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Fourth Edition



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Introduction

In settings that feature psionic powers, especially in horror and science fiction, there's often a paranormal interface between mind and machine, a place where psi and science meet. This may mean simple testing . . . or miraculous technology. The innovations can be sufficiently world-changing – or the experiments, so horrific – that they're capable of motivating heroes and inspiring scenarios, even entire campaigns. *This* is the realm of *GURPS Psi-Tech*.

Where *GURPS Psionic Powers* gives you the psi, these pages add the -tech and show you how to incorporate the resulting combination into your campaign. Described within are psychotronic machines and biotechnologies that enhance or emulate psionic powers, as well as devices that work on the same principles as psionics. The examples run the gamut from mundane lab equipment repurposed for paranormal research to out-and-out superscience – gadgets, drugs, genetic engineering, and surgery that become possible in a world with psi.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

GURPS Psionic Powers is the only supplement required to make proper use of Psi-Tech. However, GURPS Psionic

Campaigns offers useful advice to GMs regarding the origin of psi and the place of psychotronics in the game world, while GURPS Psis is of similar value to players. In addition, Psi-Tech's rules for bio-psi technology work well with those for genetics and biotechnology in GURPS Bio-Tech, and many of its gadgets complement items described in GURPS Ultra-Tech.

Publication History

Much of the material in *Psi-Tech* was adapted from *GURPS Psionics*, also by David L. Pulver. The rules for braintissue grafts are derived from *GURPS Psionic Campaigns*, by Jason "PK" Levine.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David L. Pulver is a freelance writer and game designer based in Victoria, British Columbia. He is coauthor of the *GURPS Basic Set*, *Fourth Edition* and author of *Transhuman Space*, *GURPS Mass Combat*, *GURPS Spaceships*, and numerous other gaming products.

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Bibliographies. Many of our books have extensive bibliographies, and we're putting them online – with links to let you buy the resources that interest you! Go to each book's web page and look for the "Bibliography" link.

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata pages for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are available on our website – see above.

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE SCIENCE OF PSI

"Ladies and gentlemen, I am honored to introduce Nobel laureate Dr. Paul Wixom, director of our bio-energetics division at Chulan Laboratories. The young woman beside him, wearing that rather outlandish helmet, is subject AL-19, who I am sure some of you recognize from the partial report leaked last week to the tabloid press. Dr. Wixom?"

"Thank you, Dr. Severin. I'm glad so many of you could make it on such short notice. We have a peer-reviewed article awaiting publication, but recent events have convinced us that a demonstration before the press is in the public interest.

"Ladies and gentlemen, the term **psi** has denoted the existence of anomalous processes of energy or information transfer that are presently unexplained in terms of known biophysical mechanisms. Despite more than a century of scientific inquiry, psi has been too unpredictable or weak to measure clearly. Many doubted its existence.

"That changes now. Using the Wixom-Coldwell mind amplifier and her own unique mental gifts, the young woman known to you as AL-19 – who I can reveal is Alexandra Lodge, 19 years old – will today demonstrate unequivocal proof of the psi function known as psychokinesis.

"And yes, your eyes are not deceiving you: Alex is now levitating herself one meter above the ground."

If psionic powers are understood by science, then they can be joined with advanced technology to produce effects unobtainable by natural psionic gifts. This is the essence of *psi-tech*.

Timeline of Psi-Tech Research

For over a century, psi has been the subject of scientific (or *pseudoscientific*) research. This has mostly been under the banner of parapsychology, aimed at exploring the nature of psychic phenomena in human subjects. However, some study has involved *technological* developments. The GM may wish to incorporate such elements into the campaign background when using the real world as a setting for psionic adventures:

1919-1922 – Albert Abrams, an American, popularizes the concepts of a human energy field and psychic healing via "radionic" devices that emit such life energy.

1924 – German doctor Hans Berger is the first to record human brainwaves (EEG), inspired by his interest in telepathic research.

1939 – First Kirlian photographs taken, in the Soviet Union. Techniques remain largely unknown in the West until the 1970s.

1973 – First International Congress on Psychotronic Research, in Prague. It's noted for demonstrating the "psychotronic generators" developed by Czech inventor Robert Pavlita and for popularizing the term "psychotronics" as a synonym for psi-enhancing gadgetry (rather than as an alternative term for psi, its original coinage).

1975 – United States Psychotronics Association founded, making it one of the earliest Western organizations to focus on psychotronic psi-tech.

SCIENCE AND PSI

Psionic technology falls into three broad categories:

Mundane psi technology consists of ordinary equipment adapted for psi research or enhancement. An example is the use of photographic and electrical equipment to detect auras (Kirlian photography). Similarly, if astral projection is associated with near-death experiences, then medical equipment used to stop a subject's heart and then revive him might trigger astral travel.

Bio-psi technology is based on the assumption that psionic capabilities are generated by the brain and have a biochemical basis. It typically involves affecting or creating psi powers through drugs, genetic engineering, and neurosurgery.

Psychotronics (a portmanteau of "psychic electronics") refers to superscience equipment specifically designed to generate, jam, or enhance psi abilities artificially. A typical device is a helmet that uses electrical impulses to stimulate the brain precisely enough to boost a particular psi power.

Psychotronic Generators Table

Size: A descriptive term for the device; SM appears in parentheses. A *semi-portable* or *large* generator is too big to wield manually (at least for a human!); thus, any "touch" effect involves a platform, electrode helmet, bed, chair, etc. into or onto which the subject must be strapped or placed in order to be affected by the ability.

Cost: The cost of a *powered* generator, figured from the point cost of the ability it emulates. Multiply this by 1.5 for a *self-powered* model that has no electrical power requirement.

Weight: The weight of a standalone generator. Optionally, it might be integrated into a mundane device (gun, TV,

goggles, etc.) that retain its normal functions, provided that the generator weighs no more than 1/3 of that item's original weight.

Power: The electrical power requirement for a powered generator, giving six hours of operation on batteries or a day on power cells. *Ignore* this for self-powered gadgets!

LC: The Legality Class if the effect is ostensibly benign – weather control, healing, communication, etc. Halve this and round *down* if the most likely uses are criminal, military, or espionage activities (GM's decision). Generators that can harm or control individuals are LC2 or worse.

Size	Cost	Weight	Power	LC
Mini (SM -6)	$$3,000 \times \text{point cost}$	0.3 lb.	T/6 hrs. or 2×A/1 day	4
Small (SM -4)	\$2,500 × point cost	3 lbs.	XS/6 hrs. or 2×B/1 day	4
Portable (SM -2)	$$2,000 \times \text{point cost}$	30 lbs.	$3\times S/6$ hrs. or $2\times C/1$ day	4
Semi-Portable (SM 0)	$$1,500 \times \text{ point cost}$	300 lbs.	L/6 hrs., 2×D/1 day, or external power	3
Large (SM +2)	$$1,000 \times \text{ point cost}$	3,000 lbs.	VL/6 hrs., E/1 day, or external power	3

Examples of Psychotronic Generators

Akashic Terminal: A humming, hissing, liquid-cooled electromechanical device the size of a room, within which the subject is suspended, bathed in scanning rays, his possible futures flashing on a bank of monitors above him. Gives Prognostication 4. Large, \$33,000, 3,000 lbs., external power. LC3.

Astral Blade: A large knife, covered with exotic patterns, whose hilt conceals a solid-state crystalline psychotronic generator that mirrors the knife in the astral plane. Gives Astral Sword 1 (and also works as a large knife). Mini, \$36,000, 1 lb. (including knife), self-powered. LC2.

Psiberdeck: Small electronic device resembling a 1980s game console, with attached head electrodes. Gives Netrunning 1. Small, \$50,000, 3 lbs., XS/6 hrs. or 2×B/1 day. LC4.

Psycho-Surgery: Sinister dentist chair-like device with a blank-faced helmet. The subject is strapped in; the operator uses an attached interface helmet and virtual-reality console. Gives Mental Surgery 1, Mindwipe 1, *and* Telereceive 1. Semi-portable, \$76,500, 300 lbs., external power, LC1.

Radionic Healing Crystal: A small, geometrical crystaland-metal device, resembling a futuristic salt shaker, that's passed over the subject's body to activate it. Gives Cure Disease 1. Mini, \$27,000, 0.3 lb., self-powered. LC4.

Teleport Belt: A thick metallic belt composed of linked platinum ovals and psi-charged quartz crystals, with a built-in power pack. Mentally controlled; allows the operator to teleport up to two miles. Gives Autoteleport 8. Mini, \$210,000, 0.3 lb., T/6 hrs. or 2×A/1 day. LC4.

OTHER AUGMENTATION DEVICES

These technologies offer alternative means of intensifying psionic power. They can be used in conjunction with psiamplifiers (pp. 11-13).

Gestalt Web (TL^)

A gestalt web machine is a large psychotronic device attached to two or more nearby psiberface units (p. 12). It automatically links all psis using those psiberface units into a gestalt (*GURPS Psionic Powers*, p. 9). This requires no skill roll – the effect is identical to the Gestalt Familiarity perk (*Psionic Powers*, p. 19). A gestalt web capable of linking two minds is \$1,000,000, 400 lbs. Add \$20,000 and 10 lbs. per additional mind it can accommodate. The psiberface systems are extra. External power. LC3.

Psychotronic Battery (TL^)

This is a means of storing and draining psionic energy. It typically resembles a small metal or crystal object, usually a geometric solid, although it might be built into another device. It responds to the mental control of any psi who touches it, and can be set to "positive" or "negative."

On its negative setting, it drains psychic energy from the nearest sapient being within two yards. He loses 1 FP every 10 minutes and cannot recover his own lost FP. Draining continues until the battery has absorbed 10 FP, after which it is full and no longer drains energy. Left unused, energy in the battery bleeds off at the rate of 1 FP every 12 hours.

On its positive setting, any psi who's touching the battery may tap it. He can draw up to 1 FP per second from it, using this energy instead of or as well as his own FP to power psionic abilities. The battery cannot be used to energize anything *but* psi; it's effectively a psionic Energy Reserve (p. 21).

Shiver (TL^)

An alternative to Mind Hype (p. 34), this reliable psi-drug is a neurotransmitter that makes it easier for a psi to use his abilities. It gives the user +1 *per dose* on all psi skills he knows (*not* defaults). This bonus lasts for 10 minutes, regardless of dosage.

Shiver's side effects are mild. After its bonus wears off, the user experiences physical shakiness and a mild fever. For *each dose* taken, he suffers -1 to DX and all DX-based skills, and loses 2 FP; e.g., three doses mean -3 to DX and 6 FP. The DX penalty lasts an hour per dose; FP losses recover normally.

Shiver is available in hypo form (takes effect instantly) and pill form (takes 30 seconds). \$40/dose. LC4.

Trance (TL^)

The opposite of drugs like Blocker (p. 33) and Monobloc (p. 34), this drug *lowers* the user's natural psi resistance. This makes Trance useful to telepathic psychologists – and interrogators. As it can render subjects more susceptible to mental control, it may gain a sinister reputation. Paranoid people

might fear that groups employing psis are putting it in the water supply!

Each dose of Trance gives the subject -2 to Will to resist Telepathy abilities. Up to three doses are cumulative, but this can be dangerous. After taking each dose, the user must make a HT+3 roll, at -1 per dose past the first. Failure means he lapses into a coma (p. B429) *and* suffers HP of injury equal to his margin of failure.

Trance is available in pill and hypo form. Either takes effect in 10 seconds and lasts six hours, regardless of dosage. \$15/dose. LC3.

Window (TL^)

Given to someone with the Telepathy power, this drug enhances his gifts, granting +2 to Telepathy Talent. However, it also dissolves his normal psychic barriers, giving him the Supersensitive disadvantage (p. B158) *and* completely suppressing any psionic Mind Shield advantage (p. B70) he may possess. Psis who take it unwillingly may roll vs. HT-3 to resist. The effects last for (25 - HT)/4 hours, minimum one hour.

Window is available in hypo, inhaler, and pill form. \$250/dose. LC2.

Accidental Drug-Induced Effects and Powers

Any chemical that affects the brain might influence abilities that derive from it. Thus, the GM may want to have *real* medical or psychiatric drugs interact with psi. For example, unconscious patients who've received the common anesthetic ketamine have sometimes reported "near-death experiences" – hovering outside their body – despite not being clinically dead. Some psi researchers have suggested using carefully controlled doses of this or similar drugs as a means of inducing out-of-body-experiences; that is, astral projection. Experimentation with anesthetics is hardly safe, of course!

A common trope in psi fiction is the idea of drugs *accidentally* creating psis. This is customarily a prenatal effect: A pregnant woman takes a new drug, or a combination of

drugs, that's supposedly safe – but it has the unnoted side effect of altering her unborn baby's brain structure. The child is born psionic, with either abilities or a Talent that may manifest later (e.g., after puberty) as full-blown psi. Such drug-induced powers need not be *genetic* traits passed on to the child's eventual offspring.

See *GURPS Bio-Tech* for a variety of drugs, and p. 33 of *GURPS Psionic Campaigns* for other suggestions regarding psi and drugs.

Designer Psi-Drugs

Drugs that grant a specific psionic ability for a period of time can be built using the system described in *Ultra-Tech Drugs* (p. B425).

THE GENETICS OF PSI

If psi powers have a genetic basis and the chromosomes that govern psi are known to science, then genetic profiling (TL8) could determine whether someone is psionic. This involves analyzing a DNA sample (e.g., from blood or hair) and performing laboratory tests using Biology skill (typically the optional Genetics specialty) to compare it against the known species genome. At TL8, genetic testing is only likely to be able to identify genes that code for psi if they're the result of significant species modification and stick out like a sore thumb among otherwise human DNA. If they're a natural but somewhat "hidden" part of the normal human genome, uncovering them will likely require a TL9+ understanding of genetics.

For details on genetic profiling and similar tests, see pp. 8-10 of *GURPS Bio-Tech*.

BREEDING AND CLONING PSIS

If psi powers are genetic, then biotechnology could offer ways not just to find but to *create* more psis, stacking the deck against the random draw of normal biology. Exactly what's possible depends on the nature of psionics.

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