the specifics of their gadgets. They should also give them cool mad-science names.

Experience Level	Gadget Size	Cost Modifier
1-2	Backpack	X1
3-4	2-handed	X3
5-6	1-handed	X5
7-8	Bracer	X8
9+	Ring	X10

Mad scientists are not required to build gadgets as small as possible; they may build larger gadgets than would otherwise be permitted in order to save money.

Gadgets may only be used by the scientist that created them, and tend to be somewhat unreliable. A saving throw (modified by Intelligence) is required for a Mad Scientist to successfully employ one of his or her devices. If the roll is a 1 the gadget breaks and must be repaired to use again (requiring 1 round per spell level).

If a mad scientist gets a hold of another scientist's gadget, he may reverse engineer it to learn a new schematic. Make a saving throw, modified by the scientist's Intelligence modifier. Reverse engineering requires 1 day per spell level of effect. A scientist can tell with just a little study whether a new schematic would be beyond their ability, and thus hold onto the device for later study.

Mad scientists may also develop new schematics through research. Research requires 1 week per spell level of the desired effect, plus 100 GP per spell level for materials and equipment. At the end of the period the scientist learns a new schematic of his or her choice within allowable spell levels.

Magic: Mad scientists absolutely do not believe in magic. Even if confronted with seemingly incontrovertible evidence of magic, they will rationalize a 'logical' explanation. As a result, mad scientists receive a +2 on all saves against magic.

As an additional consequence, mad scientists may not read scrolls or use magic items that require some form of activation. Passive magic items (such as a ring of protection, or the magical bonus on a dagger) will work, though the mad scientist will never acknowledge that the item ever imparted any 'magical' benefit. Potions work normally since, in the scientist's mind, the effects can be attributed to the potion's chemical properties.

Experience Bonus: Mad scientists receive a XP bonus from having a high Intelligence score.

Note: The Mad Scientist class is based heavily on the Scholar class from Scions of a Primordial Planet by Mike Berkey available here: <http://www.forum.koboldenterprise.com/index.php?topic=55.0>