Mass Effecting the Thousand Suns

by Stew "DigitalRaven" Wilson
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INTRODUCTION

This is a compendium of changes to James Maliszewski’s Thousand Suns roleplaying game to better emulate the world of the Mass Effect series of video games. Much of this information is based on the work of fans at the Mass Effect Wiki.

Mass Effect is an imperial SF story at its heart, and that makes Thousand Suns a very good fit to the universe. Most of the work in adapting one to the other is creating the traits for alien creatures, adapting Tech Powers and Biotics, and creating listings for the various items of technology that make the Mass Effect world so compelling.

While I write this document with the intention of it being a one-stop shop for Mass Effecting the Thousand Suns, it’s up to individual groups which parts they choose to use. Enterprising GMs may create whole new sets of traits for the most common robots, or add in threats and creatures from the third game. Others may want to use the new Biotic and Tech powers without bothering with the re-done technology and equipment, or just want to strip out the Morality rules for their home games.

However you use it, I hope you find this file to your satisfaction.

Oh, and if you’re looking at the front page and thinking “Ow, my printer!”, well, that’s why Page 2 is another title page.

Acknowledgements

In addition to the hopefully obvious thanks due to James Maslizewski for creating Thousand Suns, thanks is also due many people on RPG.net, especially Dropkicker and Kiero, for their ideas, feedback, and comments.

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As I write this, I’ve just found out that my preorder isn’t going to arrive on release day after all, what with it being after five on release day
Character Creation

Mass Effect characters tend to be larger than life. To reflect that, they start with 33 points to distribute between ability scores, rather than 30.

Being considered for Spectre membership is a 2-point Benefit, as is membership in C-Sec, the Citadel Fleet, or a military, police, or mercenary organization. Being a Spectre is a 3-point benefit. Benefit points converted to Assets give 2,000$ rather than 10,000$.

Species

This section doesn’t include Collectors, Elcor, Hanar, Volus, and Vorcha—the majority of these species don’t appear in combat roles; those that do are solely antagonists. And while Blasto the Hanar Spectre would be funny to play, we don’t have enough information to make decisions about how to make a playable Hanar.

Most characters rely on the machine translation provided by their personal hardware (see Omni-Tool). Characters start with a language from their species, and all communication is translated into that language. Characters who pick up additional languages through their careers can either choose to increase a language they already know, or pick up a new language (human or alien).

Asari: A mono-gender race—distinctly feminine in appearance—the asari are known for their elegance, diplomacy, and biotic talent. Their millennia-long lifespan and unique physiology—allowing them to reproduce with a partner of any gender or species—give them a conservative but convivial attitude toward other races. The asari were instrumental in proposing and founding the Citadel Council, and have been at the heart of galactic society ever since.

Culture (Asari) 2, Empathy 1, Language (Asari) 2, Mental Contact 1, Presence +1, Curious, and 6 bonus points to spend.

Batarians: A race of four-eyed bipeds native to the world of Khar’shan, the batarians are a disreputable species that chose to isolate itself from the rest of the galaxy. The Terminus Systems are infested with batarian pirate gangs and slaving rings, fueling the stereotype of the batarian thug. It should be noted that these criminals do not represent average citizens, who are forbidden to leave batarian space by their omnipresent and paranoid government.
Culture (Batarian) 2, Language (Batarian) 2, Intimidation 1, Streetwise 1, Hypersensitivity, and 9 bonus points to spend.

**Drell:** The drell are a reptile-like race that were rescued from their dying homeworld by the hanar following first contact between the two. Since then, the drell have remained loyal to the hanar for their camaraderie and have fit comfortably into galactic civilization.

Culture (Drell) 2, Language (Drell) 2, Observe 1, Body +1, Humid Susceptibility, Eidetic Memory, and 7 bonus points to spend.

**Geth:** The geth are a race of networked artificial intelligences that reside beyond the Perseus Veil. The geth were created by the quarians, as laborers and tools of war. When the geth became sentient and began to question their masters, the quarians attempted to exterminate them. The geth won the resulting war, and reduced the quarians to a race of nomads. Each geth platform runs hundreds or thousands of individual programs.

Computers 2, Culture (Geth) 2, Language (Geth) 2, Observe 1, Perception +1, Armor Restricition, Echolocator, Eidetic Memory, Pheromone Repulsion\(^2\), and 6 bonus points to spend.

**Human:** Humans, from the planet Earth, are the newest sentient species of notable size to enter the galactic stage and are hands-down the most rapidly expanding and developing. They independently discovered a Prothean data cache on Mars in 2148, and the mass relay networks shortly thereafter.

Culture (Human) 2, Language (one human), and 10 bonus points to spend.

**Krogan:** Due to the brutality of their surroundings, natural selection has played a significant role in the evolution of the krogan. Unlike most species on the Citadel, krogan eyes are wide-set – on Earth this is distinctive of prey animals, but in this case it gives the krogan 240-degree vision, giving them greater visual acuity and awareness of approaching predators. Prior to the genophage, krogan could reproduce and mature at an astonishing rate.

\(^2\) The geth are hated by many species in Citadel space. They suffer the penalty for Pheromone Repulsion without a range limit. Each Geth platform has an internal radar that uses the same rules as Echolocation.
Culture (Krogan) 1, Language (Krogan), Melee 0, Unarmed Combat 0, Body +2, Armor Restriction, Attack Bonus (+1), Natural Armor (AV 4), Ultra Immune System, and 4 bonus points to spend.

**Quarian:** The quarians are a nomadic species of humanoid aliens known for their skills with technology and synthetic intelligence. Since their homeworld Rannoch was conquered, the quarians live aboard the Migrant Fleet, a huge collection of starships that travel as a single fleet.

Culture (Quarian) 2, Culture (Geth) 2, Language (Quarian) 2, Computer 1, Technical Sciences 1, Medical Sciences 1, Perception +1, Armor Restriction, Frailty, and 10 bonus points to spend.

**Salarian:** The second species to join the Citadel, the salarians are warm-blooded amphibians native to the planet Sur’Kesh. Salarians possess a hyperactive metabolism; they think fast, talk fast, and move fast. To salarians, other species seem sluggish and dull-witted, especially the elcor. Unfortunately, their metabolic speed leaves them with a relatively short lifespan; salarians over the age of 40 are a rarity.

Culture (Salarian) 2, Language (Salarian) 2, Observe 1, Dexterity +1, Perception +1, Armor Restriction, Curious, Eidetic Memory, Hypersensitivity, and 6 bonus points to spend.

**Turian:** Originally from the planet Palaven, turians are best known for their military role, particularly their contributions of soldiers and starships to the Citadel Fleet. They are respected for their public service ethic—it was the turians who first proposed creating C-Sec—but are sometimes seen as imperialist or rigid by other races. There is some animosity between turians and humans, largely due to the turian role in the First Contact War. This bitterness is slowly beginning to heal—as shown by the cooperation of the two races on the construction of the SSV Normandy—but many turians still hate humans, and vice versa.

Culture (Turian) 2, Language (Turian) 2, Shoot 1, Tactics 1, Will +1, Armor Restriction, Damage Reduction (Radiation, AV 4), Natural Weapon (Claws, DV 1), and 8 bonus points to spend.

**Homeworld Packages**

Mostly, homeworld packages can be handled by renaming the packages provided in the *Thousand Suns* rulebook. The “Core Worlds” packages instead apply to the Citadel.
“Civilized” covers advanced colonies and most homeworlds—Pavalen, or Ilium. The “Marches” packages apply to less developed colonies like Eden Prime. “Spacer” applies to characters born in space. “Wildspace” covers stations in the Terminus Systems; as such, low-tech Wildspace locations are very rare.

**Career Packages**

Most protagonists in *Mass Effect* take some level in Army, Bounty Hunter, Criminal, Law Enforcer, Marine, Navy, Rebel, Scientist, Esper, and ESPO. It’s rare to find a protagonist (as opposed to a supporting character) who doesn’t have at least Novice in one of those. ESPO is particularly useful to reflect a character with military biotic training, while Esper reflects a natural biotic talent.

A character who takes a career that offers Technical Sciences at 4 or above can reduce her Technical Sciences rank by 1 to take a Tech Power specialty. Alternatively, a character can take Technical Sciences with a single Tech Power specialty in place of a biotic power, at one less than the rank of the power.

**Example:** Daniella is making a sentinel, who has a range of biotic and tech powers. She chooses Novice Trader/Experienced ESPO. She chooses Barrier and Pull as her biotic powers, and Overload as a tech power. She already has Technical Sciences 2 from her Trader career. Her Tech Power gives her Technical Sciences (Overload) at 3, which adds to her existing Technical Sciences as normal, leaving her with Technical Sciences (Overload) 3.

As many weapons need a Shoot specialty to use, any career package that gives the Shoot skill at 4 or above converts one of those ranks into a specialty. A character can’t lower his Shoot skill to lower than 3 from any given career in this way.

**Example:** Talos is a Veteran Law Enforcement, which normally gives Shoot 6. Danny, playing Talos, believes his Turian should be familiar with shotguns and assault rifles. Talos thus has Shoot (Assault Rifle, Shotgun) 4.

Due to the new systems around Tech Powers, the Infiltrator career is available to characters.

**Infiltrator**

An Infiltrator is a combat engineer—someone skilled with using tech powers and applying them to combat advantage. Trained both as a soldier and as savant engineer, an Infiltrator can be the turning point of a battle, overheating an enemy’s weapons or en-
hancing a squad’s weaponry. Most military cultures retain Infiltrators, often as long-range combat experts.

**Novice:** Perception +1, Athletics 2, Defend 2, Dodge 2, Melee 2, Profession (Infiltrator) 1, Resist 2, Shoot 2, Technical Sciences 2, Tactics 2, Unarmed Combat 2, any two Tech Power specialties.

**Experienced:** Perception +1, Athletics 3, Defend 4, Dodge 4, Intrusion 3, Melee 3, Observe 2, Profession (Infiltrator) 3, Resist 4, Shoot (Sniper Rifle) 4, Tactics 4, Technical Sciences 6, Unarmed Combat 4, any three Tech Power specialties.

**Veteran:** Perception +1, Athletics 4, Defend 5, Dodge 6, Intrusion 6, Melee 4, Observe 5, Profession (Infiltrator) 5, Resist 6, Shoot (Sniper Rifle) 6, Tactics 6, Technical Sciences 6, Unarmed Combat 4, any five Tech Power specialties.
Biotics

Biotics refers to the ability of some individuals to generate mass-effect fields, caused by natal exposure to element zero. Asari are the only known natural biotics among the known species; they can pick up Biotic skills at any point. Other races can only acquire Biotic skills by selecting the Esper or ESPO careers.

Biotics are handled in the same way that Thousand Suns handles psychic skills. The list is rather different between the two games. The following powers use existing psychic skills:

- Barrier (Telekinetic Shield)
- Pull (Telekinesis)
- Reave (Telekinetic Grip)
- Slam/Throw (Telekinetic Blast)

Throw and Slam both use the rules for a Telekinetic Blast, but are bought as separate powers. Slam throws the target straight up rather than back on a failed Dexterity test, dealing an additional 1D12 damage in enclosed spaces.

Affecting Shielded Characters

It’s hard, but not impossible, for a character to use biotic abilities against shielded individuals. Characters who have active shields (see Technology) can be targeted by biotic powers, but the TN of the skill check is increased by +2 per remaining shield.

New Biotic Skills

Charge (Body)

**Action:** 1 • **Performed On:** Self • **Cost:** 4

The character uses biotics to augment speed and strength, and charges across the battlefield towards a target. This culminates in a powerful collision that sends unprotected enemies flying backward, inflicting massive damage. The character travels in a straight line, ignoring all obstacles. Everyone within 5m of the character’s destination takes damage equal to the ranks in this power plus the degrees of success on a Charge skill test. In addition, the target must achieve more degrees of success on a Dexterity test than the biotic achieved or fly back 1 meter per degree of success and be knocked prone.
Singularity (Perception)

**Action:** 1 (Maintenance) • **Performed On:** Others • **Cost:** 6

The biotic launches a dark energy sphere to create an intense mass effect field. The field creates a warp in the space-time continuum, creating a gravity well akin to a black hole. The biotic makes a Singularity test opposed by the Body of everyone within 3 metres of the Singularity. If the biotic wins, the target is helpless and levitated out of cover, unable to move or attack for as long as the biotic maintains this power.

Stasis (Perception)

**Action:** 1 • **Performed On:** Others • **Cost:** 4

A biotic can hold a creature in his line of sight by making a Stasis test. If successful, the target cannot move or attack for a number of turns equal to the ranks in the power plus the degrees of success. If the target makes a successful Resist test, he’s held for half duration. While held in stasis, the target takes no damage.

Warp (Perception)

**Action:** 1 • **Performed On:** Others • **Cost:** 4

A biotic can spawn a Mass Effect field that destroys an opponent’s armor by making a Warp test. If successful, the target’s armor (and any telekinetic shield) is reduced by the ranks in the power, for one round per degree of success. If the target has been affected by other biotic powers this round, Warp deals damage equal to the ranks in the power for each other biotic power, and ends that power’s duration (if any).
Decide at character creation how to divide your 5 Action Points between Paragon and Renegade, and make a note of the split. Each can be spent as normal, with the following caveats:

**Paragon Points**
If you use a Paragon point on an action that is clearly Paragon (GM decides if the table’s unsure), treat it as though you have a Hook. If you also have a Hook, you gain both benefits: a +2 to your TN and a re-roll if needed, though further Paragon points only give you one of the two benefits.

If an action is clearly Renegade (GM decides if the table’s unsure), you can’t spend a Paragon point on that action.

**Renegade Points**
If you use a Renegade point on an action that is clearly Renegade (GM decides if the table’s unsure), treat it as though you have a Hook. If you also have a Hook, you gain both benefits: a +2 to your TN and a re-roll if needed, though further Renegade points only give you one of the two benefits.

If an action is clearly Paragon (GM decides if the table’s unsure), you can’t spend a Paragon point on that action.

**Regaining Points**
You regain all Paragon and Renegade points at the start of each session. At a particularly dramatic moment, the GM may let you permanently shift your balance of Paragon:Renegade, but only one point at a time.

When you buy another action point with experience, decide whether it’s a Paragon point or a Renegade point.
Tech Powers

A character needs two things to use a Tech Power: the components for the power in her Omni-Tool, and a Technical Sciences specialization in the specific Tech Power. This is a Trained Specialization, characters with the right omni-tool components but no specialization suffer the unskilled penalty as normal.

To use a Tech Power, make a Tech Sciences roll. On a success, the power activates, and lasts for that action unless otherwise noted. Using a Tech Power stresses a character’s omni-tool. Each power has a cooldown. This indicates how many rounds the character must wait before using any other Tech Power.

AI Hacking
This power can only be used against robots. The target does whatever the character commands for one round per degree of success. The target also regains half of its maximum shields. This power does not work against enemies with active shields.

Cooldown 6

Cryo Blast
Your target suffers a –6 penalty to all Dexterity rolls. If this penalty is higher than his Dexterity, he’s frozen solid. This penalty stacks with the penalty applied by Cryo Ammo. This power does not work against enemies with active shields.

Cooldown 2

Energy Drain
You channel your enemy’s Shields into your own. Reduce the target’s Shields by one for every three degrees of success on the test (minimum 1). You recharge one Shield for each one drained.

Cooldown 4

Flashbang
You deploy a flashbang grenade. Everyone within 2m of your target must succeed at a Body test at –2 or be stunned and unable to act for one round.

Cooldown 3

Hardened Shields
You gain one Shield per degree of success, up to a maximum of twice your normal number of shields. Any shields remaining above your maximum deactivate at the end.
of this power’s cooldown.

**Cooldown** 6

**Incinerate**

You set your target on fire. He takes 2d12 damage now, and a further 8 damage each round at the start of his action. This power does not work against enemies with active Shields.

**Cooldown** 3

**Neural Shock**

You interfere with your opponent’s synapses. Lower his Initiative rank by your degree of success. If you reduce his Initiative rank to 0, he cannot act this turn. This power cannot be used on robots, and does not work on enemies with active Shields.

**Cooldown** 3

**Overload**

Reduce your opponent’s Shields by one for every two degrees of success on the test (minimum 1). If used against a robot, treat as a Neural Shock.

**Cooldown** 2, 3 vs robots.

**Ammo Powers**

Ammo powers are a subset of Tech Powers. All the rules for Tech Powers apply to ammo powers. Once turned on, a given ammo power remains active until the character disables it. A character can only activate one ammo power at once, and can be deactivated whenever the character wants. All ammo powers have cooldown 1, which takes effect when a character *deactivates* the power.

**Armor Piercing**

A weapon that’s enhanced with Armor Piercing Ammo treats the target’s AV as half its normal value.

**Cryo**

A weapon that’s enhanced with Cryo Ammo deals damage as normal. On a damaging hit, it applies a Dexterity penalty much like a Tangler gun.
**Disruptor**
A weapon that’s enhanced with Disruptor Ammo strips an additional shield on each hit. When firing at robots, increase the weapon’s damage by 2, and increase the maximum damage by 50%.

**Incendiary**
A weapon that’s enhanced with Incendiary Ammo can set a target alight. At the start of his turn, a character who has taken damage from incendiary ammo takes 4 points of fire damage.

**Warp**
A weapon that’s enhanced with Warp Ammo ignores any AV from a character’s biotic barriers. It also strips a second shield if a hit deals more than 35 damage (rather than 50).
**Technology**

The technology of *Mass Effect* is what draws a lot of people to the setting. This section helps translate much of what’s present in the games into *Thousand Suns* terms.

**Shields**

Kinetic barriers are repulsive mass effect fields projected from tiny emitters. These shields safely deflect small objects traveling at rapid velocities. This affords protection from bullets and other dangerous projectiles, but still allows the user to sit down without knocking away their chair.

Characters who have kinetic barriers—most of them will—have a number of Shields. When a shielded character is shot, she loses one shield. If the shot would have done more than 50 points of damage, she loses an additional shield. If the firer is using automatic fire (an option on submachine guns and assault rifles), she loses an additional shield. These two are cumulative—an autofire burst that deals 55 damage strips 3 shields. Shields only apply against firearms damage, not melee combat.

A character can make a Technical Sciences roll to recharge her shields. Doing so takes an action in combat, and recharges a number of shields equal to the degree of success on the roll (up to a maximum of her armor’s shields as normal). Shields also recharge at the end of each fight.

**Robots**

Several factions in the *Mass Effect* universe use robots as guards and security personnel.

**YMIR Mech**

As the War Drone in *Thousand Suns*.

**LOKI Mech**

As the Personal Assistant Robot in *Thousand Suns*, with Shoot 4 and an M–4 Locust submachine gun.

**FENRIS Mech**

As the Security Robot in *Thousand Suns*. 
**Weapons**

Available weapons include the pistol, submachine gun, shotgun, sniper rifle, and assault rifle. Their stats are as follows. Note that the assault rifle does not include a grenade launcher.

Characters attempting to use an assault rifle, shotgun, or sniper rifle without an appropriate Shoot specialty suffer the unskilled penalty when using one of those weapons.

Most weapons have large ammo reserves, and reloading is automatic. A character runs out of ammo for one specific weapon if his player rolls a Dramatic Failure on a Shoot action.

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Damage</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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<tr>
<td>M–8 Avenger</td>
<td>4(60)</td>
<td>30m</td>
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<td>S</td>
<td>350$</td>
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<tr>
<td>M–6 Carnifex</td>
<td>4(65)</td>
<td>9m</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>500$</td>
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<td>5(70)</td>
<td>10m</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>950$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M–27 Scimitar</td>
<td>4(60)</td>
<td>20m</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>650$</td>
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<td>4(65)</td>
<td>22m</td>
<td>S/A</td>
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</table>
ARMOR

Characters can use light, medium, and heavy combat armor. This armor has the computer and communications capabilities described for the Militisto Armor in the book, and all suits can be locked down to operate in space and hostile environments.

Some species cannot use human-standard armor. Geth upgrade their frames directly, while Krogan, Quarian, Salarians, and Turians can only use armor made for their specific body types. To represent this, species that have Armor Restriction increase all armor costs after character creation by 50%, and must succeed at a Bargain roll in order to find a vendor.

Aldrin Labs’ Onyx armor is the standard-issue armor of most police forces and military units.

Explorer Armor is hardened against environmental hazards. Wearers are immune to radiation and take half damage from fire.

Sirta Foundation’s Phoenix armor is designed to keep the user running, by trickle-feeding medi-gel from an internal reservoir. While wearing it, a character regains one point or Vitality each round, at the start of his action.

Predator armor is the highest-grade military armor available on the black market.

<table>
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<th>Bulk</th>
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</tbody>
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All characters start play with a suit of light Onyx combat armor, an omni-tool, and an M–3 Predator pistol. They’ll probably be issued with a ship in short order. Characters looking to buy better armor can sell their light Onyx armor for 2000$.

**Additional Equipment**

Many characters will have access to some or all of these items.

**Omni-Tool**

The omni-tool itself is a combination computer and general-purpose engineering device that fabricates tools and equipment as needed. It acts as a translator, computer, holographic recorder and player, full translation software, and can create lockpicks and any other equipment needed to use a character’s skills. An omni-tool can be upgraded with a number of options. Characters start play with an omni-tool at no cost.

Cost 2,500$

**Monoblade**

The monoblade costs the same amount as in the *Thousand Suns* rulebook, and has the same stats. It’s built in to the Omni-Tool, which fabricates a blade on an as-needed basis then deconstructs it so the user can still use both hands.

Cost 450$

**Grenade Launcher**

The grenade launcher is a military-grade omni-tool accessory. The omni-tool fabricates small explosive devices and projects them at high speeds. The grenade launcher must be bought with at least one grenade template (the same price as a box of grenades). Changing an installed grenade template takes about five minutes. The range and so on is based on the Personal Grenade Launcher.

Cost 1,100$

**Combat Cloak**

The combat cloak provides the character with complete invisibility for his next action. Enemies can neither dodge nor defend an attack from a cloaked shooter. The cloaking device can be used once per combat, it can be re-set by the character taking an action and making a successful Technical Sciences roll.

Cost 1,500$
**Combat Drone**
The combat drone creates a small (1m spherical) hovering drone. The drone can move and attack on the character’s action, but doesn’t have a controlling VI. The character can direct the drone to attack any character (the drone’s attack uses the stats of a laser pistol), the drone can hover at the same speed as the character that created it. The drone has AV 6, Vitality 30, and no shields. Creating a combat drone takes an action, if destroyed, it takes a character two consecutive actions and a successful Technical Sciences roll to re-create.

**Cost** 1,000$  

**Shield Modulator**
An enhanced capacity rig that increases the power output of military-grade kinetic barriers. A suit can handle three Shield Modulators (sold separately), one on the greaves, one on the chest, and one on the shoulders. Each one increases a suit’s Shields by 1.

**Cost** 750$  

**Tech Shields**
This enhancement channels a biotic’s Barrier through her armor’s kinetic barrier matrix. The cost of the Barrier power increases to 3, but the AV granted by the Barrier is double the degrees of success on the biotic’s Barrier roll.

**Cost** 1,800$  

**Medi-gel**
Each dose of Medi-gel, when administered by via her armor’s computer or a medical facility, allows a character to regain lost Vitality up to one third of her total.

**Cost** 60$/dose  

**Omni-gel**
Omni-gel can be used to force electronic locks and security systems to deactivate. It has a TN of 15 for the sole purpose of disabling locks and security systems.

**Cost** 50$/dose  

**Ammo Powers (each)**
An omni-tool must have special components and subroutines installed to use an ammo-based Tech Power. An enhanced ammo power affects everyone that the character chooses, but each weapon can only benefit from one active ammo power at once (the weapon’s user chooses which).
Cost 350$
Cost (enhanced) 900$

**Tech Powers (each)**

An omni-tool must have special components and subroutines installed to use a Tech Power, which requires military-grade technology. An enhanced Tech Power component either adds two to the degrees of success to activate the Power, or affects everyone in a 5m radius (choose one when the component is installed). A character cannot use a Tech Power without the appropriate components installed in his omni-tool.

Cost 520$
Cost (enhanced) 1,100$