

Method & *Moil* - a *Lasers & Feelings* hack

In a science-fantasy world of mecha, electromagnetic ghosts, and Lovecraftian gods, you are a team of experimenters and tinkerers whose craft is powered by “mad science” - by your obsessive devotion to a particular pseudo-scientific Ultimate Theory. Your mentor’s private laboratory was recently annihilated and your mentor is missing, presumed vaporized. Will you investigate, rebuild, or move on? Will you save the nearby town, rule it, or destroy it? And what will you do about the ominous dreams that everyone’s been having?

Players: Create characters

1. Choose a **style** for your character: bombastic, flustered, gonzo, haunted, insatiable, inscrutable, meticulous, etc.
2. Choose a **field** for your character: biology, chemistry, electromagnetics, optics, parapsychology, zoology, etc.
3. Choose a **number** from 2 to 5. A high number means you’re better at *method* (precision, control, relative order, small-scale effects or subjects). A low number means you’re better at *moil* (power, intensity, relative chaos, maximized effects and massive subjects).
4. Give your character a cool mad-science name, and any other identifying quirks or characteristics you have in mind.

Stuff you have: Sets of civilian and work clothes, enough supplies to whip up an invention or two, a usually-reliable prototype of your favorite gadget, and a token of your private superstition. You have a key to the workshop’s common areas and knowledge of their on-site security measures. You also have a suite that contains your personal workroom or lab, materials storage, library, and a tiny monastic cell for sleeping in.

Player goal: Have fun with crazy pulp-science hijinks!

Character goal: Choose one or create your own: Become team leader, satiate your desires, destroy your enemies, remake the world, discover one of Nature’s ultimate secrets, prove yourself to someone, or just keep being awesome (you have nothing to prove).

Players: Create the workshop

As a group, pick two strengths for your workplace: Loyal staff, good defenses/security, durable, mobile, hidden, modular, or self-sufficient (has just enough food, materials, and energy for the team).

Also **pick one problem**: resource hog (needs constant resupply), unstable (accidents or fights tend to cause other problems), bad reputation (your mentor made a lot of enemies and your team isn’t well-liked or trusted), weirdness magnet (even when you didn’t do anything, coincidences and the supernatural seem drawn to your location), mind of its own (the workshop’s equipment, staff, and other systems don’t always do what you want).

Rolling the dice

- When you do something risky, roll 1d6 to find out how it goes. Add +1d if you’re prepared and +1d if you’re an expert, plus any from aid.
- (Aid: If you **want to help** someone else’s roll, say how you try to help and make one of your own. If you succeed, give them +1d.)
- If using **method** (precision), you want to **roll under** your number.
- If using **moil** (power), you want to **roll over** your number.

Then count your successes:

- 0 - **It goes wrong.** The GM says how things get worse somehow.
- 1 - **You barely manage.** The GM inflicts a complication, harm, or cost.
- 2 - **You do it well.** Not the most dramatic outcome, but good job!
- 3+ - **Critical success!** The GM says how things go better than planned.
- ↳ - If you **roll your number exactly**, you have a **Moment of Clarity** and gain special insight. Ask the GM a question for each die that matched your number, and they’ll answer you honestly.

GM: Create a mad-science adventure

Roll and/or choose on the tables below:

The main threat...

1. A rival team of mad scientists... or cultists
2. Your former mentor, somehow changed... or the secret police
3. An angry mob... or horrible monsters
4. An approaching natural disaster
5. Spirits from beyond the veil... or aliens from outer space
6. An actual god that you were never meant to behold

...wants to...

1. investigate or fiddle with
2. destroy or corrupt
3. protect or empower
4. steal or copy
5. control or conquer
6. bond with or consume

...the...

1. townsfolk
2. resource your community or workshop relies on
3. complex you live and work in
4. secret project your mentor was working on
5. secret that you had all been keeping from your mentor
6. whole planet

...which will...

1. unleash a plague!
2. start a war!
3. scour the mind/soul out of mortal flesh!
4. erase existence as we know it!
5. be super annoying!
6. fix everything (thus wrecking the status quo)!

GM: Run the game

Describe a fictional world and then confront it with a threat. Play to find out what happens when the players encounter that world and that threat. Introduce the main threat by showing clues about its nature, goals, and tactics. Introduce minor threats or problems as appropriate on the way to confronting the main one. Before a threat does something to the characters, show signs of what's about to happen, and ask them what they do. Use the rest of the game world to set the stakes, provide a contrast with a threat's effects, and vary the action.

When possible, say “Yes, but...” rather than “No.” Show the players the costs, the risks, and the rewards of their proposed actions. Ask questions and build on the answers; invite the players to help you build the world that their characters are adventuring in.

Call for a roll when the situation is uncertain. Don’t plan outcomes or solutions; present a situation and see what the players do in response. Use failures to push the action forward. The situation always changes after a roll, for better or worse (or both). When in doubt, play to the character’s chosen style and aim for Awesome.

Inspirations:

- John Harper’s *Lasers & Feelings: the Doubleclicks Tribute RPG* ([v1.2](#))
- The [Girl Genius](#) webcomic
- The animated movie [Megamind](#)
- [Dr. Horrible’s Sing-Along Blog](#)
- The [Mage: The Ascension](#) TTRPG
- The [Savage Worlds](#) TTRPG
- Everything pop culture ever said about [Nikola Tesla](#)
- And many, many more!