**Weapons in Science Fiction**

**From The Black Vault Encyclopedia Project**

**Science fiction** typically features fanciful or not-so-fanciful **weapons** that depict the changes in the field. A SF story that focuses elsewhere may just use generic beam weapons, while a military-oriented or meticulously detailed one might have an intricate variety of arms.

The archetypal example is the [ray gun](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Ray_gun&action=edit&redlink=1), a [directed-energy weapon](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Directed-energy_weapon&action=edit&redlink=1) that comes in all sizes and shapes, shooting [lasers](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Laser&action=edit&redlink=1), [plasma](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Plasma_(physics)&action=edit&redlink=1) or [particle beams](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Particle_beam&action=edit&redlink=1) depending on the setting. Ray guns have become a cliché in the genre, particularly when they're used to the exclusion of [firearms](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Firearm&action=edit&redlink=1). Notoriously, ray guns that have been poorly designed or aim for style before sense may be inferior to their contemporary real-world counterparts, particularly in the visual medium with its limited [special effects](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Special_effects&action=edit&redlink=1) budgets.

Sci-fi weapons can range from "much the same with lasers" to unrecognizability. [Space warfare](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Space_warfare&action=edit&redlink=1), a field with no real-world equivalent as of yet, is the bread and butter of the genre and requires weapons built for circumstances radically different from any encountered on Earth. Space allows for entirely new types of weapons, such as the [relativistic kill vehicle](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Relativistic_kill_vehicle&action=edit&redlink=1). In settings that allow [deflector shields](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Deflector_shield&action=edit&redlink=1), arms are often focused around defeating or circumventing them.

On the ground, weapons typically resemble contemporary ones, save for the aforementioned common switch from kinetic projectiles to energy bolts. On the other hand, new types of weapon systems (sonic, psionic, etc.) are not unusual, and some authors create an entirely different [paradigm](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Paradigm&action=edit&redlink=1) of combat. On occasion even traditional swordplay ([lightsabers](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Lightsaber&action=edit&redlink=1) being the best known example, [chainswords](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Weapons_and_Equipment_of_the_Imperium_(Warhammer_40,000)&action=edit&redlink=1) being a cruder but more macho one) may make a comeback.

Some science fiction weapons are plausible, but do not currently exist. Others use imaginary or physically impossible technologies. And see [Directed-energy weapon#Drawbacks in real-world use](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Directed-energy_weapon&action=edit&redlink=1).

Some real-world weapons initiatives such as the American [Strategic Defense Initiative](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Strategic_Defense_Initiative&action=edit&redlink=1) can have a resemblance to science fiction weapons. Science fiction has also drawn on real-world scenarios, such as the idea of a [Doomsday machine](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Doomsday_machine&action=edit&redlink=1), which was seriously contemplated by [Cold War](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Cold_War&action=edit&redlink=1) nuclear strategists.

**Examples**

* [beam gun](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Beam_gun&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [death ray](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Death_ray&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [lightsaber](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Lightsaber&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [needlegun](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Needlegun&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [phaser](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Weapons_of_Star_Trek&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [photon torpedo](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Photon_torpedo&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [plasma rifle](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Plasma_rifle&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [railgun](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Railgun&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [relativistic kill vehicle](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Relativistic_kill_vehicle&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [stunner](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Stunner_(weapon)&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [sonic weaponry](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Sonic_weaponry&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [mind weaponry](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Mind_weaponry&action=edit&redlink=1)
* In the [2003 film](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=2003_film&action=edit&redlink=1) [*Maximum Velocity*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Maximum_Velocity&action=edit&redlink=1), [Project Storm Fury](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Project_Stormfury&action=edit&redlink=1) is an American military program to create hurricanes as [weapons of mass destruction](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Weapons_of_mass_destruction&action=edit&redlink=1).

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