

Shock Sticks

These painful but (usually) nonlethal melee weapons, resembling short batons and based on stunner technology, are favored by those who wish to take prisoners . . . and by sadists. Shock sticks can be found in the hands of Jackson's Whole "police," prison guards, and so on. They require Knife or Shortsword skill.

Shock sticks can be set to different levels, from merely unpleasant (make a HT roll to avoid being physically stunned), painful (-1 or -2 penalty to HT rolls), to excruciating (-3 penalty). High Pain Threshold gives a +3 bonus to the roll, while Low Pain Threshold doubles any penalties. Each additional hit lowers the resisting HT roll by 1!

If the roll succeeds, the victim can still function, but at (setting's penalty-1) to ST, DX, IQ, and all skills based on those attributes for 15-Will turns (minimum one turn). If a limb is hit, the limb is useless for the same time. If the victim *fails* the roll, he loses 1d FP and suffers the Agony condition (p. B428) for 15-Will turns (minimum one turn). Critical failure causes unconsciousness for 20-HT minutes (minimum 1). Each additional hit starts the recovery time over, but penalties to attributes are *not* cumulative.

Shock sticks strike 20 times before losing power. They are \$100, 1 lb., LC1.

Vibra-Blades

These weapons are commonly found as daggers, knives, or surgical scalpels. The blade vibrates thousands of times per second, adding 1d cutting damage and a (3) armor divisor to the weapon. The blade vibrates so rapidly that its movement is invisible, but a Hearing roll made from one yard away will detect the characteristic faint whine.

Vibra-blades are powered by cells that last 300 seconds divided by the weapon's weight in pounds. Thus, a half-pound knife runs for 600 seconds. Of course, they are usually not activated until needed, so that time can be spread over hundreds of uses. Turning on the vibra effect takes one turn. A successful Fast-Draw roll activates it as the blade is drawn. When not activated, it performs like a normal weapon.

Any cutting weapon can be made in vibra version. Regular knives of all sizes cost \$200 extra in vibra; regular swords of all sizes cost \$400 extra and are generally custom jobs. Any other weapon (e.g., a vibra-halberd) would *definitely* be custom work, costing \$1,000 or more over the cost of a regular weapon – if you can find someone willing to make it at all. Vibra-blades are LC3.

SPACE TECHNOLOGY

Finishing touches on construction were still in progress around the Triumph's docking bay as Miles marched his parade across it. A few Aslunder workers in tan, light blue, and green leaned over to goggle down from catwalks. Military techs in their dark blue uniforms paused in mid-installation to stare, then had to re-sort connections and realign bolts.

– *The Vor Game*

Interstellar travel is a major element of the Vorkosigan universe, and the differing speeds of communication and movement will be crucial to many plots.

This section is an overview of the most important technologies for space travel and combat. For many campaigns, this is enough. Ships will just be transportation, and all the characters need to know is when they expect to arrive or how soon they can send a message home.

Some GMs and players will want more detailed rules for ship design and combat. These are complex enough to merit two appendices of their own – this *is* rocket science, after all! See *Spacecraft* (p. 184) for a system for designing spaceships, as well as some representative vessels; see *Space Travel and Combat* (p. 207) to learn how to use these spacecraft in play.

Interstellar Travel

All interstellar travel passes through *wormholes*, weak spots in 3-dimensional space that are the projections of a vortex in 5-dimensional space ("5-space"). See p. 9.

Passage through a wormhole requires a *jumpship* – a spaceship equipped with Necklin drive rods and a vortex focusing mirror. The 5-space fields generated by the Necklin rods enfold the ship, enabling it to "punch through" the weak spot of a wormhole and traverse 5-space. At the end of the passage, the fields unfold, leaving the ship back at a wormhole in normal 3-space.

A jumpship's pilot must have Piloting (Starship) skill and jump pilot implants (p. 80) to go through a wormhole.