

# GADGET CROSSBOWS

The crossbow is one of the earliest weapons most societies develop, generally shortly after gaining access to reliable metal production (often copper or bronze). It is also generally the first stocked weapon any given culture produces, and the first ranged weapon to store potential energy for later release without constant effort from the wielder. Though generally slower to fire and bulkier in design than comparable bows (and much bulkier than slings, though often with greater range), a crossbow is easy to learn the proper use of. Even after a military has access to early firearms, it often keeps crossbows in use for quite some time, and specialty uses of crossbows are sometimes maintained well into the era of developed firearms and even energy weapons.

And all that, of course, with without accounting for magic crossbows, crossbows made by mad geniuses, exceptional artificers, and the availability of mythological metals such as mithral and adamantine.

With entities of super-genius intellect, magic allowing direct communication with crafter gods, and mystic materials from dragonhide to world-oak wood to dire wolf sinew, the possible designs that could be created for crossbows (without even getting into crossbows that are themselves magical) is vast, and varied.

Welcome to the world of Gadget Crossbows!

## GADGETS

Each gadget lists a percentage after its name. This is the additional cost added to a crossbow that has this gadget. This cost assumes the crossbow was built with the gadget included when first made. Adding a gadget to a crossbow later can be done, but takes an additional 20% of the crossbow's base cost. These costs are always based on the unmodified crossbow's original cost.

**Armor Mount (+20%):** The crossbow is mounted on a vambrace, hip armor, or shoulderpad of a suit of armor. The armor must be bought separately. The

crossbow can be fired with just one hand (though it still takes two to reload), and is ready for use as long as it's loaded, with no need to draw it out or put it away. Armor-mounted crossbows are less accurate, and take a -1 penalty to attack rolls.

**Bayonet (+10%):** The crossbow has a piercing weapon attached to it (which must be bought separately). The piercing weapon must be one that can be used 1-handed, and must weigh less than the crossbow. Attacks with the bayonet weapon take a -1 penalty for the awkward mounting of the weapon.

This is a stirrup gadget. A weapon can only have one stirrup gadget.

**Blood Groove (+50%):** The bolt channel has a notch in the far end and a clamp that presses bolts into it when they are fired, causing each to have a channel that runs from just behind the bolt head along the front third of the shaft. When this bolt strikes deeply enough, this causes initial blood-flow from the wound to be heavier than usual. If the initial damage roll is in the upper half of the damage range (for example, if a bolt that does 1d8 damage rolls a 5-8 on its damage), the target takes another 1d4 damage on the next round as it bleeds. The blood groove is not deep or long enough to keep the wound channel open after that. The bolt can be pulled free prior to this bleed effect, but that also deals 1d4 damage.

This is a stirrup gadget. A weapon can only have one stirrup gadget

**Bolt Clip (+200%):** A clip, rack, magazine, or similar system has been built into the crossbow to hold bolts. Each time the crossbow is cocked, a bolt is automatically stripped from the clip and properly seated. This has no effect on load time by itself, but can offer a significant time savings with combined with a lever action. Even without such a device, a bolt clip crossbow can be useful in that it can be fired without the need to draw bolts from some other location (allowing the weapon to be passed about multiple users without each having to carry a source of ammunition).

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**Bolt Drum (+300%):** A bolt drum functions as a bolt clip, except the bolts are kept in a rotary system that can be dialed to load any bolt desired, rather than the bolts being loaded into the weapon in the order they were loaded into the bolt clip.

**Breaching Piston (+10%):** The crossbow has a small sliding mini-battering ram built into the stock that can be engaged by the string and prods to be driven forward by the crossbow's full force when a bolt is not loaded. It takes a full round to engage the piston and place the crossbow against a braced, stationary target (such as a door or chest), and hook it in place so the full force is applied to the object. If this is done and the attack is successful, the breaching piston does double the normal crossbow damage to the braced stationary target.

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**Breakdown Design (+25%):** A crossbow with a breakdown design can be taken apart into multiple small pieces. While broken down, you gain advantage on Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) checks to conceal it, and it fits in spaces  $\frac{1}{4}$  the size needed to store the crossbow normally. It takes 1 minute to take apart or reassemble a breakdown weapon.

**Concealed Storage (+5%):** A secret compartment, lined in a thin sheet of lead, is built into the crossbow, largely in the stock. It can store one item that weighs no more than a pound, or two that weight less than a pound. The compartment is not obvious at a glance or even when the crossbow is used, but can be found with a dedicated search of the crossbow.