



DeEvolution FAQ

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By Scot Hoover

Q: What's this DeEvolution thing all about anyways?

A: DeEvolution is my own brand of twisted post-apocalyptic netbooks & supplements for the 1st and 2nd editions of Gamma World, the science-fantasy role-playing game originally published by TSR in the early 1980's. I chose the name DeEvolution for two reasons. The first may be obvious to Gamma World fans, who know it as one of the wackier mutations available to player characters. The second is because, in my mind, the variety of different editions have had one thing in common...they haven't been progressively better or even more beautiful, just the opposite. Frankly, ever since the half-finished third edition hit the shelves, the fans have been given less and less for more and more money. If a gamer wanted to start playing the latest D20 incarnation from White Wolf they would need to spend well over 100 dollars to get roughly the same range of material found in the very first edition rulebook from TSR. Even worse, everyone who has ever been given a Gamma World product to write simply has to revamp the entire milieu to fit whatever trend in gaming is current at the moment or even worse, "correct" what they think must be deficiencies in the game or its setting. And always followed by yet *another* total revision even further removed from the last. This kind of shoddy commercial hackmanship would have condemned any other game to an early death. At least in the case of Gamma World, it appears the FANS who play the game know what the game is about even if TSR, WOTC, or White Wolf haven't a clue. To get back to the point, DeEvolution is about stripping away all of this detritus- crappy production values, dry and uninteresting writing, unplaytested crap direct from the publishers, material manhandled into Gamma World from other settings (a la Buck Rogers), missing or unreliable stats, and so on. What you're left with is pure Gamma World. And I won't tell you how NOT to play, either. I will give you the "essentials". From the real "Mark V" blaster to Death Machines to giant mutant chickens to powers of temporal manipulation, nothing will be excluded because it seems too "wahoo" or "outdated". If you think so, don't use it.

Q: Why don't you just write everything for D20? It's more modern, blah blah blah...

A: Ultimately, I only write about those games that I personally play. You'll not find any of this 'I play GURPS/write D20' hoo-ha here. That is the hallmark of the never-been-playtested hack. No one would think of buying a Chrysler from a guy who always drives a Toyota. When it comes to being the GM, I always stick with what has been proven to work on my table. If I'm swamped with the latest flash game mechanics, I'm not giving my players what they want. Again, to use the car metaphor, the passengers don't care if it's a V8 under the hood, they just want to MOVE! As far as I'm concerned, 1st and 2nd editions were pretty much complete, quick-paced and easy to play. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Q: Oh, come on, how can you expect people to even understand something so archaic?

A: It's not only possible, but a downright blast to teach someone how to play by just rolling up a mutant and playing. After all, who doesn't understand "Mental Blast 3d6 damage 3/day"? I like Classic Traveller, Call of Cthulhu, Risus and Warhammer FRP for the same reasons. These games don't require 10 page character sheets, whole supplements to explain a single character class, or even much (any?) rules knowledge on the part of the players. They DO require a lot of imagination though. And I suspect as gamers get older and become parents, these creative, fun and easy to learn rpgs will ultimately survive when the spreadsheet games are forgotten. Granted, the classic Gamma World system would not work in another genre (should you even try?) and it has some idiosyncratic 'retro' touches like weapon classes, ID cards, artifact flowcharts

and minimalist mutation descriptions which set it apart from the hipper feats, prestige classes, exhaustive milieus and graphics overload you'll find elsewhere. To go back to the auto analogy, this ain't no sleek Lamborghini, it's a classic 1978 Cadillac built to survive for years in the Wasteland. So get in the car or get outta the way.

Q: So, the rules don't change?

A: As far as the original game mechanics go, only the Status/Rank system has proved unworkable over the course of a long campaign. Most *players* just have to get personal experience outside of rank to be satisfied. After all, many *characters* have no real home or community to which they are loyal. They're far too liable to go heading off for the next rumored Mechland. Also useful here is the addition of skills and/or professions. Many 1st/2nd edition GMs have used some sort of homebrew system, again, to satisfy the campaign players who want more in-depth character development. In this vein, the third DeEvolution netbook will offer an optional character creation method with skills, experience, and professions (not to mention a lot of new Mutations!) Other than that, the rules found in DeEvolution netbooks will always be backward compatible with 1st and 2nd editions and any homebrew rules changes will be noted as optional.

Q: What have you released so far? What are your plans for the future?

A: The first DeEvolution netbook (released in April 2005) was the Mutant Manual II, a compilation of many out of print and new fan-made creatures meant to be a companion booklet to the first Mutant Manual, published in Dragon Magazines #107 & 108. The second (released in June 2005) was the Complete Post-Apocalyptic Scavenger's Field Guide, a compilation, this time of equipment and artifacts from across all the various TSR editions of Gamma World. The third in the big DeEvolution trilogy will be the tentatively-titled Project Genome, a sourcebook for character generation with optional rules, new mutations, and stock NPCs. Also, still in the *it's-in-my-head-and-I-can't-get-it-out* stage is the Allegheny Rough Guide, an updated and expanded Pitz Burke campaign sourcebook. Concurrent with these netbooks, will be an ongoing series of articles and web- enhancements dealing with these and other Gamma World topics, including gamemastering aids, maps, Cryptic Alliances, and even a short story or two.

Q: How much does it cost?

A: Nothing. Zero. Absolutely no domars accepted, please. Maybe I've been corrupted by living in communist Vietnam for the past 6 years, but the rampant capitalism in today's gaming world makes me sick. Ten years ago and earlier, it took a lot of work and time to produce an RPG for sale. Real live playtesting was almost inevitable, and companies had a line, which set them apart from the rest, if only in the sheer effort and time invested. Today, everyone with a computer and a word processor is pulling whatever comes out of their ass and flogging it, usually with a worthless preview to tempt the buyer. There are two things that really bug me about this. First, this mass of unused and unuseable material is feeding a market for the unplayable 'literary rpg'. Lacking a plot, most of this stuff fits into the category of needless trivia and background useful only for someone writing a trade paperback (read any of the Forgotten Realms gaming novels to see where that leads!). The idea that I should be inspired by someone else's overcooked verbosity is dumb. Second, I can remember a day when much of what people try to sell today, was once called "My Website". Free, in other words. I could choose to punch the Back button and get outta there, or stay, read, download, and enjoy. In any case, I could always be sure the author wasn't padding it out at 5 cents a word to make a proper \$19.99 chapbook, or even worse, adding the Open Gaming License to a magazine article and selling it as a "Supplement".

Throughout the late 90's I was heavily into the Warhammer FRP community, during a time when any new published material was hard to find. The game didn't die. Incredibly, over the course of a few years, more than 200mb of high-quality material was posted to the WFRP Mailing List Archives, three zines started publication, and a hardcore group of a few fans wrote more than 5 high-quality netbooks any one of which could stand alongside the 'canon' for-sale material. The same

has happened in many other OOP gaming circles. Not because folks wanted to start a career as a “Role-playing Professional” or wanted to supplement their income, but because they simply loved playing the games.

This is my hobby, not my life. But I am very passionate about my hobby, just as I am with my life. When I go to work, I expect a SALARY. When I play a game, I expect to have FUN. That’s what I offer you. Take the netbooks, use them as you will, but most importantly HAVE FUN. If you simply can’t handle the ‘non-capitalist’ nature of free stuff and have to pay for it- send a care package to a soldier in Iraq, contribute to a favorite charity, or take your kids out for ice cream.

Q: Ok, so where can I get it?

A: All DeEvolution materials will be posted to as many Gamma World sites as possible, particularly the Gammaworld mailing group on Yahoo and Paul William’s Post-Apocalyptic Forge. As a new host becomes available, I will post copies there as well. Watch the Gammaworld list for news updates on DeEvolution releases. I regret that I cannot send individual copies by email request, but I will respond with download links if requested. See below for my contact information.

Q: Can I comment/contribute?

A: Absolutely. In fact, while cash is not accepted, I insist on feedback. I love the instant ego-gratification, but more importantly, without this kind of ongoing ‘conversation’ about Gamma World, the game might disappear forever. If you find something you disagree with/hate/burst a blood vessel over I encourage you to put hand to keyboard and fire back an angry response, or better yet- do it your way and write a netbook that will infuriate me!

Contributions of all stripes are accepted, especially artwork and fiction. Again, don’t expect any kind of payment, but it will be used.

Q: How can I contact you?

A: As I have unreliable net access, I’m unable to have a proper website. Hopefully, this will change in the near future (upgrading to ADSL!), but I live in a third-world country with rather restrictive policies so don’t count on it. Any comments, questions, or homebrew stuff should be sent to me at:

Kellri23@yahoo.com