

Cause and Effects: Time Travel

(By John Taber, Updated: 7/21/95. NOTE: This article is not converted to FRED or updated in any fashion since the 1995 release.)

For man is man and master of his fate. - from **Merlin and Vivien** by Lord Alfred Tennyson

Some special effects are very easy to build in the Hero Rules system. For example, fire blasts, rocky skin, and claws are easy to conceptualize. A special effect like time travel can be very difficult to design. In this *Cause and Effects* article various methods of creating a “time altering” power will be analyzed.

The four special effect ideas detailed below will focus on changing the flow of time around a given target. To gain the special effect of altering time the power will be designed to either “speed up” the user or “slow down” the time around a given target. Both of these methods can be used to obtain the desired result of changing time for a creature or object.

Four different concepts will be detailed below. One idea slows the time around a target, one concept accelerates the flow of time around the user, and the last two methods actually perform time travel on the user using the teleportation and extra dimensional movement powers. These concepts are discussed in detail below. Time travel is probably best suited for play in the Champions genre although these concepts can be adjusted for a Fantasy Hero genre. The active points should be raised or lowered to suit the power levels of the campaign.

Special Effect Concept: A powerful superhero alien known only as Tick Tock wants the ability to effect the flow of time. The power should be able to effect at least one target.

Idea #1: For the first method a drain will be used. We will concentrate on using a straight speed drain to get the desired effect. For added effect a smaller dexterity drain or movement drain could also be linked to the speed drain.

Cost	Powers	END
62 3	5d6 Drain vs. speed, 5 points lost per minute (+1/4) (62 active points) Change Environment: Minor Time Slowing Effects (i.e. watches stop, sand stops in an hourglass, etc.) (5 active points) Linked to speed drain (-1/2), User must touch the target to use the power and the power only affects the target of the drain (-1/4) (62 + 5 = 67 total active points)	7

Example #1: Tick Tock quickly surveys the museum through a sky-light. His arch-nemesis, the deadly Ape King, is stealing a large golden gorilla statuette. Tick Tock decides to smash through the window and attempt to slow down Ape King. Tick Tock makes the attack roll then rolls the effect of the drain. The five dice total 16 points. The hapless Ape King has no power defense and is now down one speed point. One more hit from Tick Tock will knock the Ape King down two speed points.

Idea #2: The second method will use a speed aid on the caster to reflect a change in the flow of time. By raising the characters speed he is effectively moving more quickly through time.

Cost	Powers	END
50 3	8d6 Aid vs. speed with + 20 points to the maximum (68 point maximum), 5 points lost per minute (+1/4) (62 active points) Change Environment: Minor Time Speeding Effects (i.e. watches move faster, water flows quicker, etc.) (5 active points) Linked to speed aid (-1/2), User must touch the target to use the power and the power only affects the target of the aid (-1/4) (62 + 5 = 67 total active points)	7

Example #2: With the Glittering Gorilla in his possession Tick Tock decides to speed the flow of time around himself and quickly subdue the hapless Ape King. Tick Tock activates his power and rolls 23 points. Thus Tick Tock gains two speed points. He can now easily defeat the slow Ape King.

Idea #3: The power teleportation will be used in Idea #3. Using teleportation for a time travel special effect is not really that obvious but the results of the power are perfect for the desired special effect. The character essentially “pulls himself away from flow of time”. When the character is out of time he may move to a new location and return the flow of time. The ranged sight power is used to prevent blind teleports.

While time is stopped (i.e. while the character is teleporting) the character can’t move objects or change the environment. The surrounding environment is also effectively frozen in time. While the character is walking in “frozen time” he will have the ability to examine his environment. To mimic this ability overall levels are added to the teleporting character. These levels can be used to offset the half phase minus to skill rolls caused by the combat teleport. The user can line up his punches then return into the normal time stream. Some other powers can be added to strengthen the overall effect. For example, find weakness can be added to the character to achieve the effect of examining a targets defenses closely why they are frozen in time.

Cost	Powers	END
18	20” Teleport (40 active points) Must be combat teleports only (-1/4), User must be able to physically move (i.e. walk, climb, crawl, etc.) to the teleportation end point without changing the environment (-1)	4
2	Range on Sight Sense (5 active points) Linked to teleport (-1/2), Only used to prevent blind teleports (-1/2) (40 + 5 = 45 total active points)	
23	3 Overall Levels (30 active points) Only used after teleporting (-1/2)	

Example #3: The Ape King has the priceless Glittering Gorilla in his clutches and attempts to escape from Tick Tock. Ape King rounds a nearby corner and dives out of a window into a back alley. Tick Tock stops the flow of time using his teleportation power. As a special effect of using the power Tick Tock walks down the hall, rounds the corner, and then exits into the alley next to Ape King. (The ranged sight power prevents a blind teleportation.) Tick Tock takes a moment to examine the Ape King’s position. Tick Tock decides to grab the gold idol from the big ape and lines up his grab. Tick Tock returns the flow of time and attempts to grab the idol. Tick Tock has prepared and uses the overall levels to boost his OCV. Tick Tock can now attempt a grab hit roll at +1 (-1 for a grab -1 for a half move + 3 overall levels = +1 to the roll).

Idea #4: The last concept uses the extra dimensional movement power. This concept relies a great deal on GM intervention. Game masters should be very careful using this method as dimensional movement is a “stop sign” power.

Cost	Powers	END
50	Extra Dimensional Movement to move 60 minutes into the future. Requires the time travel (+20 points) and the related group of dimensions (+10 points) options (50 active points)	5

Example #4: Tick Tock returns to the museum where he finds that his encounter with the Ape King has attracted the attention of the museum security personnel. Not wanting to deal with any “humans” Tick Tock decides to slip into the future and activates his power. In an hour the scene should be clear of any troublesome guards. An hour later Tick Tock reappears in the museum and silently leaves the scene.

Analysis:

- Idea #1 and Idea #2 rely on changing the speed of a given target. The optional speed changing rules should be used. The optional speed changing rules state that a new speed is not used until a phase occurs that both the old AND new speeds have an action. Changing speeds in the middle of a turn is effective if you are draining a targets speed but not as effective if you are raising the target’s speed. For example, Ape King has a 5 speed and it is phase 3. On phase 3 Tick Tock rolls the drain and manages to drain 1 points of speed from the Ape King. Now Ape King is speed 4. Ape King’s next action will be on phase 12. This is the first phase that both speed 5 and speed 4 can act! Ape Kings will lose a bunch of actions! Adding to a characters speed is not as effective when the power is first started. For example, Tick Tock has a speed 5 and it is currently phase 3. He aids his speed and

manages to raise it by 2 points. Now Tick Tock wants to act at speed 7. According to the speed changing rule Tick Tock won't be able to act until phase 12. Phase 12 is the first time that a 5 speed and a 7 speed can both act.

- An advantage to the drain and aid methods is that they can effect vehicles, robots, or computers. Basically any target with a speed stat can be affected. Dropping a vehicles speed is a good way to slow down a quick get away.
- Method #3 is best suited for use as an entire character concept. A Champions character can be built around this one special effect. Adding various skills and abilities based on the "time stop teleportation power" would make a very interesting and complete character.
- Under the power description for extra dimensional movement it mentions that the power should be unreliable. Thus extra dimensional movement is not a safe power for a player character.
- Using the extra dimensional movement power can cause problems with game flow. With this method the character is completely gone from the world while the power is active. They can't interact or see anything that is happening while they are traveling through time. It will also be up to the GM to determine what happens if there are any time paradoxes.
- Extra dimensional movement does not allow the user any type of additional movement. When the character appears after the extra dimensional movement he will be in the exact position where the power was activated.