

This MCC article contains my take on the artifact check rules and artifacts in general, and it includes an alternate artifact check table.



MCC House rules: Artifacts, checks and more

Description: Artifacts and artifact checks are a core part of MCC, but I disagree with them at points and some of them seem needlessly convoluted and contradictory. So, for the benefit of my home game, I'm writing down some generalizations, clarifications and house rules on the topic. Apart for the alternate artifact check table at the end the article largely consists my personal of interpretations of the rules along with clarifications, rather than actual replacement rulings. So, your mileage may vary, but this is how I run things at my table

Artifacts: For the purposes of artifact checks, not everything left behind by the Ancients constitutes an "artifact". *Artifact checks are only required for ancient items that either require a power source, or items that are of particularly advanced design.* Generally advanced design means complex or strange enough to not be recognizable as useful for whatever task they were designed for, especially if that task is no longer a part of the every day life on Terra AD. Generally, clothes, non-technical accessories, and household items of the Ancients are certainly useful and cool, but they are not artifacts as such despite being of superior design¹.

¹ Consequently, some artifacts described in the MCC rulebook are not artifacts in my games. For example, *carbon nano cord* is just very tough cord you can't cut. Mostly because I don't feel like telling my fumbling players that their intrepid explorer just hung theirselves while trying to figure out a weird rope.

Tech levels: Tech level correlates with Intelligence, so it functions as simple shorthand for “*how smart do you need to be in order to figure out how to use the item successfully if there is no one around to show you how it works*”. Without sufficient Intelligence, a character cannot recognize the artifact for what it is (beyond it being an artifact of some sort, that is). These artifacts are the provenance of shamans, or at least tribesmen with more cunning. Insufficient tech level prevents a character from rolling an artifact check on an item, but not necessarily from using the artifact in question should someone teach them (Judge’s discretion based on artifact, see below).

Complexity modifiers: Complexity modifiers are usually just shorthand for “*how many buttons does the artifact have*”, with a built-in increase for items with particularly drastic uses (combat artifacts, invasive medical tools, etc.). Familiarity with similar artifacts may reduce the complexity modifier situationally: for example, one grenade works much the same as another one, regardless of payload.

For Judges - Everyday artifacts of the Ancients: Minor items, such as household appliances and toys have a Tech level of 1-4 and a Complexity modifier of the same. Apply values at Judge’s discretion, or roll a d4 to figure it out. Everyday artifacts are usually powered with small, inconsequential power cells, unapplicable for any other utility beyond their intended use. These are rules of thumb to speed up play in order to avoid undue twiddling with dinky junk, however flavourful it may be.

Artifact checks: Artifact checks are rolled when a suitably clever user tries to figure out an artifact they have not used before. There are two types of artifact checks: basic artifact checks which take some time to complete, and fast artifact checks (described as *combat artifact checks* in the MCC rulebook).

Basic artifact checks: ACTION DIE + INT mod. + CHECK BONUS - COMPLEXITY mod. = TABLE A

A basic artifact check represents a character doing their best to figure out an item for the first time. This requires the situation to be calm, and takes some time² (1-6 turns, depending on artifact complexity and Judge’s discretion, usually it is good manners to inform player how long they can expect to be fiddling with a piece of tech). Roll check and refer to table A for result.

Fast artifact checks: SPEND 1 LUCK, roll ACTION DIE = TABLE A

A fast artifact check represents a character closing their eyes and trusting their luck while pressing a button on an unknown artifact. Usually, this is done under some kind of duress (for example in combat), but foolhardy explorers may opt to do this at any time. Roll check and refer to table A for result.

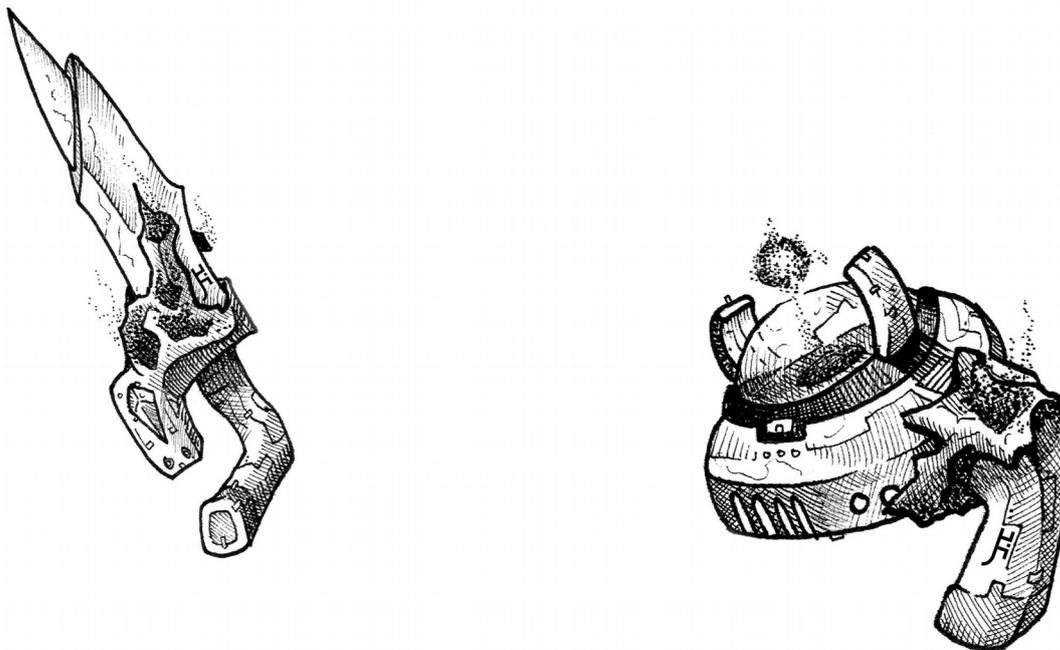
Teaching artifact use: Once a character figures out how to use an artifact, they can teach others. Properly teaching the use of an artifact requires calm conditions, time and a DC 10 INT check on part of the student.

The time required generally matches however long the initial artifact check took, and extra time can be spent in increments to increase the student’s INT check die. For example, Dolu the shaman successfully figured out how to pull a pin on a grenade in 1 turn, so she can then spend 3 turns explaining her friends how not to blow themselves up, granting them +2d on the INT check to learn this important skill (1 turn for a basic lesson, 2

2 The less buttons or other interactive features, the faster this is. It doesn’t take a caveman half an hour to figure out how to blow themselves up with a grenade.

extra turns for a careful explanation, resulting in two increases on the dice chain). Treat any natural 1s rolled by students as result one on table A.

Finally, artifact use can be taught as a downtime activity between adventures. In this case characters may forego rolling the INT check in order to comprehend the artifact use: it is assumed that even the stupidest caveman can be taught to operate most anything given enough time. In this case, roll to check for fumbles if the Judge is feeling particularly ornery.



Alternate artifact check table: The below table replaces the artifact check table in the MCC rulebook.

Comprehension rank: In addition to a few minor changes in the lower results, this alternative table adds a comprehension ranking for artifacts in the higher results. The purpose of this ranking (ranging from I to VI) is to simplify reloading, repairing and duplication of artifacts - it acts as a quick shorthand to keep track of how well items are understood.

- All related checks are DC 15, comprehension ranking determines what can be attempted. For example, rank I means a character can use the item but not change the power source, but rank V means they understand the item so well that they can attempt repairs even without the exact correct tools and materials. Refer to the table for exact details.
- Characters can increase their comprehension ranking during downtime with study. The details of this are left up to Judge's discretion.
- If a character studies to use an item above their tech level, only ranks I or II can be accomplished (Judge's discretion applies).

TABLE A: Artifact Checks

CHECK RESULT	EFFECT
1 or less	Fumble! Artifact breaks irreparably and inflicts maximum damage possible (or 1d6, whichever is greater) to all characters within a minimum range of 10' (or greater range if applicable, Judge's discretion).
2 - 4	Botch! Artifact breaks irreparably, inflicting 1d3 damage to user.
5 - 7	Mistake! Artifact is damaged somehow - part falls off, capacitors are misaligned, display gets scuffed. Item can be repaired with a successful INT roll (aim for equal or below).
8 - 10	Blunder! Artifact immediately activates, but it gets damaged in the process. Item can be repaired with a successful INT roll (aim for equal or below). Similarly, user may make an INT roll (aiming for equal or below) to avoid collateral damage if applicable.
11 - 13	Success? Artifact immediately activates, but its operation is not understood. User user may make an INT roll (aiming for equal or below) to avoid collateral damage if applicable.
14 - 18	Success! (I): Artifact's basic operation is understood and it may be activated. Without additional study user's comprehension is not extensive enough to replace a depleted power source or for making repairs.
19 - 23	Understanding! (II): Artifact's operation is understood and it may be activated. User comprehends the item well enough to replace depleted power cells, but cannot make repairs or alterations.
24 - 27	Realization! (III): Artifact's operation is understood and it may be activated. User comprehends the item well enough to replace depleted power cells, and can make minor repairs with the correct tools and materials, but not well enough to alter its function.
28 - 31	Comprehension! (IV): Artifact's operation is understood extensively and it may be activated. User comprehends the item well enough to replace depleted power cells, and can make major repairs or minor alterations provided they have the correct tools and materials available.
32 - 35	Inspiration! (V): Artifact's operation is understood exhaustively and it may be activated. User comprehends the item well enough to replace depleted power cells, and can make major repairs even with limited or replacement tools and resources. If provided access to the correct tools and materials they may alter the function of the item in a major fashion.
36 +	Ingenuity! (VI): Artifact's operation is understood perfectly and it may be activated. User comprehends the item well enough to replace depleted power cells, and can make major repairs or alterations even with limited or replacement tools and resources. If provided access to the correct tools and materials they may produce an exact functioning duplicate of the artifact.