

An E-Z Guide to Cthulhu Weaponry

Part II

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The use of weapons in the game CTHULHU LIVES raises a number of difficult and important questions for anyone who wishes to participate safely in the game. Many of the decisions regarding weaponry must fall upon the Keeper, however, players too must carry a great amount of responsibility when they utilize weapons. If properly used, weapons can be a great boon to the game, adding realism and combative excitement. However, in all cases they serve only to represent real weapons, and under no circumstances should anyone use any kind of real weapon in a game context.

Naturally, the first and foremost consideration in using weapons of any sort is safety. All of the weapons described in Part I of the E-Z Guide can be safely simulated in game context. In addition, many other sorts of weapons can be used and the Society hopes to be able to offer seminars in armed and unarmed stage combat, to add to the combative resources of Investigators and NPCs alike. Although it can be tempting, it is not wise to ever allow realism to overrun safety. Imagination is the key to maintaining a balance of excitement and precaution.

Time has shown that the most constant weapon used by players is the trusty cap gun. They come in all different sizes and shapes and range in price from roughly \$2 to \$80 for detailed replicas. Most have a percussive hammer that strikes a small explosive charge which makes an adequate "bang." They fire no projectile and are only remotely dangerous when fired immediately next to the eyes, ears, or other sensitive organs. So, in terms of safety and realism, the cap gun is a good choice for Investigators, thugs, and other assorted troublemakers.

A new weapon has arisen in the last year in the CTHULHU LIVES scene, and it can be used, but only with careful considerations. The Daisy Co. produces a line of full-scale plastic guns which are marketed under the name of Soft Air. The guns use spring-powered realistic firing mechanisms to shoot a .25 calibre plastic pellet at a moderate velocity; a Soft Air shot from twenty feet against bare skin gives a good sting but little more. The best use of these guns for the game is for the user to remove the clip and check to be absolutely sure the chamber is empty. The gun's own spring will then make a loud enough noise without firing any sort of projectile. If a Keeper has prepared a special adventure in which he/she specifically requests the use of loaded Soft Air guns, then with protective eyeguards they may be used in play, with targeting from the waist down only.

Rifles have so far been uncommon in CTHULHU LIVES, however most of the rules for cap guns apply towards rifles as well. Rifles which shoot caps are available at better toy stores. Single shot air rifles may be used with the same precautions as the Soft Air, however, BB guns should be avoided for any game purposes. Dummy wooden guns may be used so long as the user doesn't mind yelling "bang" as he mimes firing the weapon.

Knives and other hand held weapons are rather varied in terms of their construction and use. Many novelty stores have two kinds of knives which work well: the rubber bladed dagger, and the plastic "switchblade" which has a retracting blade. Both look like knives, but neither is dangerous under all but the most perverse circumstances. Foam clubs, rubber nunchaku, and the blackjack made of a pair of socks have all worked well. For improvising weapons, the best bet is to try to make the weapon resemble what it really is and then devise a soft and harmless facsimile. Again, imagination is helpful.

Heavier forms of artillery require a bit more planning and (yet again) imagination to successfully execute (no pun intended). After several experimentations, dynamite has been made into a playable CTHULHU LIVES weapon. We have taken 1-inch dowel rod, covered it with foam pipe insulation, painted it red, and added a piece of string for a fuse. The result looks vaguely like dynamite and can be thrown nearly anywhere without threat of damaging property or people. Detonation can be a bit tricky; if a Keeper is on hand, then he can wait an appropriate amount of time before yelling "boom" for the players. Assume damage to be substantial to anything near. For the enterprising and detail obsessed, a firecracker may be added (only in states where it's legal, of course) with an extended fuse which will then burn and give a much more specific and less dependable explosion. With this method, however, safety of players and positioning of dynamite must be considered more carefully. Nonetheless, it can be well used in the game by enterprising characters and Keepers. Grenades and other small scale explosives may be simulated similarly to dynamite.

{Note: In years subsequent to the original publication of this article, some Keepers used water balloons to simulate small explosives like hand grenades and dynamite to excellent effect.}

In using any kind of weapon in CTHULHU LIVES, it is important to recognize that the Keeper has the final say and decides what is safe and usable and what is not. As a Keeper, one must accept this and give careful consideration to what weapon policy will be. Always think when employing weapons and avoid "getting caught up" in the action and acting dangerously, because your mistake could have serious consequences for someone else. The successful use of weapons also calls for honesty from everyone involved, since many issues such as whether a bullet fired from a cap gun hit its target must be left to the discretion and integrity of those involved. Remember, character demise is really no great loss, and the injury or death can add much excitement to a situation.

As a final note: the when, where, and why of weapon use in the game should be considered. First, consider whether your character would carry and use any sort of weapon. If they would, then what kind of weapon would it be and under what circumstances would they use it? Remember that aside from soldiers, police officers, and criminals on duty, very few people carry weapons under any circumstances. It is a great test of player skill and ingenuity to negotiate a difficult situation unarmed. Secondly, everyone should always avoid carrying or using weapons in public areas; people outside of the game don't know what's going on, and numerous bad situations could arise out of their fear. Try never to "flash" weapons anywhere where they could cause a problem. Keepers are well advised to stage combative scenarios on private property or in remote and obscure locations. If by some extreme circumstance the police should become involved in any situation, drop any exposed weapons, inform the officer that you have a toy weapon on your person, and follow the officer's instructions exactly. The police have no way of knowing or understanding CTHULHU LIVES, and this kind of situation is no place for humor or jokes. Always cooperate fully until the situation is resolved. This kind of problem can usually be averted by good Keeper planning and careful play by the characters. If these weapon guidelines are followed, then weapons can safely play an important role in CTHULHU LIVES.

