

# **The Time Agency**

## **UKLTA Laser Larp Setting Guide**

**Version 1.0**

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# Introduction

This forms the player & GM handbook for UKLTA LARPs about *The Time Agency* at Dropzone 2019. A revised version without Dropzone specific information will be released in the future if there is interest in running further games in this setting.

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## The Agency in Brief

From their secret base on Io in the 27th Century, the Time Agency patrol the timelines to ensure that the true history is preserved. They are up against rogue time travellers, temporal anomalies, and transdimensional beings.

Through the use of Time Windows which can open in weak spots in the Web of Time, they send Agents and Operatives back through history to protect the established continuity all the while being careful to avoid the dangers of Paradox.

When the Directors of the Time Agency decide to launch an intervention mission, they select a team of Agents and Operatives which is led by an Agent-in-Charge with overall responsibility and a Commander who orchestrates any military operations carried out by the team.

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## Strangers from out of town

Time Agency personnel are each equipped with Anachronism Concealment Equipment (ACE). This device emits a low-level psychic field which causes observers to rationalise anachronisms as the most period-appropriate alternative<sup>1</sup>. The device does have the unfortunate side effect of generating a sense of unease in the subject's subconscious, an effect which is more serious the greater the rationalisation required.

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## Creating a character

Different games have different needs. We hope that players will be able to play a mixture of NPC and PC roles throughout the weekend and that those who wish to play the same character whenever they are a PC will be able to do so. After reading through this section, please get in touch with the different GMs and express your preferences as to archetype along with a hint as to which skills you want to take. Our goal here is to avoid games where the player team has 6 engineers and no medics, or where there are 37 players and 6 crew. We hope that GMs will provide a survey to help with this (and are willing to help them set one up if they wish).

Once you know which archetype you are portraying:

1. Give the character a name
2. Select the character's skills
3. Send the details to the GM

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<sup>1</sup> A concept of the genre is that wearing a modern suit is not considered too out of place in the past. This is our rationalisation for that.



If players and GMs decide they like this “universe” and would like more, we will put in a system for character progression.

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## Archetypes

These are broad roles which, with the exception of NPCs/crew, are differentiated largely by costume and weapon requirements.

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## Agent

Agents are the face of the Agency. They are lightly armed but heavily skilled.



## Costume

### Standard

- Black combat boots<sup>2</sup>
- Black suit<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Smart black shoes would look better, but we play these games in woodland. Sensible footwear should take priority over the look of the costume.

<sup>3</sup> May be omitted in hot weather



- Black tie<sup>4</sup>
- White shirt
- Black sunglasses are a popular accessory

#### Undercover

- Period costume for the mission's target time zone

#### Weaponry

- A pistol

#### Skills

- Pistol
- 5 additional points to spend in the Skill section

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### Operative

Operatives are primarily called upon for the application (or threat thereof) of brute force.



#### Costume

- Black combat boots
- Black combat trousers
- Black shirt

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<sup>4</sup> May be loosened in hot weather





- Black combat vest

## Weaponry

- A big gun
- A pistol

## Skills

- Pistol
- Big Gun
- 3 additional point to spend in the Skill section

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## Skills

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### Skill use

How skills are applied with vary from skill to skill and game to game. Commonly a skill will either:

- Change what equipment you carry in game (e.g. allowing you to carry a bigger gun or configure your sensor to a higher number of hit points)
- Provide new ways to interact with non-player characters (such as linguistics) via roleplay
- Allow you to bypass obstacles (such as locks) or achieve other in game effects (such as destroying something with explosives) which may require a skill challenge.

Many skill descriptions give example uses for the skill. These descriptions are not intended to be exhaustive. Consult a GM if you think a skill may be useful in a situation.

Skills do not replace the need for proper equipment. For example, a detailed chemical analysis of an unknown compound would usually require the chemistry skill and access to a laboratory.

Sometimes skills can be combined to provide more information or a better or faster success. Consult a GM if you wish to combine skills. One person may hold both skills or two may work together to achieve a goal.

### Skill challenges

A skill challenge is an abstract task which a player performs to represent the time and possibility of failure when using a skill. GMs will set specific mechanisms which may include:

- Roleplaying the action for a specific amount of time
- Rolling dice until a certain total is achieved
- Achieving a certain score on a Bopit!



Opportunities to use a skill may be marked with the image shown to the right in combination with symbol identifying the skill. If it is accompanied by a number or further instructions (on the back of the “Challenge” card), then you can perform the skill challenge without a GM present. If the number is 0, the challenge is passed simply by having the skill and observing the area. If it does not have a number, consult a GM. Not all situations where a skill can be used will be marked, if you think a skill you have can help solve a problem then consult GM.



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## Skill list

All players start with points to spend as described in the archetype section. Each skill costs 1 point unless otherwise specified.

### Toughness Skills

#### Pain resist

*Cost: Operative: 1. Agent: 2.*  
1 additional hit point

#### Better... stronger... faster

*Cost: Operative: 1. Agent: 2.*  
1 additional hit point (stacks with pain resist)

### Combat skills

#### Big Gun

*Cost: Operative: Free. Agent: 2.*  
Allows you to be able to maintain and fire a rifle. Rifles can deal up to 2 points of damage using the DoT system<sup>5</sup>. Red-dot or telescopic sights are permitted. No special effects<sup>6</sup> without explicit permission from the GM.

#### Pistol

*Cost: Free.*  
Allows you to be able to maintain and fire a pistol. Pistols can deal 1 point of damage and may not have special effects without explicit permission from the GM.

#### Sleeper hold

*Cost: Operative: 1. Agent: 2.*  
Allows you to render an opponent unconscious for 5 minutes.

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<sup>5</sup> This is a default; a GM may declare 1 point weapons only or allow bigger weapons.

<sup>6</sup> Stun and poison weapons are cool, but get the GM to OK it first



To activate you must be behind your opponent while they are occupied in some activity or unaware of your presence. Then tell them you are using sleeper hold. (Please remember that this is a non-contact LARP).

Note that some armoured or non-human opposition may be immune to this ability.



#### Demolitions

*Cost: Operative: 1 Agent: 2*

This gives the ability to prepare, set and detonate explosive charges of various sizes.

This uses the H-Bomb Explosives & Demolitions System. Please see UKLTA handbook (link below) for more information:

<https://www.firefight.org.uk/documents/UKLTA-handbook-2009-05.pdf>

### Linguistics

You have a basic grasp of a wide variety of languages<sup>7</sup>. This is just enough to make yourself understood — most of the time — and pick up odd words in written texts. (RP guide - you may use pidgin speech within those languages, just like a stereotypical Brit on holiday abroad)



#### Linguistic expert

*Cost: Operative: 2. Agent: 1.*

You have a passable grasp (written and spoken) of five different human languages that were in use between 1000AD and 2600AD, but may miss nuance and could not pass as a native speaker.



#### Linguistic specialist

*Cost: Operative: 2. Agent: 1.*

You are fluent in a human language, have in-depth knowledge of a culture associated with it, and can pass as a native speaker.

### Knowledge skills

#### Historian



*Cost: Operative: 2. Agent: 1.*

You have a thorough knowledge of the history of humanity. This makes it easier to identify anachronisms and their likely effects on the timeline.

### Science Skills



#### Advanced computers

This skill may be used to hack systems, crack electronic locks, and search databases.

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<sup>7</sup> Coincidentally, these almost always correspond to the missions you go on on



Advanced mathematics

Can be used to crack mathematical codes e.g. electronic locks and encryption



Astronomy

This skill could be helpful to identify your physical and temporal location and recognise unusual astronomical events.



Biology

Can be used to identify causes of death, identify and safely handle infectious agents, and identify types of creature. It does not substitute for medical skills.



Chemistry

Can be used to identify materials, detect impurities, and improvise acids and explosives<sup>8</sup>.



Physics

Useful for analysing crash patterns, quantum effects, and spatial phenomena.



Forensics

Allows analysis of crime scenes. You can identify fingerprints, bodily fluids, DNA, soil samples, etc.

## Perception Skills



Distortion field sensitivity

You able to detect distortions in the space-time field



Interrogation

*Cost: Operative: 2 Agent: 1*

When questioning another character, this skill enables you to influence them into giving the truth but this must be roleplayed to have the greatest effect and a GM should be present to judge it.

## Surreptitious Skills

Conceal item

You are able to hide 1 small object about your person that cannot be discovered if you are searched.

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<sup>8</sup> It does not provide expertise in using said explosives. You may wish to find a demolitions expert.



## Forgery

You can fabricate documents, IDs and works of art. See your friendly GM prior to the start of game to see what scope they will allow you.



### Pick lock

You can open doors, safes and other locked items to which you have physical access.

## Technical Skills



### Engineering

You can fix, break, and determine the function of mechanical and electronic items.

## Medical Skills

### Field Medic

A fully trained medic can heal others. They can perform basic, life-saving surgery. Every crew should have one! Please see [Medical System](#) section of this booklet.

## Survival Skills



### Survival

Everything an agent or operative needs to survive in the wilderness. Find food and safe drinking water when cut off from civilisation. Track people through natural terrain. Identify usual behaviour among the local fauna.

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# Medical System

This medical system incorporates the use of the SIABs (see <https://www.firefight.org.uk/documents/> under technical manuals). Both GMs and any player with the Field Medic skill should familiarise themselves with the SIAB manual.

You will start with 4 hit points. You may add additional hit points as per your archetype or as part of your skill set.

When all of your hit points have been taken, you should scream/cry out in pain and fall to the floor.

A Field medic can heal you by using a SIAB. The SIAB will diagnose the patient, the severity of the injury and the time it will take to recover. This information can then be sent to the sensor which will commence a countdown, beeping every minute until fully recovered. The sensor will then make a sound similar to the start-up notification.

If after diagnosis, the SIAB determines that you have suffered a critical injury, please find a GM as soon as you can.



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## Life as a Time Agent 101

This section provides an overview of the essential aspects of life in the Time Agency. Please see [A Not-so Brief History of Time Travel](#) to put it all in context.

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### The 27th Century

Humanity has spread throughout the Solar System and, theoretically, united under a World Government. In practise, the further one goes from Earth, the more you will find colonies beholden more to corporate interests than the law or run as, effectively, independent nations.

Interstellar travel is not a regular part of life. Despite the existence of time travel, long distance space travel still needs to take place at sublight speeds. There have been a few attempts to launch interstellar colonies using generation ships or cryogenic stasis, but the outcomes of those missions are currently unknown.

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### Time travel and humanity at large

That Time Travel is possible is well known throughout the solar system. The Hernandez Incident was high profile news which rocked the world.

The law forbids the changing of history, and the Time Agency is tasked with ensuring that nobody does.

Not everybody agrees with those laws, but fear of what could happen to their own lives if the past were altered, means that the majority do.

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### Mechanics of time travel

Human time travel technology is based on wormholes known as Time Windows which connect two points of Space-Time.

Early physical time travel made use of permanent Windows found throughout the solar system, but heavily clustered around Jupiter. An area which the Time Agency patrols to ensure unauthorised and accidental passage through the Windows does not occur.

Most travel today makes use of short-lived, artificially generated Windows. Conditions must be right to open a wormhole, but it is usually possible to find a point within a mile and a few hours of the desired destination to which a wormhole can be opened within easy travelling distance.

Travel is possible via ship and, providing both ends of the Window open into a life sustaining environment, simply by walking. The Time Agency operates two ships — The *Yi Xing* and



The *Liang Lingzan* — designed specially to place an atmosphere around a Window which would otherwise open into space.

Human technology is currently able to open Windows to most of the solar system's history. Attempts to travel interstellar distances through space, or to points in time beyond the present day have been unsuccessful.

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## Threats

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### Accidental Time Travellers

Sometimes a ship strays too close to a Window, sometimes an unexpected temporal incident transports a hapless historical figure into the late 27th century. Time Agents need to find the lost traveller and return them, and any anachronistic technology they might have brought with them, to their home time period.

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### Criminal Time Travellers

Since the Windows became common knowledge, morally-challenged individuals and groups have seen a plethora of opportunities. Most criminals are in their line of "work" to make money and with the publicity surrounding the trial of the coterie, they hope to make a quick buck or billion themselves.

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### Idealists

Following the interplanetary revelation about the existence of Windows, plenty of people believed that they should be used to improve the world by undoing mistakes of the past.

Their idealism was laudable but as it was impossible to predict the outcome of such actions, it was forbidden by the the Planetary Government and strictly patrolled by the Time Agency.

Some people took this idea more seriously than others and have largely coalesced into two groups (with assorted minor splinter factions).

#### Utopia

An extremist organisation which attempts to achieve intervention by any means necessary using tactics which range from terrorist attacks in the present to illegal temporal interventions.

#### Repair

A legitimate political party which holds the same aims as Utopia, but attempts to achieve them within the law through political pressure. They are a fringe group, but not without sympathisers. They currently hold one seat in the World Parliament.



While there are no official ties between Utopia and Repair, it is inevitable that there are some connections. Investigations into Repair members, some very senior, have resulted in the arrest of Utopia terrorists.

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## Aliens

At least one group of mysterious travellers from an unidentified place and time with advanced technology whom the Time Agency has not yet been able to capture any of.

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## Time Wraiths

The shadowy, vaguely humanoid figures known as Time Wraiths appear when there is significant disruption to the timelines — particularly when a paradox is occurring. They appear to be attracted to chroniton particles and envelop temporally displaced objects and people before erasing them from time, one moment at a time<sup>9</sup>.

Agents are given strict instructions to avoid triggering any paradox that might attract Time Wraiths. Agency weaponry is capable of fending them off, but not destroying them.

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# A Not-so Brief History of Time Travel

*Please note that this section is intended to be **optional** reading for players. We hope that all players will find it interesting enough to read and that all game writers will use it to spark ideas and develop a consistent view of the Time Agency universe. As the Time Agency doesn't have it's own source material (as with High Frontier), we have sought to provide a thorough and detailed history.*

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## Development of the Chroniton Wave Emitter

It was in 2565 that Professor Naomi Callendar developed the Chroniton Wave Emitter. This device forms the foundation of all human time travel technology. Her early experiments provided a limited one-way viewing of history as the path followed by the chroniton wave allowed electromagnetic radiation to flow back to the present day. Confirmation of the success of the project was achieved when a 21st century radio broadcast was reassembled in the professor's lab. Further development of the process was able to pick out other forms of information, including images from pre-radio society that were extracted from natural x-rays.

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## Broadcasting to the past

Twenty-two years later, Lloyd Jones made the next great breakthrough: The transmission of a signal along the wave that could be picked up on equipment available in the past. His first

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<sup>9</sup> Obligatory spooky tooth & claw monster





transmission was dismissed as a hoax, but is recorded in sensationalist media publications<sup>10</sup> (such as the Ripley's Believe It or Not! column) of the day.

After his transtemporal broadcast, Jones discovered the records and realised that he had, in a minor way, altered history. Confronted with this reality, he decided that nobody should have access to the technology and attempted to destroy his work.

He retired to Toronto and spent the next few years painting landscapes in oils on canvas<sup>11</sup>. This was interrupted when Isabella Pavlova, a fellow academic, kidnapped him and his son, James.

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## Brain Wave Transfer

Pavlova had also been working in the field of Chroniton science. Her dedication to the subject had turned from professional to obsessive after her husband was killed when a bridge collapsed under his car, sending it crashing into a river.

She had recovered most of Jones' work from his university's backup systems, but had been unable to achieve her goal of time travel with it. In order to meet her goals, she forced Jones to help her broadcast to the past and to adapt BWT technology to operate along the wavelength.

BWT was developed in the mid 24th century and allowed a human brain to be completely overwritten with the memories and personality of another person. It was quickly outlawed, but a small black market trading in the technology exists to this day, primarily to allow the exceptionally rich to extend their life by transplanting their mind into another body — usually that of someone coerced or outright forced into taking part in the procedure.

Jones and Pavlova successfully completed their work. Isabella Pavlova's brainprint was, apparently, transferred to someone living 8 years in the past.

History records that Jacob Pavlov's car was forced off the road by another vehicle, sending both of them through the barriers on the bridge and into the river below. The incident stopped traffic and allowed a structure problem with the bridge to be detected before the entire bridge collapsed.

The alternative timeline described at the start of this section was pieced together from Isabella Pavlova's notes and Lloyd Jones' reports of what she told him while he was held prisoner.

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## Security Service Oversight

The investigation into the Jones kidnapping was led by agents from the Department for Planetary Security and Defense (DPSD). They had tracked down the lab from where

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<sup>10</sup> These are available to read in the public data archive and original paper copies are on display in the Cairo Museum of World History and Ontario Science Centre.

<sup>11</sup> Several examples of his art are on display at the Ontario Science Centre.



Pavlova was operating and launched an assault on it during the final experiment. They burst into the room just as Pavlova's body collapsed into a coma, her mental pattern transferred away.

As the timeline altered around them, only Jones and four agents in close proximity to the lab retained any memory of the previous timeline. This became known as the Temporal Calm Effect, in which people in close proximity to a Chroniton field are unaffected by changes to the timeline.

Learning of Jones' and Pavlovas' disruptions to the timeline, the DPSD leadership fell into a state of panic at the potential the technology offered for radicals. They suppressed all knowledge of the incident and created a special department monitoring all scientific work on the TT phenomenon. This department was quickly nicknamed The Time Council.

The DPSD drafted their own agents and experts from various other agencies and civilian scientific bodies who had demonstrated skills useful to the Council. Lloyd Jones was selected to be deputy head of the scientific branch and coerced into accepting the role.

Thus was launched a massive intelligence and scientific operation which scoured the world's academic output looking for any signs of time travel related research while performing its own original research.

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## The Jupiter Triangle

Space travel had become routine inside the solar system, with various mining and resource extraction colonies on planets, moons and asteroids. All colonies were still nominally under the control of the World Government, but with limited resources. Some parts of the frontier were more influenced by corporate interests and corruption.

A routine research project in orbit around Jupiter grabbed the attention of The Time Council when it reported picking up slightly elevated Chroniton levels.

The area of space had intrigued conspiracy theorists for decades and a number of manned and unmanned craft had disappeared in the region without explanation. It had been nicknamed after the Bermuda Triangle and become a popular subject for science fiction.

Investigators had scoured the area looking for them. Full spectrum scans revealed the gamma signatures of the craft just... stopped. There was no gradual fading, the trails simply and abruptly terminated. This caused a great deal of confusion and the reasons remained a mystery for years.

The Chronitons provided the missing link. The Time Council launched a research vessel of their own, with a project led by James Jones, Lloyd's son, now in his early 60s. They discovered wormholes which connected different parts of time together and crossed at least four different dimensions in the process.



Physical time travel was now possible, albeit in a highly dangerous and uncontrolled fashion. James christened the phenomena the “Time Windows”. Later they would usually come to be known simply as The Windows.

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## The Mapping Of Time

The Time Council quietly established a research facility on Io from which they could better study the Time Windows. The location had two main advantages. First, aside from a few, largely automated, gas mining facilities, there wasn't much activity around Jupiter so they had little difficulty in keeping the existence of the base secret.

It was also where the higher concentration of wormholes was to be found. Further exploration would eventually find Windows in other parts of the solar system, but they were relatively rare compared to the orbit of Jupiter.

The research team speculated that this may have had something to do with the gravity well created by Jupiter's planetary mass. They were correct, while the two ends of each wormhole would fluctuate and shift location, specifically they never moved far from the nearest gravity well.

Through the next couple of decades, scientific endeavour found that the wormholes moved in regular and predictable patterns. There were no shortage of pet theories as to why, and Chaos Theory was particularly popular.

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## The Temporal Celestes

By listening to radio signals arriving through the Windows to determine which opened into time periods where any research activity might be detected, the Time Council selected six wormholes to launch unmanned probes through.

These probes had three main objectives. To test if travel through a Window was safe, to provide telemetry about the passage through the Window and to confirm the destination was where expected.

The probes all arrived at their destinations unscathed, and all completed their missions perfectly. There was one surprise though: Probe 4 picked up a spacecraft on its sensors. This was quite a surprise as it had been targeting the Jurassic period.

Probe 4 was retasked to investigate the ship. It sent back enough data for the scientific team to determine that they had found the Victoria II, an experimental ship that had disappeared on a test flight between Earth and Pluto some 70 years earlier (or 150 million years later depending on your perspective).

The Victoria II was drifting without power, caught in Jupiter's gravity well, and was doomed.

The team had a tough decision to make: Did they risk an emergency, woefully unprepared, manned mission to try to save the Victoria II? Or did they allow the ship, its secrets, and any



crew who might still be aboard her crash into Jupiter and be swallowed up by the G-forces and pressure of the planet?

They risked the mission.

Ragina Rodríguez and Ada Novak become the first humans to deliberately travel physically into the past.

The Victoria II was empty: no crew but no bodies either. The escape pods were unlaunched. The flight recorder was damaged.

Novak and Rodríguez had little time to complete their investigation. The Window was due to shift at some point between four and six hours after their arrival. The pair raced back to the wormholes entrance for the return trip.

They reached the Window precisely four hours, one minute, and 23 seconds after their arrival time. This was just as the shift occurred.

What emerged from the wormhole was barely recognisable as the vessel that had traveled back in time. It was now distorted by massive gravitational forces. Ragina and Ada had been killed in an instant.

The project team was in shock, but time passed and the research continued.

Over time, they found eight other ships and probes that had been lost through accidental travel through the Windows. They had all been either destroyed through travel at the time of a shift, or were drifting with no crew.

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## Business As Usual

Over the next decade the mapping and exploration of the Windows continued, all under the veil of DPSD secrecy.

The agency continued to try to learn as much about time travel as possible so that they might combat any attempts to use it to pervert the course of history.

Over the decades, a few people had stumbled upon the secrets. Most were scooped up by the Time Council, and paid handsomely to work under their direction and oversight. A few attempted to actively change history, and they were stopped. In one case, by an agent piloting a ship through a wormhole, sneaking onto Earth, and physically stopping a victim of temporal brain wave transfer.

Areas of space were declared no fly zones under the guise of scientific study, but secretly it was as much to do with preventing unsuspecting ships from entering a Window by mistake.

The scientific work done by the Time Council had become a matter of routine. They became complacent.



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## The Hernandez Incident

Professor Paulo Hernandez was the first to knowingly defy the authority of the Time Council. He held a position of authority, overseeing the crews mapping of the Windows, and willing to exploit it. The Window designated AZ94 had shown to be caught in an orbit that lasted eleven months and spent 21 days connecting the present day with 47 years previously. With clear routes along his own timeline, Professor Hernandez attempted to return to his past and drastically alter it.

Hernandez persuaded the crew responsible for these early successes to allow him to come on a ride-along to check their telemetry and spectrum monitoring devices were working within correct parameters. While this was something that could be done while the vessel was docked, he convinced them that he would get better readings if they took a route that had been travelled before and could compare the data to previous journeys' upon their return.

The crew, with no reason to mistrust him, were easily coerced into the professor's ruse.

The craft reached a particular point; a time when Paulo was a young child.

The older version of Hernandez, under the guise of checking the equipment, put his plan into action. It was quite elegant. A sum of money transferred out of his father's current account and into an investment account that would do particularly well over the next decade and be made available to him when he turned 17.

The only problem was that this required communications to be sent between the research craft and the Internet. This tripped a safety protocol that had been set up soon after the first manned trips to the past began and then forgotten about by everyone except the engineers who had to ensure it was installed on the ships.

The outgoing signal was on a tight beam aimed back through a Window. It triggered a loud alarm in the cockpit. Hernandez was rumbled.

At this turn of events, the crew were no longer in the dark about the true nature of this venture. They turned on the professor and subdued him quickly. They returned to the Time Council and reported the Professor for attempting to disrupt the timeline.

During his trial, he confessed that studying in his first year of Cosmology and Astronomy, a hard, double-major to say the least, he had had to take a full time job to support himself and had always resented having no time for sleep, let alone fun. His plan had been to go back to his childhood and set up a trust for himself to be paid a monthly stipend upon beginning university. Not a big change, but it wouldn't affect anyone else, right?

The Time Council ordered him confined to a Black Site. He was considered too much of a security risk to be allowed to continue in his role, or risk leaking information outside the DPSD.



This is where it should have ended, but the Professor had once been a leading light of academia and people had wondered what had happened to him.

Michael Garrett was an investigative journalist who, bored after returning from three months undercover, exposing working conditions on a mining colony on Deimos, decided to figure out what had happened to Hernandez.

Garrett was brilliant, and as a direct consequence of his investigation, the secrecy of the Time Council was blown away. The DPSD had kept the secret for decades, and lost it when one journalist found an itch to scratch.

The fallout was tremendous.

Hernandez got a real trial. While much of the public had sympathy for his reasons and for his detention in a Black Site, a jury still found him guilty of official misconduct, insider trading, identity theft, and fraud. He received the maximum sentence, with a comment that a greater punishment was deserved but there was no crime on the books that covered his actions.

This was quickly rectified with “Conspiracy to Disrupt the Timeline” and “Disrupting the Timeline” being added to the legal system.

He was retried for the new offenses. Being the first crime of this kind to be prosecuted, the publicity was immense. The public were divided. The majority wanted his head, the others wanted his brains! This reaction had rather severe consequences for Hernandez when a particularly harsh judge sentenced him to life imprisonment. She stated that she “could see no other recourse” and feared “that without a severe punishment to deter others, humanity would put itself at risk of annihilation through paradox”

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## The Time Agency

The secrecy under which the DPSD had operated their time travel research was less than popular with the public, and the World Government.

Their control over time travel was considered untenable under the circumstances — especially as they couldn’t police one of their own.

A new agency was created, independent of the DPSD, with its own budget and mandate. It was the Time Agency, and it was official, public, and would have to give press briefings and justify its budget to the senate.

In practice, this just meant a few slight changes at the top, and business continued as usual.

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## A New Mandate

When the Agency was set up, the priority was to ensure that there would be *accountable* people responsible for policing time travel. The government and public wanted to ensure that no one could use the Windows to change the timeline any further than it had already been



altered. The ripple effect was just too unpredictable and it was feared that the risks of quantum disruption could cause a paradox which could destroy civilisation.

With the reality of time travel becoming public knowledge, the number of deliberate attempts to alter the past by unscrupulous individuals rose dramatically. The agency was forced to rapidly develop approaches which they could use to pursue rogue travellers into the past and stop them without causing future alteration to the timeline.

While the press focused on the dangers of deliberate interference in the past, the agency was also concerned with accidental changes by the reckless few that accidentally strayed into Windows and got themselves lost. They would mount a number of expeditions to retrieve such people before they could do any damage.

After a couple of years, the possible benefits of time travel began to outweigh the fears of temporal disruption and proposals were made to use the Windows for historical research.

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## Historical Interaction

Operations on Earth proved to be complicated and required agents to try to fit in at specific time periods. Clothing and language had changed significantly over the centuries and required specialised agents educated as historians and linguists to complete these missions. Not to mention an army of seamstresses to create authentic costumes relevant to scores of different parts of the world in each period!

It was the complicated nature of these interactions that led to the development of the Anachronism Concealment Equipment (ACE) which emitted a low level psychic field that encouraged people subject to it to dismiss concerns about how out of place an agent looked. This made it much easier to assign agents for day-to-day operations, although there are still plenty of missions that need undercover agents to operate without the drawbacks of the ACE.

The Time Agency developed a uniform of black suit, white shirt and black tie for its standard agents; black shirt, black combat vest and black combat trousers for operatives. It was a look that would not be too out of place in any period from the 20th century forward, and the ACE was able to smooth over the problems elsewhere.

Scientists are currently working to upgrade the ACE so that it doesn't cause unease to those experiencing it *and* to incorporate new technology: Ripple Dampening Field (RDF) to reduce PTLD, which has performed well in lab conditions and now needs to be tested in the field.

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## Previous Timeline Distress

Despite efforts to prevent ripples and paradox, some minor ripples in the early days meant that agents were returning to different futures than the ones they left. All similar but slightly different. These divergences from the traveller's experience and the new reality could be



mentally damaging. The effect became known as Previous Timeline Distress (PTLD) and scientists worked hard to counter the effects, usually with little success.

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## Distortion Field Sensitives

Scientists have not yet determined how or why but there seems to be a small percentage (<0.1%) of the population that are somehow attuned to, and therefore, able to detect distortions in the fabric of space-time. Many of these people are recruited into the military, more specifically, the Time Agency.

While wearing the ACE, their abilities are dampened (not completely switched off). Many of them are grateful for this as sensing a disturbance in The Windows can cause reactions in people with this skill. So far recorded reactions include: pain, pleasure, dizziness, nausea, headaches and fear.

With the ACE, these agents and operatives can detect where Windows have recently been opened/closed. They can also detect people and objects that have recently passed through a Window.

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## A Coterie of Conspirators

Unbeknownst to the Time Council, within their number were a group who had decided to put personal profit above their duty. The cabal had been plotting and planning since long before Professor Hernandez had put his greasy little plot into action. Undeterred by the sentencing metered out, they continued.

Over time they moved pieces into position and when the time was right, they put the plan into action. They were playing a long game but it would be worth it for the payoff.

On June 16th 2637, a day of celebration to mark the quincentenary of successful interplanetary travel was held. The conspirators' plan would need attention focused elsewhere and on this day it was.

The first pawns in their multidimensional game of chess were sacrificed. Despite heavy security on all planets, moons and asteroids, the coterie managed to position several unwitting people into high populous areas. These "altered" persons, had had surgical implants of the prototypes to the ACE and signed documents forbidding them to discuss the procedure with anyone other than the implant team and designers (all in the coterie). Of course, that's not what was actually implanted and the high yield explosives that *had* been implanted were detonated simultaneously causing mass casualties throughout the system.

During the furore, no one noticed two small chrono-cartography units take flight from an asteroid into the nearest window. In fact, it would take quite some time before anyone even noticed they were missing.





The coterie, had pre-plotted their course and programmed it in, hidden in subroutines and behind heavily protected firewalls. They made the trip out the easiest but they had several stops along the way on their return for this plan to work.

The trip out was plain sailing. They hit their mark and donning appropriate costume, made their way into the early Victorian era.

Once here, they each opened bank accounts. This seemed to go smoothly, although they wouldn't be able to tell just yet if it had worked.

Back to the ship and fast forward 40 years. They arrived back and found that, apart from their accumulated interest, nothing seemed any different (at least not as far as they could tell). They closed their bank accounts claiming to be the son or daughter of the account holder and opened new accounts in different banks.

This process went on through the centuries, with accounts accruing more and more interest during the time that had passed. They did nothing to give themselves away and did nothing to affect the timeline (as far as they could tell), just repeated the process until they reached their own present.

By now, they held vast amounts of interplanetary wealth in no more than seven bank accounts. Between them they held 97% of humanities' wealth. The effect of this had caused ripples.

Vast areas of cities had changed from affluent to slums. Wars over resources raged between previous allied nations. Education levels were lower; only the rich could afford school. There were fewer colonies throughout the solar system. Law enforcement was brutal. It was a miracle that humanity had come as far as they had in the previous timeline without the resources that had allowed them their early successes.

The Time Council's secret had never come out and the Agency had not been formed. The conspirators found they still held similar positions in the Council.

Despite the differences, the coterie were able to return unimpeded. They returned the vessels and carried on as normal.

The next day, the chrono-cartography teams went to their usual craft and were surprised to find that they had changed. They were better equipped, sleeker and had a completely different layout to the vessels they were expecting.

The authorities were alerted and a full investigation was begun. It revealed the course that had been taken and forensics had uncovered the perpetrators. An enormous manhunt ensued. Their bank accounts frozen and their faces on screens on every street, every station, port, airport and spaceport, the coterie were forced underground.

Three and a half months into the investigation, and a credible sighting was made. The lead led back to a member of the coterie who was located and followed rather than immediately arrested. The gamble paid off and three other members were discovered.



History, at least their version of history, was repeated and they were sent to a black site. Unsurprisingly, the Time Council wanted it all brushed under the carpet. There were, however, still three members of the coterie on the loose.

Lead after lead came to nothing until it was discovered that another craft had been stolen from the Time Council. This time, the remaining members of the coterie took no chances, all signatures were scrambled and a random course plotted. They had escaped into the Windows and couldn't be traced.

The four captives were all well known, well liked and (now) extremely rich. As with the Hernandez case, it wasn't long before the press became involved and the Time Council was revealed. The Time Council were able to piece together the original history, before the disruption, through journals, telemetry and data from the ships.

The phrase "History repeats itself" was declared by the Judge at their trial and they too, were sentenced to life in prison. Their ill gotten gains were absorbed by the Planetary Government and immediately distributed into housing, infrastructure, planetary defense and scientific endeavor. They were able to negotiate peace among warring nations and the solar system began looking much like it had before the ripple effect of the coterie's actions.

Following the publicity of this case, in parallel to the Hernandez incident, the Time Agency was created.

The Time Agency strictly patrols the opening to certain Windows, more so than others, in order to prevent catastrophic alterations to the timeline. While many wanted to go back and kill Hitler before WWII, it was generally accepted that the positives that came after WWII (e.g. the unification of EU countries, European Court of Human Rights etc) were worth preserving the timeline for.

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## Other Travellers

Over the next few decades the Time Agency thwarted many attempts to disrupt the timeline most of which were clearly of human origin. Some left evidence that suggested the possibility of interventions by an alien species<sup>12</sup> that appeared to be using TW to travel through both time *and* significant distances through space. The possibility of interstellar wormholes had been theorised by the scientific branch of the Time Council but none have been discovered and their artificial creation is beyond current Earth technology.

Tentative operations to make contact have been ignored by these travellers and no interception mission has yet been successful. Those few which have come close have resulted in the travellers triggering a self-destruct rather than be captured.

It is still unknown what the purposes of these forays were and, with no two-way contact, the Agency has deemed these travellers a potential threat.

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<sup>12</sup> Note for GMs - this has been left deliberately vague as you may wish to run a game where the truth is revealed



Standing orders are to prevent these travellers from interfering in Earth's timeline. The capturing of travellers and their technology is a high priority for the agency.

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## The Development of Artificial Windows

In 2643 a key discovery was made by Dr. Miriam Cohen. Analysis of the nature of the Windows had provided a clue to their origin and, building upon Pavola and Jones' work, she was able to open a new Window. It seemed more stable than the ones that had been discovered previously, with no fluctuation in any measurable dimension and after a few minutes, it gently shrunk and disappeared.

By 2677, the technology had matured significantly. The application of String Theory helped tremendously, and it was discovered that the wormholes would always follow an existing quantum link between two parts of space/time. This made the opening of new Windows much more predictable, given the application of enough computing power.

Predictability was not control though, Windows can still only be opened between two points which have a connection.

The degree of predictability allowed for the safe opening of Windows inside an atmosphere. This allows passage through time without having to take a spaceship with you, providing a life sustaining environment can be provided at both ends. To this end, two specialist ships were commissioned — The *Yi Xing* and The *Liang Lingzan* — each contains a powerful Window generator, a deck of quantum supercomputers, a plentiful supply of equipment, and everything needed to coordinate a Temporal Intervention Mission. The heart of each of the ships is a large chamber — quickly nicknamed The Departure Lounge — containing a Window projector array. The ship can be piloted onto a potential Window, then the projector is fired up and a team can walk from the departure lounge straight into the past.

A mission will frequently last longer than the duration a window can be open before one of its ends shifts. Teams are given regular updates about when and where future windows may be opened for an extraction<sup>13</sup>.

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## The Future

Attempts were made to travel to the future, but it became clear that this was extremely challenging. Scientific conjecture pointed to an unwritten future.

While travel to the future was technically possible, crews would have to be in some kind of stasis to protect them from the pressures created from travelling close to the speed of light for an undetermined length of time.

Probes had revealed that for every hundred Earth years, crews may only age a few months or years before reaching their destination. The probes contained hundreds of years worth of

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<sup>13</sup> This allows for “run to the shuttle” style game endings (albeit with a shuttle in the form of a hole in the air) should GMs desire to end their game that way.



relative data but had only been travelling for two years at a time. Each probe sent, recorded completely different data, proving that the future is not yet fixed and could be a highly perilous place to try to visit.

Through further scientific exploration it was determined that the Time Windows had been caused by a catastrophic war waged by unknown entities that appeared to no longer exist (or possibly existed in the relative future). Artifacts, including partial vessels and weapons, had been discovered to support this theory and the theory also claimed that they had wiped each other out in this war.

### **The future is not fixed - can you change it?**

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## **Guidelines for Game Writers**

David and Claire are available if anything in the guide is unclear, if we have managed to write something self-contradictory, if you have any questions, want any advice, etc. Feel free to call on us to help if you want.

Plenty of what we have written leaves unanswered questions (for example, “Threats” is deliberately sparse so that GMs can embellish upon threats, giving more scope for interesting and exciting plots) , some more explicit than others. If you intend to answer any of them, then please mention that in your game submission so we can prevent two games answering the same question. Don’t tell us what the answer is though, we’d like to avoid spoilers as much as possible as we might be playing the games.

It would be appreciated if you could design your game to provide something for every player to do. We understand this is not always possible, but efforts would be welcome. Please take into consideration both the skills selected for the characters and the physical capabilities of players. If you would like help building a survey to ask players what these are, then we would be happy to help. Obviously, if a player doesn’t tell you what they want, catering for them is significantly harder and you cannot be expected to write anything specifically for them.

Images for “Challenge” cards will be available on the Firefight website in the Time Agency section should you wish to create your own. Alternatively, there will be a number of pre-printed, laminated challenge cards and symbols available. There will be a velcro attachment so that symbols can be changed with ease. As the cards are laminated, further instructions can be written on the back in dry erase markers (also available).

Claire has an A4 laminator should anyone need to borrow it for creating more weather-proof “Challenge” cards/tags themselves. This can be collected from Wickham one-day events on a first come, first served basis. You can message via the Firefight Facebook page or email to [firstcowinspace@googlemail.com](mailto:firstcowinspace@googlemail.com) to make your request.