

**Sciencetown**  
**December 12+13 2009**  
**Rules and Scenario**

The following are the rules for *Sciencetown*, a real-time, real-space roleplaying game sponsored by the MIT Assassins' Guild. You are responsible for knowing these rules. Many of them are nigh-impossible to enforce and rely upon the honor system. Do not cheat. Do not abuse loopholes. Play fair. Be your own harshest critic.

The **gamemasters (GMs)** run the game. If you have any problems or questions concerning the game, contact a GM. Rulings they make are final. They may violate the letter of the rules to preserve the spirit. The GMs promise to be as fair and reasonable as possible. Neither they nor these rules are perfect.

This game is intended to be fun. Getting into character, roleplaying, being dramatic, and playing competitively can all increase the fun of the game. Do not take the game too seriously. Even if you are losing, keep a good attitude. When the game is over, the real winners are the players with the best stories.

This is only a game. Everyone involved should act with courtesy, sportsmanship, patience, and taste. The GMs may expel anyone they believe to be violating the spirit of the rules or the game. Emotions may run high. If you think things are crossing the line from game to reality too much, or if you are just getting too stressed, calm down and maybe take a break. Stay in control. Use common sense. Always, play safely, then play to have fun.

This game is a work of fiction. Although it may refer to things in the real world, it does so only for the sake of the scenario. It does not represent the opinions of the GMs or the MIT Assassins' Guild. These rules are modifications of those used in previous games. This game and all materials thereof are copyright 2009 by Nelson Elhage, Hubert Hwang, Joy Perkinson, and the MIT Assassins' Guild.

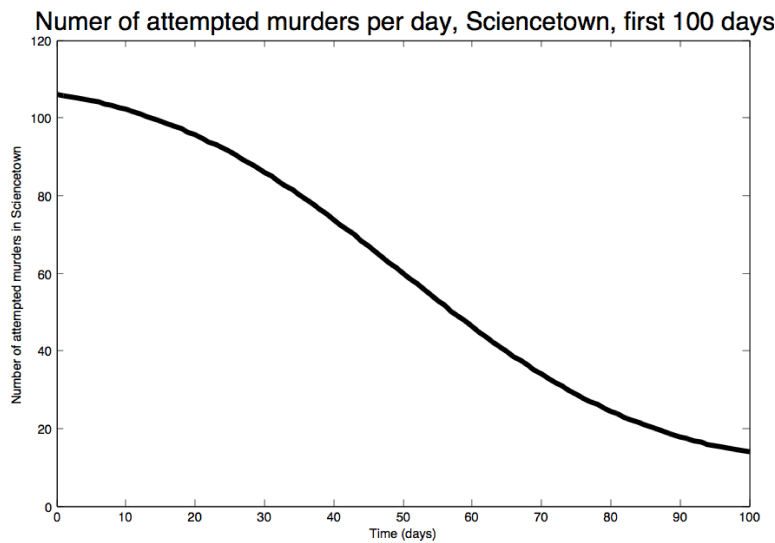
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# 1 Scenario

## SCIENCE!

Years ago, unchecked mad scientists terrorized the globe. Their outlandish plans to conquer the world (often involving irradiated gold, moon satellites, or laser sharks) wreaked havoc on the planet, and their blackmail schemes plunged the world into an economic recession. Eventually, a group of MIT graduates at a top-secret government installation created Sciencetown, a place for scientists to “retire” and continue their mad scientists without bothering anyone else. They also created the ScienceDome, a transparent bubble that covers the town. The ScienceDome is made of pure energy doped with nanoparticles of a neptunated dysprosium-technetium alloy that has proven effective at confining mad scientists and their technology.

The nations of the world reconstructed the city centers that had been detonated with ballistic plutonium-carbon megatubes, worked their way out of the recession, and returned to their relatively peaceful lifestyles. Within the confines of the ScienceDome, the transition went less smoothly. The attempted daily murder rates were above 100 attempts per day for over a week (Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** The number of attempted murders in Sciencetown during the first 100 days of the town’s existence. Number of attempted murders per day started at 105.80, and fell to a value of 13.85 over the first 100 days. Asymptote predicted at 10.43 attempted murders per day.

However, the violence eventually diminished somewhat as the scientists realized that every time they attempted to assassinate one of their fellow Sciencetown residents, their victim would *just barely* escape at the last second. The murder attempts still continue, with very little luck.

Once Sciencetown became relatively peaceful, it began to organize itself into a community. After decades of mad science, Sciencetown developed a culture with well-established traditions. Mad scientists were given access to state-of-the-art facilities. And, though life was never quite “relaxing,” given the number of laser blaster duels, femtoproton detonators, and ransom situations, life went on. For many years, all was well... until one week ago, when the entire population of the world was suddenly converted into mindless drones! Dr. Frankenstein quickly made it known that this “drone virus” was his evil work. Only the ScienceDome protected the residents of Sciencetown from the fate.

Isolated from the outside world, however, the residents of Sciencetown are frustratingly isolated from the armies of mindless potential minions, and life within the ScienceDome goes on. In particular, tonight is election night! Every year, a new Mayor is elected. The current Mayor is Dr. Clayton Forrester, who ran on the platform of sending his enemies to space and subjecting them to bad movies. He won handily over Dr. Strangelove, who ran on the platform of “ten women for every man.” Sciencetown also has a psychiatrist, Dr. Hannibal Lecter, a blogger/reporter, Dr. Horrible, and a seemingly inexhaustible supply of henchmen. There is an exciting lineup of events surrounding tonight’s elections:

- T+1:15: Storytime with Uncle Lecter!
- T+2:15: Debate and Election Extravaganza!
- T+3:15: Invention Exchange!<sup>1</sup>

On top of all that, of course, is the persistent fact that the outside world is in disarray, which makes this the perfect time. The perfect time... TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD!!!!

BWAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!!!!!

**Game Times:** Game runs from 12pm to 4pm on Saturday, or from 2pm to 6pm on Sunday, depending on which run you are in. Surviving PCs are expected to be in-game for the entirety. Game may end early. Cleanup and Wrapup will immediately follow the end of game.

Game is four hours long. For the purposes of certain mechanics it will be divided into eight half-hour long *phases*. The first phase of game begins at T+0 and lasts until T+0:30, and so on.

**Gamespace:** Sciencetown is the following floors: 26-2, 26-3, 16-3, and portions of 8-3 and 56-3. The **GM Control Room** is room 26-302, which is the same place as the Satellite Room. You may leave personal items with the GMs for safekeeping. Other important locations:

- 16-3: Tech Square
- 26-302: Satellite Room
- 26-310: Mayor's Office
- 26-322: Dr. Lecter's Office
- 26-328: Lex Luthor Laser Laboratory (L<sup>4</sup>)
- 26-328: Lex Luthor Chemistry Laboratory
- 26-210: Robotics Laboratory
- 26-210: Physics Laboratory
- 26-204: Biology Laboratory
- 26-204: Paranormal Laboratory

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<sup>1</sup>T+4h: You buy the GMs food!

## 2 Getting Started

### 2.1 Character Packets

Your character packet is a big manila envelope. It contains your role: who you are, what you're up to; everything about your part as a **player-character (PC)** in the game. Read all the contents and generally keep them with you during the game. If you are missing something or find something which doesn't seem to belong to you, tell one of the GMs. Character packets are confidential. Game materials which cannot be given to other players are marked "Not Transferable," whereas things which can be given to others are marked "Freely Transferable" or "Game Item."

**Name-Badge:** A name-badge with your player name, character description, and **badge number** on it shows that you are in the game; wear it visibly while you are playing. It represents your character's body in-game. Badge numbers are not in-game information. See the *Character Bodies* and *Badge Numbers* sections for more details.

**Character Sheet:** Your character sheet describes who you are and what you are up to. It contains a list of everything else that should be in your character packet. Do not show or read your character sheet to other players.

**Bluesheets:** A bluesheet describes information common to members of a group. When in conflict, character sheet information overrides bluesheet information. Do not show or read a bluesheet to other players.

**Greensheets:** A greensheet describes and expands abilities, mechanics, or in-game knowledge. Do not show or read a greensheet to other players.

**Stat Card:** Your stat card lists your statistics. You might not know what all of your stats mean. Do not show your stats to others. The reverse side is a **death report**; fill it out and give it to the GMs when your character dies.

**Ability Cards:** An ability card explains a special ability your character has. The front side describes the effects; show it to players when you use the ability. The reverse is the rules of use and must not be shown to other players.

**Memory/Event Packets:** A memory packet is an envelope or stapled piece of paper with a **trigger** which describes when to open and read it. If the trigger is a number, open the packet when you see something with that number. If it's a quoted phrase, open when you hear or read it in-game. If it's a symbol, open when instructed. Do not take game action based on an unopened trigger. Do not show or read a memory packet to other players.

**Items:** In-game items may be transferred from character to character, and should be marked as such. See the *Items Etc.* section for more details.

## 2.2 Reality and Game Reality

There is a big difference between reality and game reality. Players must treat each other with courtesy and explain to each other what their characters perceive in confusing situations; e.g. “My character’s hands are covered in blood,” an **out-of-game** statement. Characters are under no such restrictions, and may do what it takes to further their goals; e.g. “Uh, hi Bob. Just got back from the butcher shop,” an **in-game** statement.

**Metagaming** is inferring in-game knowledge that is inappropriate for your character from out-of-game information. In general, you should do your best to not metagame. However, in Sciencetown this is made more difficult by the fact that every character is existing and well-known, so it’s less of a big deal. Go wild.

**Halts:** A halt pauses game action. To call one, say “game halt” in a clear and audible voice; other players around a corner should hear you, but you shouldn’t scare some poor grad student. End a halt by saying “three, two, one, resume.” Call a halt for one of only three reasons: because a rule instructs you to, for safety and similar out-of-game issues, or to pause game and fetch a GM (which you should avoid).

**Not-Here:** You may go not-here by turning your name-badge around so the “I’m Not Here” side is showing (or by removing your badge entirely, if you are leaving game). Putting a hand on your head, visible from a distance, helps if you’re near other players. Go not-here for one of only three reasons: because a rule instructs you to, to leave game, or to fetch a GM while in a halt (which you should avoid).

When you are not-here, your character is not there. Your character cannot see, hear, or remember any game actions or information you (the player) happen to encounter. Avoid other characters, common game areas, game signs, or any sort of game interaction.

**Non-Players:** Use tact and common sense when dealing with non-players (**NPs**). You are encouraged to spread the gospel of real-time, real-space roleplaying; however, many NPs prefer to sleep, study, or work undisturbed.

NPs may not knowingly affect the game. They and their rooms may not be used to hold items or information. They may not help you kill. Do not use the presence of NPs to hide from rampaging mobs that want your blood.

Avoid conspicuous or threatening game actions in front of NPs. Shooting your friend outside of a classroom one minute before class lets out is a bad idea, as is screaming bloody murder down a hallway. If, despite your most valiant efforts, some NPs do get upset, call the GMs who will help calm them down.

**Observers:** An observer is someone not playing the game who has agreed to watch. They generally wear an observer headband or an observer name-badge. Observers have traditionally been called “ghosts.” They should stay out of the way; you can always ask an observer to leave. If a friend who is not playing wants to observe game, send them to the GMs.

**Non-Player-Characters:** Non-player-characters (**NPCs**) are characters in the game’s universe not played by a full-time player. They are minor characters, bit parts, or random people. Some may have name-badges; sometimes called “GM plants,” these are often not readily distinguishable from PCs.

**Mechanics:** Many actions your character can take, such as walking, talking, and general interaction with other characters, are represented by you doing them. Others, like combat, are performed via abstract mechanics, which are described in ability cards, greensheets, and rules. The abstract information for mechanics (like badge numbers) may not be discussed in-game. If you want to do something special for which there is no mechanic, ask a GM.

Become familiar with your mechanics before game starts, especially those which occur under time-pressure (like combat). Game action will not stop for memory packets, greensheets, or such.

A **kludge** (and derivative forms like “kludge-ite”) is something impervious to logic and cleverness, usually for game-balance. You can’t affect a kludge without a specified mechanic.

**Zone of Control (ZoC)** is a rough distance measurement. You are within ZoC of someone if your outstretched fingers can touch their outstretched fingers. Double-ZoC is twice this distance, triple-ZoC is three times, etc.

**Headbands** represent obvious visual effects; wear them visibly on your head. If you see a headband and don’t know what it represents, ask. If you are wearing a headband, tell people what their characters see.

**Roleplaying:** This is a high-schtick game. We expect much of the fun to be getting into character and interacting like a set of zany mad scientists. To that end, we encourage you to heavily roleplay interactions. Don’t feel constrained to stay just within the information contained in your character sheet; feel free to pull from your character’s source material, or just improvise. We’ve tried to write mechanics so you won’t be accidentally leading anyone down a red-herring garden path.

If, for example, a character asks you if you know anything about death rays, but your character sheet didn’t say anything about death rays, don’t just shrug, and say “Sorry.” Go ahead and talk about the time you almost completed the ultimate death ray, but then your bumbling henchman stumbled over the power cord right as you trained it on the hero breaking into your lab. Or lecture them about the magnetic physics required to propagate a beam of pure anti-matter through the air into the White House without it annihilating with the air before it gets there!

This is also, to some extent, an experimental game. There is some chance that if you intentionally try to find loopholes in mechanics and use them to dominate game, you will succeed. Please don’t do this. Stick to the spirit of the game, and let the GMs know about the loophole.

**Roleplaying Inconvenient Characters:** In this game, you might have characters whose own arrogance, madness, rage, or other issues might cause them to sabotage their own goals. For example, let’s say that you were Dr. Strangelove, but you were in Sciencetown under the assumed name of Edward Nygma, the Riddler. You would not, for example, play it like Frank Gorshin did in the old Batman series, even though that would be most conducive to keeping your cover. Instead, you would play it like Dr. Strangelove pretending (and mostly failing) to be the Riddler. It is the difference between “Riddle me this, Batman!” and “Riddel me zis, Batman, mein Freund!”

**Safety:** This is a game. Real violence is unacceptable. Game action should cause no real-world damage, either to people or property. If something dangerous is happening, call a halt. Stay in control, use common sense, and do not endanger yourself or others. You should not run or otherwise force your way into or through someone else’s ZoC, and you should not make physical contact with another player without permission.

## 2.3 Basic Strategy

Make sure you understand the rules. If you are completely confused, get a GM who will try to help you out. Make sure you know enough about your character to role-play him or her when you start talking to other people. Read through your entire packet a couple of times, and skim through it again right before game starts. If you don’t know something about your character, ask a GM.

As a character, your first priority should be to open lines of communication. Contact people, show up at meetings, and chat. Try to be easy to get in touch with. Ask people questions on relevant subjects. They’ll probably lie, but you may find something out.

There are no guarantees that you can trust anyone, but since cooperation is the key to accomplishing things, you will be forced to trust people anyway. The most trustworthy people are probably those who need you.

### 3 Items Etc.

Many in-game items are represented by little white cards with a number and description. Item cards may be shown to others, passed around, stolen, etc. The **item number** on the card is not in-game information and may not be discussed. Not all in-game items have cards or numbers; whatever they are represented by should be clearly marked “in-game item” or “freely transferable.”

Use common sense. You can't carry a hundred rocks in your pocket, fold a sword in half, or hide a life-sized statue in a fire hose. You can't stop a bullet with a set of blueprints or rip apart a metal safe with your bare hands. Even if your bag can carry a shovel in it, the shovel noticeably sticks out (“you see a shovel sticking out of my bag”).

In this game, you may only carry one item in each hand, and only up to four non-bulky items in your pockets.

**Written Information:** If you write in-game information down on a piece of paper, that paper is now an in-game item and must be clearly marked as such. Don't write in-game information on out-of-game documents (character sheet, etc.). Don't write out-of-game information (like memory packet triggers) on in-game documents.

**Envelopes:** Some items and locations may have an attached envelope (or just be a labeled packet or folded paper). The envelope may include directions for when to open these (“open packet if you press the big red button” or “open packet if you eat this”); otherwise you may only open them if instructed. Close them when you are done. Open and close packets gently.

**Signs:** Some locations and other game materials are represented by signs or packets posted throughout game area. You may read any signs and must follow any rules printed on them. If a sign or packet doesn't have some sort of in-game description (it only has out-of-game mechanics information, like a number or just a colored dot), then your character doesn't even see it or know that anything unusual is there.

**Bulkiness:** A bulky item is too big or heavy to be carried or concealed freely. Bulkiness is measured in **hands** or **dots** (how many hands it takes to carry it). If you are carrying a bulky item, make it clear to onlookers (hold the card). A hand carrying a bulky object may do nothing else. With one hand less than required, you may drag a bulky item at a slow pace.

In addition, you may only ever carry one item at a time in a hand, and only up to four (non-bulky) items in your pockets.

**Props:** Some items may have props (physical representations or **physreps**) associated with them. The card and physrep should be kept together. If they are separated, the card is the real item. Prop items are as bulky as the physrep. They can be carried in bags that can hold them, on straps that are attached to them, etc.

**Containers:** Some items, like crates or personal bags, have a **capacity**. Capacity is measured in dots or hands; this is how many dots of items can be stored within. You can put as many non-bulky items inside as is within reason. A container may have a capacity bigger than its bulkiness; use common sense when nesting containers. Put contained item cards inside the envelope attached to the container card.

**Character Bodies:** A body is two hands bulky and usually represented by a name-badge. It must be willing or unable to resist for you to carry it. Carry the badge conspicuously. Onlookers can't tell if it's dead without close examination, unless it would be obvious (like headless).

**Unstashable Items:** All items in Sciencetown are unstashable. Unstashable items can't be hidden or left behind. They look too important, valuable, or interesting; NPCs will not let them stay there. This is a kludge. If you're not leaving an unstashable item in another PC's care, and you want to leave it behind, give it to a GM or observer. You may leave it in plain sight in a public area if there are other PCs around.

### 3.1 Searching, Stashing, and Stealing

**Places:** To search a place, search it. Items may not be stashed in this game, so any items that you will need will likely be in plain sight. Don't search in places that are not in-game; see the *Game Areas* section for more information. Items will not be behind locked doors, inside drop ceilings, in air vents, or in hacking locations. Don't search there.

**People:** All searches of characters or their belongings are conducted via player dialogue. Someone must be willing or unable to resist for you to search them. Since there is no martial combat in Sciencetown, this may be difficult. See the *Combat* section below for more details. You need at least one free hand to search someone. Anyone within ZoC of either you or your victim can prevent the search by saying "I stop you" or an equivalent phrase.

You can perform a **pat-down search**, which will only reveal the presence of weapons. This takes as much time as it takes your victim to tell you what you find. If you're the victim, do this at a reasonable pace.

A **total search** is an invasive, complete search of a character's clothing. This reveals all in-game items, and takes as long as your victim spends handing over possessions. If you're the victim, hand over items at a reasonable pace.

**Bags:** To search a bag in someone's possession, say "I search your bag." This proceeds just as a total search.

To search a bag that is obviously in-game (has an attached, displayed item card), search the physrep. Item cards in the bag must be in reasonable places. If the item card has a capacity and an envelope, the bag is just a prop and all in-game items should be in the packet.

To search a bag that is not obviously in-game (no visible item card attached), spend thirty seconds by the bag, put a "searched (see a GM)" note on the bag, and come tell a GM. Tell any onlookers that they see you searching through the bag. Search an attended bag via player dialog with the owner; they must be willing or unable to resist. If someone searches a bag you are holding, hand over all game items inside at a reasonable pace.

If you find a "searched" note on your bag, come see a GM. To declare a bag out-of-game, label it "no game items."



## 4 Violence, Damage, and Death

### 4.1 Health States

Characters have only two health states, concerning health and damage. When you are **fine**, you may act freely. When you are **this close to being killed**, you drop all of your items, perform a **miraculous escape**, and leave game for five minutes.

You cannot die in Sciencetown, due to the protective field created by the ScienceDome, and the fact that you're all mad Scientists.

### 4.2 Miraculous Escapes

If, for any reason, you become **this close to being killed**, you must drop all in-game items and perform a **miraculous escape**. Describe an unlikely scenario in which you just barely escape certain death through use of gadgets (e.g., "I swing out of the way of the laser using a roll of dental floss in my pocket"), biological transformations (e.g., "I push my heart out of the way of the bullet at the last second, leaving only a flesh wound where the bullet passes through my chest"), etc. Use your imagination.

For example, if Dr. Strangelove were to be shot by a giant laser cannon, his miraculous escape might be along the lines of: "I quickly spin my wheelchair around to absorb the shot with its wheels, and push the ejector button to launch myself through the wall and get out of range."

Once the **miraculous escape** has been performed, go **Not Here** for five minutes and re-enter game in the laboratory of your choice. If you wish to regain lost items critical to your research, you may do so by repeating the relevant steps in your research notebooks.

### 4.3 Weapons

All weapons have both a physrep and an item card; keep these together. To use a weapon, you must have it in your hand and unobstructed. Display it in an obvious manner. You cannot hold more than one weapon in a hand. You may only use one melee weapon at a time. Every melee weapon will have an incant indicated on its card. To attack with it, stand within ZoC of your target, spend the appropriate amount of Science, and state "Martial Attack: *incant*." Martial attacks cannot be resisted or dodged. All attacks bring you **this close to being killed**.

### 4.4 Ranged Combat

Ranged combat is real-time and mostly based upon player skill at firing and dodging physreps. Keep it safe. Hits to anywhere on the body count the same; don't aim for the head. If a projectile hits clothing or long hair such that it would not hit the body when passing through, it doesn't count. Hits to an item you hold count as a hits on you, not the item. If there is a conflict over whether or not a projectile hit, the shooter calls the shot. If you are hit with a projectile, unless the shooter indicates some other effect or you know otherwise, you become **this close to being killed** and must perform a miraculous escape.

### 4.5 Combat

To attack someone, you need a weapon. Firing the weapon costs Science (see the *Economy* section for more details). If the weapon hits your target, they become **this close to being killed** and must perform a miraculous escape.

## 5 Miscellaneous

**Headband Colors:** A white or yellow headband represents an observer.

**Badge Numbers:** The first digit of your badge number is your character's apparent age in decades.

**Rope:** Rope is freely available. Make an item card for it. However, due to the lack of melee combat, we doubt you'll need it. To tie someone up, they must be either willing or helpless. Good luck with that.

**Alcohol:** There are alcoholic beverages in game. Generally they will tell you to increase your  $t$  stat. This stat represents how drunk you are. If your  $t$  stat reaches 5 or above, your liver *miraculously escapes* your body, and you become **this close to being killed**. Go not here, etc. as per the rules above. For lower values, roleplay being drunk accordingly.

As long as it is positive, your  $t$  stat decreases by 1 every five minutes.

## 6 Economy

The Sciencetown economy is based around **Science**. Science can be used for research, firing weapons, and various other tasks. Keep track of your amount of Science on a piece of paper. There is no physprep for Science.

**Generating Science:** Science is generated in two ways: **income** and **experiments**.

**Income** is represented by your psi ( $\psi$ ) stat, which stands for "psi"ence. Your  $\psi$  stat will have five numbers on it, one for each hour of game. At the start of each game hour, you receive Science equal to the next number on your  $\psi$  stat, starting at game start.

For instance, if you  $\psi$  stat is 2, 3, 5, 8, you would receive 2 Science at game start, 3 at T+1:00, 5 at T+2:00, and 8 at T+3:00.

You can also generate Science through **experiments**. Experiments can be performed at any time. Take a card from the **Experiment Folder** in 34-3. The card will contain a description of a task, as well as a Science value. Perform the task to get the listed amount of Science. You cannot search through the Experiment Folder for the task you want; you must take the first card you find.

There are two main restrictions on experiments:

1. Once you take an experiment from the folder, you may not take another until 20 minutes have passed, even if you complete the experiment before that time elapses.
2. If you have an experiment that you have not completed and you draw a new one, destroy the old one; you cannot gain any Science from it anymore.

## 7 Closing Notes

These rules are imperfect. The GMs may violate the letter of the rules to preserve the spirit. We hope these rules are reasonably clear, but if you have any doubts about your interpretation, talk it over with us in advance. We should also add, as much as we hate to admit it, we GMs are human: when all of our carefully laid plans are going haywire, we may lose our cool. The best way to deal with people is remaining calm and friendly, especially when everyone is tired and hungry.

We hope you have lots of fun. Good luck.