



9

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ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL...

- *Creating Custom Fantasy Races:* A step-by-step guide to designing unique races for your campaign
- *Hauberks and Hobbits:* Armor weight and cost for small and large creatures
- *Folks Fair and Foul:* Beware the faerie, nymph, and jinn!
- *Noncombatant Characters:* A new approach to handling normal men, decadent nobles, noncombatant monsters, and more



ADVENTURER CONQUEROR KING SYSTEM™

AXIOMS™ ISSUE NINE

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CREATING CUSTOM FANTASY RACES

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO DESIGNING UNIQUE RACES FOR YOUR CAMPAIGN

By Alexander Macris

With the release of *Player's Companion, Lairs & Encounters*, and *Axioms I*, the **Adventurer Conqueror King System** now provides rules for creating custom classes, custom spells, custom monsters, and custom magic types. What it does not yet provide, however, is a set of rules for creating custom playable fantasy races. This article fills that gap, elaborating on some mechanics we initially presented on the Autarch forums.

Follow these steps to create a custom fantasy race for your campaign:

1. Develop a name and concept for the fantasy race. Is it a sinister race of serpent-men with access to dark magic? Is it a titanic race of giant-sized humanoids? Perhaps it is a race of human-sized talking rabbits. The concept should drive your choices in the remaining steps.
2. Determine the ability score requirements for the race (see Requirements below).
3. Determine any modifications or restrictions that may apply to the race's allocation of build points to the class category values (see Class Category Values below).
4. Select one or more custom powers for the fantasy race and assign them to the racial values of 0, 1, 2, 3, and 4 (see Racial Powers below)
5. Calculate the cost for racial value 0.
 - a. Count the total number of racial powers available at racial value 0. Remember that some racial powers count as negative, half, two, or other variable numbers of powers.
 - b. For each racial power, increase the cost of the race at this value by 40 XP, or more if the power is directly applicable to all of the race's likely classes (see Racial Powers below).
 - c. For each racial power that is a spell-like ability, increase the cost of the race at this value by 65 XP + 5 XP per level of the spell (see Racial Powers below).
- d. If the race's racial value mimics or stacks with a class category value (such as Elf and Arcane), add the cost of the mimicked class value at that level.
- e. If the race's racial value mimics or stacks with a negative class category value (such as Halfling and HD), subtract the cost of the mimicked class value.
- f. Subtract 40 XP from this total to represent the fact that racial classes lose maximum levels of experience.
6. Calculate the cost for racial value 1, 2, 3, and 4 by repeating these steps.
7. Calculate the additional cost per level after 8.
 - a. If the race's racial value mimics a class category value (such as Elf and Arcane), divide the Racial Value XP cost at Value 4 by the cost for Elf 4 (2,625) and multiply the result by 50,000. Round to the nearest 5,000. This is the additional cost per level after 8.
 - b. If the race's racial value does not mimic a class category value (such as Dwarf), divide the Racial Value XP cost at Value 4 by the cost for Dwarf 4 (1,400) and multiply the result by 10,000 for 2 class types and 30,000 for 2 class types. Round to the nearest 25,000. This is the additional cost per level after 8.
 - c. If the race is monstrous (as determined by the Judge), the cost per level after 8 continues to double. Apply this rule for races that are particularly inhuman and powerful.

You're finished. Time to build a class using your new fantasy race!

REQUIREMENTS

All fantasy races should have at least one ability score requirement of 9 or higher. Races whose racial value mimics the Arcane value should require Intelligence 9 or higher. Races whose racial value mimics the Divine value should require Wisdom 9 or higher. Other ability score requirements are at the Judge's discretion. Fantasy races with higher ability score requirements will tend to be

available for play much less often, so setting high requirements is a useful tool to keep some races comparatively rare and exceptional.

Apart from the mechanical effect on the die roll, what does it mean for a race to have ability score requirements? For instance, what does it mean to say that “all gnome classes require a minimum Intelligence and Constitution of 9 or better”? There are many ways of interpreting the requirement. Here are a few:

- » **G Factor:** The natural floor for gnomish intellect and health may simply be higher than it is in humans. The smartest gnome is no smarter than the smartest human, but the least intelligent gnome is as smart as the average human. (Tolkien’s elves seem to just not have any weak, dumb, slow, sickly, or unattractive members of their species.)
- » **GNASA Dungeonauts:** Gnomish culture might carefully regulate entry into the adventuring classes. Only the most intelligent and healthy applicants are able to become adventurers. Entire government programs may exist that inflict annoying gnomish tricksters on an unsuspecting host populace.
- » **No Gnome Left Behind:** Gnomish culture might have wonderful public schools with a commitment to education and physical fitness that assures that all gnomes reach a comfortable baseline. Those that drop out of higher education end up as tricksters, obviously.
- » **This Is GNOMELAND:** Gnomes may systematically kill the slow and weak during childhood, allowing only those capable of bare-chested war cries in red cloaks to survive. This seems unlikely, but it’s hard to know what these diminutive races are capable of.

Which interpretation is “true” is a matter of world-building, not mechanics. For instance, in my own campaign, the Auran Empire, the meaning of the requirements varies from race to race. The ability score requirement for dwarves is because dwarves simply “are” hardier than humans; all dwarven classes require a minimum Constitution of 9 because there are no dwarves with less than that. Conversely, the nigh-impossible ability score requirements for Nobirans represent the rarity of their manifestation. Nobirans are drawn from those humans who have some divine ancestry or blood, but that divine blood only manifests rarely (only when all ability scores are 11 or above). The offspring of a dwarf is always going to be a dwarf with a minimum Constitution of 9, but the offspring of a Nobiran is only potentially a Nobiran.

Since the choice of how difficult to make the requirements to meet is a matter of world-building, rather than a matter of mechanics, it does *not* adjust the cost of the class’s racial value.

CLASS CATEGORY VALUES

One of the most effective tools to create a distinct fantasy race is to adjust, modify, or limit the effects of the various class category values.

FIGHTING VALUE

Races that are less than man-sized, such as gnomes and dwarves, may be prevented from using two-handed swords or longbows. This does not adjust the cost of the class’s racial value. If the race is so small that it cannot wield any large weapons at all, and must wield medium weapons with two-hands, this counts as the Short-Statured custom power (-0.5 power cost).

Races that prefer particular weapons might encode these preferences with limitations on choices for narrow or broad weapon selections. For instance, dwarves with narrow or broad weapon selections must include at least four axes, flails, hammers, and/or maces among their selections, while elves with narrow or broad weapon selections must include at least two bows, crossbows, swords, or daggers. Gnomes with narrow or broad weapon selections must include arbalests, crossbows, and war hammers among their selections. Halflings with narrow weapon selections are limited to choosing from bola, dagger, darts, hand axe, javelin, sling, short bow, or short sword, while halflings with broad weapon selections can also choose battle axe, crossbow, mace, or sword. Racial weapon preferences do not adjust the cost of the class’s racial value.

Races that are pacifistic, small, or otherwise ill-equipped for melee combat may have their Fighting Value limited. For instance, Halflings cannot allocate more than 2 points to Fighting.

Races that have extraordinary fighting skills, or who often practice fighting in addition to another profession, might allow build points allocated to the Fighting Value to stack with build points allocated to the racial value for purposes of determining the class’s fighting ability. Add the effective values to find the class’s fighting ability, up to a maximum of 4 points.

DIVINE CATEGORY

Fantasy races that lack a relationship or devotion to the divine may be forbidden from allocating build points to the Divine value, or limited in the number of points they can allocate. If the race’s racial value indicates something like its caste (as in Thrassians, or a hypothetical serpentman race), the race may be limited in the number of points it can allocate to this category by its racial value. Limits on the Divine value do not adjust the cost of the class’s racial value.

Races that have an extraordinary relationship or devotion to the divine, or who often practice divine spellcasting in addition to another profession, might allow build points allocated to the Divine Value to stack with build points allocated to the racial value for purposes of determining the class’s divine spellcasting ability. Add the effective values to find the class’s spellcasting abilities, up to a maximum of 4 points. Stacking increases the cost of the racial value by the equivalent value of the benefit provided. For instance, if Race 4 provides the equivalent of Divine 4, the cost of Race 4 must be increased by the cost of Divine 4.

Races that are mechanically-inclined and worship craftsmanship, such as dwarves, might gain the ability to create divine constructs when they reach 9th caster level. This is such a minor benefit that it does not add to the race's XP cost, though such "freebies" should always be used sparingly.

Remember that races whose racial value mimics the Divine value should require Wisdom 9 or higher.

ARCANE CATEGORY

Fantasy races that lack innate magical abilities may be forbidden from allocating build points to the Arcane category, or limited in the number of points they can allocate. If the race's racial value indicates something like its caste (as in Thrassians, or a hypothetical serpentman race), the race may be limited in the number of points it can allocate to this category by its racial value. Limits on the Arcane value do not adjust the cost of the class's racial value.

Races that exceed the spellcasting abilities of humans, or who often practice arcane spellcasting in addition to another profession, might allow build points allocated to the Arcane Value to stack with build points allocated to the racial value for purposes of determining the class's arcane spellcasting ability.

Unlike stacked racial and Divine values, stacked racial and Arcane values can reach values of 5 or greater. If so, apply the following rules. When calculating number of spells available, round fractions of ½ or more up; round any smaller fractions down.

- » **Arcane + Race = 5:** The class has the ability to cast spells and engage in magical research as a mage, with the class's spells per level increased by 33%. The class uses its class level for all level-dependent spell ranges, durations, and damages; these are not increased.
- » **Arcane + Race = 6:** As above, but the class's spells per level are increased by 50%.
- » **Arcane + Race = 7:** As above, but the class's spells per level are increased by 66%.
- » **Arcane + Race = 8:** As above, but the class's spells per level are increased by 100%.

Stacking increases the cost of the racial value by the equivalent value of the benefit provided. For instance, if Race 4 provides the equivalent of Arcane 2, the cost of Race 4 must be increased by the cost of Arcane 2.

Note that it is possible for a fantasy race to be forbidden from selecting the Arcane value while simultaneously having a racial value that stacks with Arcane. For instance, gnomes may never allocate build points to the Arcane category, but gnomes may gain the ability to cast arcane spells by allocating points to the Gnome Value.

CUSTOM POWERS FOR YOUR FANTASY RACE

Custom powers for your fantasy race can be selected from the **Custom Power Index** in the *Player's Companion* or built using the rules for **Creating New Custom Powers** found in the same chapter. Except as noted below, they function exactly like class custom powers.

COST OF RACIAL CUSTOM POWERS

Some Judges will have noticed that, if they calculate the cost per custom power from the Fighting or Thievery value, it typically costs 67 to 150 XP per power. Why, then, is the default cost just 40 XP to acquire a custom power for a race?

The reason is that races are intended to serve as the chassis for multiple classes. Therefore, the racial powers should be more general in nature and less specifically useful to any given class. They are costed with a discount to reflect the fact that a typical character will find its *class* custom powers more important in play than its *race* custom powers.

However, sometimes racial powers do apply directly to the class's function. If a particular race tends to specialize in only one type of class, and the racial powers are directly applicable to the function of that class, then the Judge should charge 75, 100, or even 125 XP per racial power to maintain balance. The Halfling Skills gained from Halfling 1 – 4 cost 75 XP each, for instance, as they are specially chosen to compliment the type of classes and functions that halflings fulfill in the game, and for balance purposes cannot be costed at less than equivalent Thievery value skills.

Powers such as Child-Like or Inhuman, which apply both a bonus and a penalty to reactions with specific creatures, are typically costed at 0 custom powers.

COST OF RACIAL SPELL-LIKE ABILITIES

A related issue is the cost of spell-like abilities. Spell-like abilities taken as racial powers cost at least 70 XP each, more as the spell level increases. This escalating cost is contrary to the approach taken in the *Player's Companion*, where spell-like abilities count as one custom power each as long as they follow the usage limits (1st level spells usable at will with a casting time of 1 turn, etc.).

However, the *Player's Companion* also specifies that "spell-like abilities should generally not appear as a class power at a level of experience lower than the spell's level." Racial spell-like abilities violate this rule, as the example of the gnome race shows: 1st level gnomes can begin play with 2nd level spell-like abilities. The special rules for costing racial spell-like abilities are intended to reflect this.

EXAMPLES OF RACE CREATION

In order to better illustrate the creation of fantasy races using this system, they are organized from the least complex to the most complex designs.

NOBIRANS

The Nobiran race is a very simple design that relies on a few racial powers for flavor combined with racial value / Divine value stacking.

Requirements: Since Nobiran value mimics Divine value, the race must have a minimum Wisdom requirement. Here the rule is moot, as we decided that Nobiran classes require a minimum 11 or better in *all* ability scores. This requirement makes Nobiran racial classes exceptionally difficult to qualify for. Nobirans aren't limited in number because they have especially powerful racial powers (they don't), but simply to reflect an in-world conceit that they are rare, divinely-touched, descendants of the gods.

Nobiran 0: The race receives Divine Blessing (1 power), Blood of Kings (1 power), Heroic Spirit (1 power), and Longevity (1 power), for a total of 4 powers. None of these are spell-like abilities, so the cost for them is $4 \times 40 = 160$ XP. However this is reduced by 40 XP in step 3(c). Therefore the cost for Nobiran 0 is 120 XP, which rounds to 125 XP.

Nobiran 1: The race's racial value mimics Divine 1, so we add the cost of the mimicked class value at that level to the total. Divine 1 costs 250 XP, so the cost is 375 XP. The value in *Player's Companion* is listed as 250 XP, but this is incorrect! The editors responsible for this error have been sentenced to indenture in the salt mines of Alakyrum.

Nobiran 2: The race's racial value mimics Divine 2, so we add the cost of the mimicked class value at that level to the total. Divine 2 costs 500 XP (i.e. an additional 250 XP over Divine 1), so the cost is 625 XP.

Nobiran 3: The race's racial value mimics Divine 3, so we add the cost of the mimicked class value at that level to the total. Divine 3 costs 1000 XP (i.e. an additional 500 XP over Divine 2), so the cost is 1,125 XP.

Nobiran 4: The race's racial value mimics Divine 4, so we add the cost of the mimicked class value at that level to the total. Divine 4 costs 2000 XP (i.e. an additional 1000 XP over Divine 3), so the cost is 2,125 XP.

ZAHARANS

The Zaharan race is another very simple design. It relies on a few racial powers for flavor combined with racial value / Arcane value stacking. This parallels the design of the Elf value (see below) and was intended to showcase an "evil elf" type race such as the Drow, Melnibonéans, or Black Numenoreans.

Requirements: Zaharans require Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma of 9 or higher. Since Zaharan value mimics Arcane value, the race had to have a minimum Intelligence requirement.

Having two more requirements makes the race considerably more difficult to qualify for than more common races like dwarf or elf, but not nearly so difficult as Nobiran.

Zaharan 0: The race receives Ancient Pacts (1 power), Zaharan Tongues (1 power), Inexorable (1 power), Dark Soul (-1 power), and After the Flesh (3 powers). None of these are spell-like abilities, so the cost for them is $5 \times 40 = 200$ XP. This is reduced by 40 XP in step 3(c). Therefore the cost for Zaharan 0 is 160 XP, which rounds to 150 XP. The value in *Player's Companion* is listed as 200 XP.

Zaharan 1: The race's racial value mimics Arcane 1, so we add the cost of the mimicked class value at that level to the total. Arcane 1 costs 625 XP, so the cost is 825 XP.

Zaharan 2: The race's racial value mimics Arcane 2, so we add the cost of the mimicked class value at that level to the total. Arcane 2 costs 1,250 XP, so the cost is 1,450 XP.

Zaharan 3: The race's racial value mimics Arcane 3, so we add the cost of the mimicked class value at that level to the total. Arcane 3 costs 1,875 XP, so the cost is 2,075 XP.

Zaharan 4: The race's racial value mimics Arcane 4, so we add the cost of the mimicked class value at that level to the total. Arcane 4 costs 2,500 XP, so the cost is 2,700 XP.

GNOMES

With the gnome, we begin to introduce spell-like abilities, custom powers that accumulate over the various racial values, and partial-level stacking with Arcane. It's a complex design but it all adds up.

Requirements: All gnome classes require a minimum Intelligence and Constitution of 9 or better. In the Auran Empire setting, gnomes are a relatively rare hybrid descended from dwarven and elven stock, so it made sense to impose the elf's Intelligence and dwarf's Constitution requirement.

Gnome 0: The race receives Nose for Potions (2.5 powers), Gnome Tongues (1 power), Gnomish Infravision (2.5 powers), and Resistance to Illusions (1 power), for a total of 7 racial powers. None of these are spell-like abilities, so the cost for them is $7 \times 40 = 280$ XP. However this is reduced by 40 XP in step 3(c). Therefore the cost for Gnome 0 is 240 XP, which rounds to 250 XP.

Gnome 1: The race receives **faerie fire** (level 1), **ventriloquism** (level 1), and **speak with animals** (level 2). These are spell like abilities which increase the cost for Gnome 1 by 70 XP, 70 XP, and 75 XP, or 215 XP total. The cost for Gnome 1 is therefore (240 XP + 215 XP) or 455 XP, which rounds to 450 XP.

Gnome 2: The race gains the abilities of a mage of 1/3rd the character's class level. This is the equivalent of Arcane 1, so it increases the cost by 625 XP to 1,080 XP. That rounds to 1,075 XP.

Gnome 3: The race gains **mirror image** (level 2) and **phantasmal force** (level 2). These are spell-like abilities which increase the cost of Gnome 3 by 75 XP each. In addition, the race gains access to all magic items usable for thieves (1 power). Collectively this



increases the cost of Gnome 3 to $(1,080 \text{ XP} + 150 + 40)$ to 1,270 XP, which rounds to 1,275 XP.

Gnome 4: The race gains the abilities of a mage of $\frac{1}{2}$ the character's class level. This is the equivalent of Arcane 2, so it increases the cost by another 625 XP. In addition, the race gains Innate Illusion Mastery (1 power), as well as the ability to use magic items usable by mages (1 power). The cost for Gnome 4 is therefore $(1,270 + 625 + 40 + 40)$ 1,975 XP.

HALFLINGS

The halfling design is unusual in that its racial values run negative – in other words, halfling classes cost less XP than human classes. The reason for the negative XP cost of the halfling value is the class's Weak custom power, which imposes a HD type reduction. Since increasing HD by one type increases a class's XP cost by 500 XP, reducing HD by one type is modeled by reducing the race's XP cost at each point by 500 XP.

Another unusual aspect of the halfling design is that the halfling value affords the race a series of “halfling skills” which are especially suited to halfling adventurers. Therefore these powers are costed at 75 XP each rather than the usual 40 XP.

Requirements: Halfling classes require a minimum Dexterity 9 or better. The halfling race is easy to qualify for without any special rules.

Halfling 0: The race receives Child-like (0 powers), Demi-Human Ancestry (0.5 powers), Difficult to Corrupt (1 power), Easily Encumbered (-1 power), Halfling Tongues (1 power), Heroic Breakfast (1 power), Underfoot (1 power), Short-Statured (-0.5

powers), and Weak (-1 power), for a total of 2 custom powers. None of these are spell-like abilities, so the cost for them is $2 \times 40 = 80$ XP. However, this is reduced by 40 XP in step (3)c) to 40 XP. In addition, the Weak power imposes a HD type reduction, which is the equivalent of a -1 value in the HD category (-500 XP). Therefore the cost for Halfling 0 is -460 XP, which rounds to -450 XP.

Halfling 1: The race receives one halfling skill. Halfling skills cost 75 XP each, so the cost for Halfling 0 is increased to -375 XP.

Halfling 2: The race receives one halfling skill. Halfling skills cost 75 XP each, so the cost for Halfling 0 is increased to -300 XP.

Halfling 3: The race receives one halfling skill. Halfling skills cost 75 XP each, so the cost for Halfling 0 is increased to -225 XP.

Halfling 4: The race receives one halfling skill. Halfling skills cost 75 XP each, so the cost for Halfling 0 is increased to -150 XP.

ELVES

The elf race was not so much designed as it was reverse engineered from the elf class in ACKS's predecessor game (*Classic Dungeons & Dragons*). The result was that, although it's similar to the Zaharan design, elven classes enjoy a 125 XP discount for the Arcane Value, a necessity to keep the Elven Spellsinger at 4,000 XP for 2nd level. This mechanic in turn led to the cost of the Elf 4 value being reduced by 125 XP to avoid an asymmetry (Elf 3 + Arcane 1 costing less than Elf 4). Judges who wish to “play by the meta-rules” should raise the cost of Elf 4 by 125 XP and eliminate the 125 XP discount for Arcane points.

Requirements: All elven classes require a minimum Intelligence 9 or better. Since Elf value mimics Arcane value, the class must have a minimum Intelligence requirement.

Elf 0: The race receives Attunement to Nature (0.5 powers), Elf Tongues (1 power), Keen Eyes (1 power), Connection to Nature (1 power), and Animal Friendship (0.5 powers), for a total of 4 racial powers. None of these are spell-like abilities, so the cost for them is $4 \times 40 = 160$ XP. However this is reduced by 40 XP in step 3(c). Therefore the cost for Elf 0 is 120 XP, which rounds to 125 XP.

Elf 1: The race's racial value mimics Arcane 1, so we add the 625 XP cost of the mimicked class value to the total, bringing it to 750 XP.

Elf 2: The race's racial value mimics Arcane 2, so we add the 1,250 XP cost of the mimicked class value to the total, bringing it to 1,375 XP.

Elf 3: The race's racial value mimics Arcane 3, so we add the 1,875 XP cost of the mimicked class value to the total, bringing it to 2,000 XP.

Elf 4: The race's racial value mimics Arcane 4, so we add the 2,500 XP cost of the mimicked class value to the total, bringing it to 2,625 XP. At this point, we take the unusual step of *reducing* the cost of Elf 4 to 2,500 XP. The reason for this reduction is that otherwise it creates an asymmetry in the build point cost for two otherwise-identical classes. HD 1, Fighter 2, Arcane 1, Elf 3 costs 4,000 XP, while HD 1, Fighter 2, Elf 4 would cost 4,125 XP.

DWARVES

Like the elf race, the dwarf race was not designed so much as reverse engineered from the dwarf class in *ACKS's* predecessor game (*Classic Dungeons & Dragons*). Unlike the elf, which in B/X was built as the equivalent of HD 1, Fighting 2, Arcane 1, Elf 3, the B/X dwarf was built with HD 2, Fighting 2, Dwarf 0, meaning it offered no guidance as to what the higher Dwarf values should offer. If the most elven elves are arcane casters, what are the most dwarven dwarves? The choice of cumulative additional proficiencies and bonuses to proficiency throws was intended to reflect the trope of superior dwarven craftsmanship.

The tricky question for evaluating the dwarven design is to how to cost the +1/+2/+3/+4 bonus to proficiencies and thief skills. In general, a +4 bonus to a proficiency throw counts as a custom power, so a +1 bonus should equate to 0.25 custom powers. Since the bonus is applicable so widely, it should be costed at 75 XP rather than 40 XP per power. But the bonus applies to *all* proficiencies and thief skills, so the cost needs to be $75 \text{ XP} \times 0.25$ per +1 per proficiency or thief skill. How many is that?

Calculating the average number of proficiencies or thief skills requires making some assumptions. We know every character will have two proficiencies at 1st level. Let's assume a typical class build of HD 1, Fighting 2, Thievery 0 with two Fighting Value

trade-offs. The class could have another five proficiencies or thief skills. It will gain another proficiency at 3rd, 5th, 9th, 11th, and 12th level, which (using trade-off mechanics) is worth a bit more than two proficiencies. The class might have one or more bonus proficiencies from Intelligence. This suggests around 10 proficiencies is a serviceable baseline, and is used for the suggested costs below.

Requirements: All dwarven classes require a minimum Constitution 9 or better. The dwarf race is easy to qualify for without any special rules.

Dwarf 0: The race receives Sensitivity to Rock (0.5 powers), Dwarf Tongues (1 power), Detect Traps (1 power), and Hardy People (2.5 powers), for a total of 5 racial powers. None of these are spell-like abilities, so the cost for them is $5 \times 40 = 200$ XP. However this is reduced by 40 XP in step 3(c). Therefore the cost for Dwarf 0 is 160 XP, which rounds to 150 XP. The value in *Player's Companion* is listed as 200 XP.

Dwarf 1: The race gains one extra proficiency (1 power), for a cost of 40 XP. The race gains a +1 bonus to all proficiency throws. Above we calculated a baseline of 10 proficiencies for the typical dwarven class, so the +1 bonus must cost $[(10 + 1) \times (1 \times 0.25)]$ 2.75 powers. Those powers cost another (2.75×75) 206 XP. Therefore the additional cost for Dwarf 1 is $(160 + 206)$ 366 XP, which rounds to 375 XP. The value in *Player's Companion* is listed as 400 XP.

Dwarf 2: The race gains an additional proficiency (1 power), for a cost of 40 XP. The race gains an additional +1 bonus to all proficiency throws. Again using a baseline of 10 proficiencies for the typical dwarven class, the +2 bonus must cost $[(10 + 2) \times (2 \times 0.25)]$ 6 powers. Those powers cost another (6×75) 450 XP. Therefore the additional cost for Dwarf 2 is $(160 + 450)$ 610 XP, which rounds to 600 XP. The value in *Player's Companion* is listed as 600 XP.

Dwarf 3: The race gains an additional proficiency (1 power), for a cost of 40 XP. The race gains an additional +1 bonus to all proficiency throws. The cumulative +3 bonus must cost $[(10 + 3) \times (3 \times 0.25)]$ 9.75 powers. Those powers cost another (9.75×75) 731 XP. Therefore the additional cost for Dwarf 3 is $(160 + 731)$ 891 XP, which rounds to 900 XP. The value in *Player's Companion* is listed as 900 XP.

Dwarf 4: The race gains an additional proficiency (1 power), for a cost of 40 XP. The race gains an additional +1 bonus to all proficiency throws. The cumulative +4 bonus must cost $[(10 + 4) \times (4 \times 0.25)]$ 14 powers. Those powers cost another (14×75) 1050 XP. Therefore the additional cost for Dwarf 4 is $(160 + 1050)$ 1,210 XP, which rounds to 1,200 XP. The value in *Player's Companion* is listed as 1,400 XP.

EXAMPLES OF RACE CREATION

VALUE	DWARF	XP COST
4	Dwarf +4 proficiencies	1,200
3	Dwarf +3 proficiencies	900
2	Dwarf +2 proficiencies	600
1	Dwarf +1 proficiencies	375
0	Dwarf	150

From the above analysis, we can see that the Dwarf class has been over-charged at Dwarf 0, Dwarf 1, and Dwarf 4. The proper XP costs are shown in the accompanying table. However, adopting this XP Cost progression would cause the dwarven vaultguard to lose its backwards compatibility with the B/X and BECMI dwarf class.

THRASSIAN

The Thrassian race is probably the most controversial in *ACKS*. With its high armor class and powerful attack routine, it can dominate a party's melee capabilities.

Requirements: All Thrassian classes require a minimum Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution of 9 or better. This makes the class relatively difficult to qualify for. In-world, it reflects the fact that Thrassians are born into slavery, and sickly Thrassians are killed as hatchlings or die in training.

Thrassian 0: The race receives Claws 1d2 and Bite 1d4 (2 powers), Infravision 30' (1 power), Scaly Hide +1 AC (1 power), and Swimming 60' (2 powers), for a total of 6 powers. None of these are spell-like abilities, so the cost for them is $6 \times 40 = 240$ XP. However this is reduced by 40 XP in step 3(c). Therefore the cost for Thrassian 0 is 200 XP, just as listed in *Player's Companion*.

Thrassian 1: The race receives Claws 1d3-1 and Bite 1d6-1 (3 powers), Infravision 45' (1.5 power), Scaly Hide +2 AC (2 powers), and Swimming 90' (2.5 powers), for a total of 9 powers. None of these are spell-like abilities, so the cost for them is $9 \times 40 = 360$ XP. However this is reduced by 40 XP in step 3(c) to 320 XP, which rounds to 325 XP. The value in *Player's Companion* is listed as 400 XP.

Thrassian 2: The race receives Claws 1d3-1 and Bite 1d8-1 (4 powers), Infravision 60' (2 powers), Scaly Hide +3 AC (3 powers), and Swimming 120' (3 powers), for a total of 12 powers. None of these are spell-like abilities, so the cost for them is $12 \times 40 = 480$ XP. The race's racial value mimics Fighter 1, so we add the 500 XP cost of the mimicked class value to the total, bringing it to 980 XP. However this is reduced by 40 XP in step 3(c) to 940 XP, which rounds to 950 XP. The value in *Player's Companion* is listed as 1,000 XP.

Thrassian 3: The race receives Claws 1d4-1 and Bite 1d8-1 (5 powers), Infravision 90' (2.5 powers), Scaly Hide +4 AC (4 powers), and Swimming 120' (3 powers), for a total of 14.5 powers. None of these are spell-like abilities, so the cost for them is $14.5 \times 40 = 580$ XP. The race's racial value mimics Fighter 1, so we add

the 500 XP cost of the mimicked class value to the total, bringing it to 1,080 XP. However this is reduced by 40 XP in step 3(c) to 1,040 XP, which rounds to 1,050 XP. The value in *Player's Companion* is listed as 1,250 XP.

Thrassian 4: The race receives Claws 1d4-1 and Bite 1d10-1 (6 powers), Flying (5 powers), Infravision 120' (3 powers), Scaly Hide +5 AC (5 powers), and Swimming 120' (3 powers), for a total of 22 powers. None of these are spell-like abilities, so the cost is $22 \times 40 = 880$ XP. The race's racial value mimics Fighter 2, so we add the 1,000 XP cost of the mimicked class value to the total, bringing it to 1,880 XP. However this is reduced by 40 XP in step 3(c) to 1,840 XP. The value in *Player's Companion* is listed as 2,300 XP.

The Thrassian race is therefore actually *over-costed* at Thrassian 1, 2, 3, and 4. But is that a fair assessment? Arguably, the Thrassian's racial custom powers should cost 75 XP each, rather than 40 XP each. It's hard to argue that an attack routine, armor class bonus, infravision, or flight aren't uniquely valuable to all classes. If the Thrassian race is designed using a cost of 75 XP per power, the racial value costs work out as follows:

Thrassian 0: The cost is $6 \times 75 = 450$ XP. However this is reduced by 40 XP in step 3(c). Therefore the cost for Thrassian 0 is 410 XP, which rounds to 400 XP.

Thrassian 1: The cost is $9 \times 75 = 675$ XP, reduced by 40 XP in step 3(c) to 635 XP, which rounds to 650 XP.

Thrassian 2: The cost is $12 \times 75 = 900$ XP. The race's racial value mimics Fighter 1, so we add the 500 XP cost of the mimicked class value to the total, then subtract 40 XP in step 3(c), for a total of 1,360 XP. That rounds to 1,350 XP.

Thrassian 3: The cost is $14.5 \times 75 = 1087$ XP. The race's racial value mimics Fighter 1, so we add the 500 XP cost of the mimicked class value to the total, bringing to 1,587 XP. This is reduced by 40 XP in step 3(c) to 1,547 XP, which rounds to 1,550 XP.

Thrassian 4: The cost for them is $22 \times 75 = 1,650$ XP. The race's racial value mimics Fighter 2, so we add the 1,000 XP cost of the mimicked class value to the total, bringing it to 2,650 XP. This is reduced by 40 XP in step 3(c) to 2,610 XP, which rounds to 2,600 XP.

VALUE	THRASSIAN	XP COST
4	Thrassian 4	2600
3	Thrassian 3	1550
2	Thrassian 2	1350
1	Thrassian 1	650
0	Thrassian 0	400

Several years of *ACKS* playtesting certainly don't support the idea that the Thrassian race is underpowered and should have a lower XP cost. For Judges who wish to re-evaluate the race as potentially being more expensive than in *Player's Companion*, we present the costs here for consideration.

HAUBERKS & HOBBITS

ARMOR WEIGHT AND COST FOR SMALL AND LARGE CREATURES

By Alexander Macris with Pat Kilbane

Since the *Adventurer Conqueror King System* has only officially included hobbits for a few months, it has only just now come to the design team's attention that halflings are being unfairly treated when it comes to encumbrance. Leaving aside the argument that being a halfling is an unfairness in itself, let's review the situation at hand.

The weight of a set of armor for any given creature is determined by the creature's body surface area, the thickness of the armor, and the density of the material. Let us assume that for any given type of armor (leather, chain, plate, etc.) the thickness and density does not change. That means that the weight of a set of armor is proportional to the creature's body surface area.

Body surface area in meters squared is found with the following formula:

$$\text{Body Surface Area} = 0.007184 \times (\text{body weight})^{0.425} \times (\text{body height})^{0.725}$$

Body weight is a function of volume and increases with the cube of body height. Therefore if we start with a human being of known height and weight, we can calculate body surface area for other creatures with similar proportions. Entering the formula above into a spreadsheet we can calculate the following:

- » A human, 6' (182cm) height and 180lb (81.6 kg) weight has a bsa of 2.02 meters squared
- » A bugbear, 8' (243cm) height and 424lb (192.3kg) weight has a bsa of 3.6 meters squared.
- » An ogre, 12' (365cm) height and 1,440lb (653kg) weight has a bsa of 8.13 meters squared.
- » A halfling, 4' (121cm) height and 53lb (24kg) weight has a bsa of 0.9 meters squared.

From these outputs it's evident that body surface area quadruples when height doubles; that is to say, body surface area changes with the square of height.

Now, it's a known physiological fact that muscle strength increases with the cross-sectional area of the muscle. Assuming no change in body proportion, cross-sectional muscle area quadruples when height doubles; that is, strength changes with the square of height.

Therefore:

$$\begin{aligned} \Delta \text{ body surface area} &= \Delta \text{ height}^2 \\ \Delta \text{ muscular strength} &= \Delta \text{ height}^2 \\ \Delta \text{ body surface area} &= \Delta \text{ muscular strength} \end{aligned}$$

Since the weight of armor is based on body surface area, armor thickness, and armor density; and since we are holding armor thickness and armor density constant, we can safely conclude that *the weight of armor should increase or decrease at the same rate as the rate of strength.*

The strength in question here is, in *ACKS* terms, **normal load**. The derivation of normal load for a given creature of a given body form and weight is fully detailed in *Lairs & Encounters* and will not be repeated here. Instead let's simply list some normal loads for known creatures and use that to calculate an encumbrance modifier for their armor. For humanoid creatures, we calculate armor encumbrance modifier as (normal load / 5). However, for non-humanoid creatures, we calculate armor encumbrance modifier as (normal load / 10). (*Lairs & Encounters* allows humanoids to carry more than non-humanoids of the same weight and strength, so to avoid having horses unable to move from the weight of their barding we have to take that into account.) Round fractions to the nearest 1/6.

CREATURE	N. LD.	ARMOR ENC.	CREATURE	N. LD.	ARMOR ENC.	CREATURE	N. LD.	ARMOR ENC.
Human	5	x1	Horse, Light	20	x2	Goblin	3	x0.6
Gnome	4	x0.8	Horse, Medium	30	x3	Orc	7	x1.4
Halfling	3	x0.6	Horse, Heavy	40	x4	Bugbear	13	x2.6
Pixie	1	x0.2	Elephant	180	x18	Ogre	20	x4

EXAMPLE #1: Hamgee Samwhich is a halfling bounder. With a normal load of 3 stone, halflings can only carry 3 stone without becoming encumbered. When carrying 4 stone their encounter movement rate is reduced to 90'. When carrying 5-6 stone, their encounter movement rate is reduced to 60'. When carrying 7 stone or more, their encounter movement rate is reduced to 30'. Hamgee purchases a set of halfling-sized plate armor. Plate armor normally has an encumbrance of 6 stone, which would mean that even carrying a shield or spear would push Hamgee down to 30' movement! However, halfling-sized plate armor has a reduced encumbrance of (6 x .6) 3.6 stone, or 3 4/6 stone.

EXAMPLE #2: Ashok, Crusher of Halflings, is an ogre with a normal load of 20 stone. Ashok wears plate armor fitted to his titanic form. Man-sized plate armor weighs 6 stone, so Ashok's plate armor weighs (6 x 4) 24 stone.

MAGICAL ARMOR

Magical armor reduces the encumbrance of armor by 1 stone per bonus. When determining the encumbrance of magical armor for creatures smaller or larger than man-sized, first apply the encumbrance reduction from magic, *then* apply the armor encumbrance modifier from creature size.

EXAMPLE: If Hamgee is wearing **plate armor +1**, the armor's encumbrance would be (6-1) x 0.6, or 3 stone instead of 3 4/6 stone.

COST OF ARMOR

A suit of armor for a small creature does not cost any less than for a man-sized creature, because of the technical complexity of working in miniature. (A joke about the cost of children's clothes would surely insult our halfling readership and thus has been edited out of this article.)

However, the cost of armor for larger creatures is increased at the same proportion as encumbrance. It simply takes more material to cover a larger creature, and more material means more time spent hammering plates, weaving chain links, boiling leather, fastening straps, and so on.

EXAMPLE: A normal suit of plate armor costs 60gp. Hamgee's 3 4/6 st plate armor still costs 60gp. However, Ashok's titanic plate armor costs (60gp x 4) 240gp.

BARDING

The *ACKS Core Rules* offers barding costing 40gp, 75gp, 150gp, 300gp, and 600gp for AC 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 respectively – an early recognition that it's more expensive to armor something the size of a horse than a man. It does not, however, take into account any change in encumbrance. The following table presents revised cost and encumbrance of barding for various common war-mounts:

Half-Barding: War-mounts can be equipped with half-barding that only covers the front half of the mount. Half-barding costs and weighs half as much as full barding. However, the AC bonus from half-barding is lost if the creature (or its unit) is attacked from the flank or rear.

CREATURE	1	2	3	4	5
Light Horse or Dire Wolf	25gp/2 st	50gp/4 st	100gp/6 st	200gp/8 st	400gp/10 st
Medium Horse or Camel	40gp/3 st	75gp/6 st	150gp/9 st	300gp/12 st	600gp/15 st
Heavy Horse	50gp/4 st	100gp/8 st	200gp/12 st	400gp/16 st	800gp/20 st
Elephant	240gp/18 st	450gp/36 st	900gp/54 st	1,800gp/72 st	2,400gp/120 st



FOLKS FAIR AND FOUL

BEWARE THE FAERIE, NYMPH, AND JINN!

By Cole Kelland

In the northern realms of the Auran Empire, faeries – the Fair Folk – dwell, including pixies, sprites, brownies, spriggans, redcaps, knockers, piskies, and nixies. Some are helpful, some mischievous, others dangerous, and all are mercurial. Nymphs inhabit the southern realms of Nicea, Tirenea, and Krysea, the dryads, naiads, oreads, and satyrs that embody raw aspects of nature. In Opelenea and Shebatea, the elemental genies may be found, djinn, efreet, dao, and marid. Following are those entities noted above but not yet featured in *ACKS Core* or *Lairs & Encounters*.

BROWNIE (BOGGART)

% in Lair:	90%
Dungeon Enc:	Solitary (1)/Lair (1)
Wilderness Enc:	Solitary (1)/Lair (1)
Alignment:	Neutral (Chaotic)
Movement:	90' (30')
Armor Class:	2
Hit Dice:	1*
Attacks:	1 (club or dagger)
Damage:	1d4+2
Save:	E1
Morale:	0
Treasure Type:	None
XP:	13

Resembling nothing so much as 2' tall, wizened, bearded old men wearing colored, pointed wool caps and brown, roughspun tunics, brownies are faeries of household and farm. Despite their tiny stature, they are immensely strong (Strength 16 in human terms) and can undertake tasks appropriately.

Brownies are naturally *invisible*, but may choose to become visible at will. The spell *detect invisibility* will reveal their presence. Brownie *invisibility* is unlike the spell of the same name in that a brownie may act freely, including attacking, without becoming visible. Because of this advantage, a brownie will always get surprise on its opponent. An opponent cannot attack a brownie during the first round they are engaged in combat, but in the second round

an opponent may strike due to hearing the brownie and otherwise having some idea where it might be as it moves.

A brownie labors nightly when the householders or farmers are asleep, invisibly performing menial chores such as cleaning away spider webs, sweeping the floor, and stacking hay bales. They avoid contact with the folks they aid, and dwell within unused areas of the house or farm. In exchange for their help, brownies expect small gifts of food, delighting in milk, cream, butter, honey, and porridge. Failure in this tribute, idleness on the part of the people they support, taking their assistance for granted, lavish gifting, or worse – insisting that the tribute given is payment or wage – enrages these faeries. An enraged brownie becomes Chaotic in alignment, and is called a **boggart**. A boggart will use its *invisibility* and great strength to punish the family. It will break items, set loose or attack livestock, torment children and pets, steal and hide needed tools and implements, and in some cases assault and injure those responsible, until finally fleeing to another habitation where it feels its help is more welcome.

KNOCKER

% in Lair:	35%
Dungeon Enc:	Gang (2d4)/Lair (1 troop)
Wilderness Enc:	Troop (1d4 gangs)/Vault (1d10 troops)
Alignment:	Neutral
Movement:	90' (30')
Armor Class:	2
Hit Dice:	1*
Attacks:	1 (hammer, pick, or shovel)
Damage:	1d6
Save:	E1
Morale:	-2
Treasure Type:	D
XP:	13

2' tall old men with exaggerated features and large eyes, knockers are mine faeries dwelling deep within the earth. They carry picks, hammers, and shovels. They excavate and dig for metals and minerals and bear no ill will towards dwarves and other

such miners as they encounter, though they are loathe to reveal themselves directly. Indeed, given gifts of surface food and praises, knockers will warn the delvers of other folk of impending danger by loudly knocking on the rocks and tunnel walls nearby. Like most faeries, however, they are not above minor practical jokes.

Knockers have infravision to 90' and may also *transmute rock to mud* (as per the spell, but without the reverse) once per hour. Characters encountering these naturally stealthy, shy faeries in their natural habitat suffer a -2 penalty to surprise rolls.

NIXIE

% in Lair:	85%
Dungeon Enc:	None
Wilderness Enc:	Solitary (1)/Watery Lair (2d4)
Alignment:	Neutral
Movement:	120' (40'), Swim 120' (40')
Armor Class:	2
Hit Dice:	2*
Attacks:	1 (dagger)
Damage:	1d4
Save:	E2
Morale:	-1
Treasure Type:	B
XP:	29

These water faeries stand 4' tall and look like beautiful elfin-featured men or women, the former called a nix, the latter a nixie. Their flawless skin is pale with just the slightest silvery sheen, and their expressive eyes are ever-shifting shades of blue.

Waterfalls, pools, gently flowing rivers: these are the places nixies call home. There they while away the hours singing and playing music. As mercurial as the waters they inhabit, they can be by turns helpful or vicious as the whim takes them. They may simply perform for an outsider, teach them the intricacies of playing an instrument, or may lure them in and drown them.

Outsiders find the music and song of nixies attractive and entrancing. Any character hearing a nixie's magical performance must make a saving throw vs Spells. Failure indicates the victim has been *charmed*. Success grants the character immunity to the effects of nixie songs for the rest of the encounter. Any being under the *charm* of a nixie will attempt to move close to them, and will not make any attacks. A nix or nixie usually dallies with a *charmed* victim for a while before either drowning or releasing them.

Nixies may also polymorph self (as per the spell) once per day, though only to assume the form of a light horse of surpassing quality. In this shape they explore the land around their lair and also trick outsiders.

OREAD

% in Lair:	35%
Dungeon Enc:	None
Wilderness Enc:	Solitary (1)/Cave Lair (1d6)
Alignment:	Neutral
Movement:	120' (40')
Armor Class:	4
Hit Dice:	2**
Attacks:	1 (spear or shortbow)
Damage:	1d6
Save:	E2
Morale:	0
Treasure Type:	D
XP:	38

Oreads, the nymphs of the mountains, roam the forests of their rocky homes, hunting such wild beasts as take their fancy, exulting in the chase.

Like all nymphs, they look like stunning, elf-like women, though their skin is like finely polished stone and their eyes the colors of brilliant gemstones. As keen hunters, oreads bear spears and bows, and when not hunting return to their mountain cave lairs, these often accessed through solid rock. Oreads may passwall (as per the spell) at will, but only through stone.

Though somewhat less inclined to do so compared to dryads and naiads, oreads still possess the ability to *charm* others. A victim of the charm must succeed in a saving throw versus Spells or approach the oread to serve her desires for a year.

Oread lairs often contain metals, minerals, and fine furs kept as hunting trophies.



PISKIE

% in Lair:	10%
Dungeon Enc:	Band (2d4)/Lair (1d4x10)
Wilderness Enc:	Troop (1d4x10)/Lair (1d4x10)
Alignment:	Neutral
Movement:	120' (40')
Armor Class:	5
Hit Dice:	1*
Attacks:	1 (dagger or sling)
Damage:	1d4
Save:	E1
Morale:	0
Treasure Type:	B
XP:	13

These attractive faeries resemble 2' tall children with elfin features and green eyes, clad in ragged clothes and caps. They live within barrows, stone circles, and near dolmens and menhir.

Largely benign, they spend their days dancing, wrestling, and exploring. That they enjoy nothing more than riding horses or ponies, whether these belong to them or not, does not endear them to travelers. Piskies show little malice to others, though they are mischievous by nature and delight in confusing and misleading outsiders, causing *confusion* (as per the spell) at will. Only the pixies and sprites are regarded with real enmity, and it is not uncommon for conflict to break about between bands of piskies and those other faeries.

Piskies have a love of finery, and the easiest way to win their cooperation is in gifting them with shiny trinkets, fine ribbons, and well-made clothing in green and red as suits their stature.

REDCAP

% in Lair:	40%
Dungeon Enc:	Solitary (1)/Lair (1)
Wilderness Enc:	Solitary (1)/Lair (1)
Alignment:	Chaotic
Movement:	120' (40')
Armor Class:	5
Hit Dice:	4*
Attacks:	1 (spear) or 2 claws, 1 bite
Damage:	1d8+1 or 1d3/1d3/1d4
Save:	E4
Morale:	+2
Treasure Type:	B
XP:	135

The most vile and vicious of the fae, redcaps are sinewy old men in mien, 2' tall with sharp, elongated teeth, filthy clawed fingers, and staring red eyes. Rusty iron boots adorn their feet, and a woolen cap their heads, stained red with the blood of those they kill.

Redcaps live a solitary life, living within old forts and other ruins, actively hunting such lone or weak-looking wanderers or beasts as venture too close. They favor spears, but may resort to tooth and claw when truly angered. When a victim is slain, the redcap dips its cap in the blood before settling down to feast.

Notoriously hard to kill, redcaps are resistant to all nonmagical weapons as many a would-be hero has found to their ultimate cost.

SATYR

% in Lair:	35%
Dungeon Enc:	None
Wilderness Enc:	Gang (1d6)/Lair (1d4 gangs)
Alignment:	Neutral
Movement:	120' (40')
Armor Class:	2
Hit Dice:	2*
Attacks:	1 (two-handed club or shortbow)
Damage:	1d6
Save:	E2
Morale:	0
Treasure Type:	A (in lair)
XP:	29

The male counterparts to the female nymphs, satyrs are lustful, hirsute men with horse-like ears and tails. Children born to a satyr and nymph are always a nymph if female, or satyr if male.

Sensualists to the core, they drink to excess, dance wildly, hunt, wrestle, and cavort and will happily chase and enchant any nymph or attractive female that comes their way.

By playing the aulos (reed pipe), a satyr may entrance listeners nearby. Any character who hears a satyr's magical piping must make a saving throw vs Spells. Failure indicates the victim has been *charmed*. Success grants the character immunity to the effects of satyr music for the rest of the encounter. Any being under the *charm* of a satyr will attempt to move close to it, and will not make any attacks. Satyrs themselves are immune to *charm* effects.

SPRIGGAN

% in Lair:	25%
Dungeon Enc:	Gang (2d4)/Camp (1 band)
Wilderness Enc:	Band (1d4 gangs)/Lair (1d4 bands)
Alignment:	Chaotic
Movement:	120' (40')
Armor Class:	3
Hit Dice:	3*
Attacks:	1 (weapon)
Damage:	weapon
Save:	E3
Morale:	+1
Treasure Type:	D x2, B x2 (per band)
XP:	65

Standing just over 4' tall, spriggans are as malicious as they are ugly, and resemble gnarled, nasty old men with overlarge heads clad in rough clothing and leather.

Bandits and thieves by nature, they lair in ruins and cairns, jealously guarding their ill-gotten gains, leaving only to raid and steal from others though some will hire out their services as mercenaries and guards.

Spriggans manipulate the weather near their lairs, drawing in ominous and unpleasant weather to discourage outsiders from approaching. A spriggan is able to *summon weather* (as per the spell) once per day. Far more formidable, however, is their ability to grow in stature, doubling in size at will to tower over and menace their victims. At will they may use *growth* (as per the spell, but with no reverse), doubling their normal attack damage and enjoying a +16 bonus to force open doors.

NONCOMBATANT CHARACTERS

A NEW APPROACH TO HANDLING 0-LEVEL NORMAL MEN, DECADENT NOBLES, NONCOMBATANT MONSTERS, AND MORE

By Alexander Macris

ACKS, unlike many other role-playing games, affords non-adventuring characters a means of advancement. Mages can advance through spell research, thieves through hijinks, and all characters through domain rulership. This is, overall, a good thing for world-building and verisimilitude, but it can lead to a possibly unwanted outcome: Namely, that every domain ruler ends up a powerful high-level combatant.

Conversely, for those without domains to rule or spells to research, an opposite, but equally unwanted, dynamic occurs. Each and every non-adventuring and non-ruling character defaults to being a “normal man” (or elf, dwarf, etc.) or “noncombatant”. These “normal men” or “noncombatants” are always unclassed characters with worse attack throws, saving throws, and Hit Dice than their classed or monster equivalents. Class powers that might seem quite applicable to a noncombatant (like those of the bard or venturer) remain closed off no matter how much training, influence, or knowledge the character accumulates.

In short, **ACKS** does not seem to afford any possibility for a character to be highly important in society without being an elite combatant, nor any way for a character to advance in knowledge and ability without improving in combat. This article seeks to resolve both dilemmas by introducing a unified noncombatant mechanic that can be applied to any creature at any level or HD.

NONCOMBATANT SUB-TYPE

A noncombatant is a character that is not devoted to adventure, combat, and exploration. Characters of any class or race can be noncombatants. A fighter noncombatant is someone who is ostensibly a soldier, but has never fought in a war or truly risked his life in combat; examples might be an overweight supply officer who never goes on campaign, a raw recruit who has never taken to the field, or an epicurean noble who has been placed in charge of an army due to high birth. A venturer noncombatant is a merchant who does not engage in risky ventures over land and sea, but focuses on counting coins and trading goods at home. A mage noncombatant is a wizard who studies books and conducts magical research, but avoids the stress and suffering of quests and adventures.

LEVEL	XP	COMBATANT	XP	NONCOMBATANT
1	0	Man-at-Arms	0	Man-about-Town
2	2,000	Warrior	1,200	Courier
3	4,000	Swordmaster	2,400	Swordowner
4	8,000	Hero	4,800	Nero
5	16,000	Exemplar	9,600	Unexemplar
6	32,000	Myrmidon	19,200	Dastard
7	65,000	Champion	35,000	Championet
8	130,000	Epic Hero	70,000	Petty Lord
9	250,000	Warlord	120,000	Lord
10	370,000	Warlord, 10th lvl	190,000	Lord, 10th level
11	490,000	Warlord, 11th lvl	260,000	Lord, 11th level
12	610,000	Warlord, 12th lvl	330,000	Lord, 12th level
13	730,000	Warlord, 13th lvl	400,000	Lord, 13th level
14	850,000	Overlord	470,000	Overweight Lord

The advantage of being a noncombatant is that the character advances in level more quickly. Instead of having to maintain physical fitness, practice with arms and armor, and master adventuring arts, the noncombatant simply focuses on whatever is most likely to advance him. A noncombatant fighter might spend his time attending elite military academies, going to court functions, serving as an aide-de-camp to important nobles, and generally being a “peacetime soldier”. A noncombatant cleric might spend his time lecturing parishioners on the need to go out and fight evil, overseeing alms-giving for the poor, and studying theology at the high temple.

The base cost of advancing from 1st level to 2nd level is decreased by 800 XP, and doubles thereafter through 8th level. At 9th level and above, the base cost is decreased by 50,000 XP per level thereafter. The Combatant v. Noncombatant XP table above provides an

NONCOMBATANT SUB-TYPE

example of the combatant versus noncombatant progression for the fighter class.

However, the penalties of being a noncombatant are high – at least for anyone who hopes to engage in combat! Apply the following as custom powers to any noncombatant of any race or class.

Indolent: A noncombatant avoids training in arms. He suffers a -1 penalty to attack throws at 1st level of experience. The effects of indolence become worse with time, so the penalty increases to -2 at 3rd level, -3 at 5th level, -4 at 9th level, and -5 at 11th level. (This counts as -3 custom powers.)

Nonaggressive: A noncombatant has never had to kill or be killed. He suffers a -1 penalty to damage rolls with missile and melee weapons. (This counts as -1 custom power.)

Uncertain: A noncombatant lacks the situational awareness and intensity of focus that keeps an adventurer alive. He suffers a -1 penalty to saving throws, due to loss of morale. As the years pass, the noncombatant becomes ever more used to a calm and comfortable life, so the penalty increases to -2 at 3rd level, -3 at 5th level, -4 at 9th level, and -5 at 11th level. (This counts as -1 custom power.)

Sedentary: A noncombatant's epicurean lifestyle contributes to the decrepitude of age. The penalties from age are increased, as shown on the table below:

ABILITY SCORE ADJUSTMENTS BY AGE		
AGE CATEGORY	PROGRESSIVE ABILITY SCORE ADJUSTMENTS	CUMULATIVE ABILITY SCORE ADJUSTMENTS
Middle Aged	-2 STR, -2 DEX, -3 CON	-2 STR, -2 DEX, -3 CON
Old	-3 STR, -2 DEX, -2 CON, -2 CHA	-5 STR, -4 DEX, -5 CON, -2 CHA
Ancient	-2 STR, -3 DEX, -2 CON, -4 CHA	-7 STR, -7 DEX, -7 CON, -4 CHA

Sedentary counts as -1 custom power. Even sedentary elves and other ageless characters suffer age penalties, representing “fading” or weariness with life.

Tender: A noncombatant has never been hardened by suffering and injury. He begins play with one-half normal hit points (excluding CON bonus). He gains one less hit point each level of experience thereafter. (This counts as -10 custom powers.)



LEVEL	XP	CUMULATIVE NONCOMBATANT PENALTY REMOVAL
1	100	+1 attack throws, damage rolls, saving throws; +1/2 HD of hp; aging penalty removed
2	+800	+1 hp
3	+800	+1 attack throws and saving throws; +1 hp
4	+1,600	+1 hp
5	+3,200	+1 attack throws and saving throws; +1 hp
6	+6,400	+1 hp
7	+12,800	+1 hp
8	+64,000	+1 hp
9	+50,000	+1 attack throws and saving throws; +1 hp
10	+50,000	+1 hp
11	+50,000	+1 attack throws and saving throws; +1 hp
12	+50,000	+1 hp
13	+50,000	+1 hp
14	+50,000	+1 hp

EXAMPLE: Let's compare two 1st level characters, Marcus Quintillus (a combatant fighter) and his brother Gaius Quintillus (a noncombatant fighter). To keep things even-handed, both brothers will have identical ability scores - Str 11, Int 10, Wis 9, Dex 11, Con 11, Cha 10 - and both will roll maximum hit points at 1st level.

Based on the above, the combatant Marcus Quintillus has 8 hit points, a base attack throw of 10+, and deals 1d6+1 points of damage. He saves as a 1st level fighter. Meanwhile, his indolent brother Gaius Quintillus has 4 hit points, a base attack throw of 11+, and deals 1d6 points of damage. He saves as a 1st level fighter with a -1 penalty, which is to say, as a normal man. The noncombatant Gaius Quintillus, in other words, has the characteristics of a 0-level mercenary (from *Domains at War*), while the combatant Marcus Quintillus has the characteristics of a 1st level veteran mercenary. Put another way, the difference between being a 1st level fighter noncombatant and combatant is the difference between being a normal man and a veteran.

Now, let's advance both brothers to age 50 (middle aged) and 11th level. Marcus has been an adventurer and warrior, while Gaius has advanced through politics, ruling the estates of others. Assume that both brothers have rolled average for hit points (4 points on even levels, 5 points on odd levels).

Marcus Quintillus now has Str 9, Int 10, Wis 9, Dex 9, Con 9, Cha 10. He now has (8 + 4 + 5 + 4 + 5 + 4 + 5 + 4 + 5 + 2 + 2) 48 hp. His base attack throw is 3+ and he deals 1d6+4 points of damage. He saves as an 11th level fighter.

Gaius Quintillus now has Str 9, Int 10, Wis 9, Dex 9, Con 8, Cha 10. The low Con will impose a -1 penalty on hp for 1st through 9th level. In addition, he will gain 1 less hp for each level after 1st. Therefore he has (3 + 2 + 3 + 2 + 3 + 2 + 3 + 2 + 3 + 1 + 1) 25 hp. His attack throw is 8+ (the same as a 4th level fighter) and he deals 1d6+3 points of damage. He saves as an 11th level fighter, but with a -5 penalty, again about the same as a 4th level fighter.

BECOMING A COMBATANT

From time to time, a noncombatant may become a combatant. This may occur almost accidentally, as when a person is thrown into difficult circumstances and survives; or deliberately, if a character is roused by some motivation to abandon their indolent lifestyle and get good.

A 1st level noncombatant can become a combatant simply by accumulating, then expending, 100 XP from adventuring (including war). These XP do not count towards his advancement to 2nd level, and are expended simply to remove the noncombatant sub-type from the character's class.

With age and advancement, a noncombatant becomes increasingly set in his ways, and it becomes increasingly difficult for a noncombatant to become a combatant. The Cumulative Noncombatant Penalty Removal table shows the number of XP that must be accumulated and expended at each level to overcome that level's noncombatant penalties. Each level's penalty must be bought off in order, cumulatively.

EXAMPLE: For 1st level Quintillus to become a combatant he would just have to 100 XP from adventuring. But for 11th level Gaius Quintillus to become a combatant is far more challenging, for he is far removed from his energetic youth. He has incurred a total penalty of -14 to hp, -5 to attack throws, -5 to saving throws, -1 to damage, and -1 to CON. After accumulating and expending 100 XP, these penalties would be reduced to -10 hp, -4 attack throws, and -4 saving throws. After accumulating and expending 1,700 XP from adventuring total, the penalties would be -8 hp, -3 attack throws and -3 saving throws, and so on.

Once a noncombatant decides to begin adventuring to become a combatant, he can no longer accumulate XP in his character class until he has removed all of his noncombatant penalties. He may abandon his efforts to become a combatant at any time, but doing

so causes him to revert back to his noncombatant status, with penalties returning at a rate of 1 point per week. (As every athlete knows, its easier to decondition than to re-condition!)

NONCOMBATANT MONSTERS

The following section provides the noncombatant characteristics of various human, demi-human, and humanoid creatures in **ACKS**. In calculating HD, we subtracted 0.5 for the first HD and 0.25 for each HD thereafter, then converted back into standard notation (+1 = 0.25 HD). Attack throws and saving throws are calculated by base (combatant HD), then modified by the penalties noted above.

- » **Bugbear:** AC 3, MV 90', HD 2+1, #AT 1 (weapon) 9+, Dmg 1d6 or weapon, Save F1, ML +1, AL C
- » **Dwarf:** AC 0, MV 120', HD ½ HD, #AT 1 (weapon) 11+, Dmg 1d6 or weapon, Save D1 -1, ML -1, AL L
- » **Elf:** AC 0, MV 120', HD 1-1, #AT 1 (weapon) 10+, Dmg 1d6 or weapon, Save E1 -1, ML -1, AL N
- » **Gnoll:** AC 1, MV 90', HD 1+1, HD, #AT 1 (weapon) 10+, Dmg 1d6 or weapon, Save F1, ML -1, AL C
- » **Gnome:** AC 0, MV 120', HD ½, #AT 1 (weapon) 11+, Dmg 1d4 or weapon -1, Save D1 -1, ML -1, AL N
- » **Goblin:** AC 0, MV 60', HD ½ -1, #AT 1 (weapon) 11+, Dmg 1d4 or weapon -1, Save NM -1, ML -2, AL C
- » **Halfling:** AC 0, MV 90', HD ½-1, #AT 1 (weapon) 11+, Dmg 1d4 or weapon -1, Save E1 -1, ML -2, AL L
- » **Hobgoblin:** AC 0, MV 90', HD 1-1, #AT 1 (weapon) 10+, Dmg 1d6 or weapon, Save NM, ML -1, AL C

- » **Kobold:** AC 0, MV 60', HD 1d2 hit points, #AT 1 (weapon) 11+, Dmg 1d2 or weapon -2, Save NM -1, ML -3, AL C.
- » **Lizardman:** AC 3, MV 60', HD 1+2, #AT 3 or 1 (claws/bite or wpn) 10+, Dmg 1d2/1d2/1d6 or wpn, Save F1, ML +1, AL C
- » **Man:** AC 0, MV 120', HD ½, #AT 1 (weapon) 11+, Dmg 1d6 or weapon, Save NM, ML -1, AL N
- » **Ogre:** AC 3, MV 90', HD 3, #AT 1 (weapon) 8+, Dmg 1d8 or weapon +2, Save F1, ML +1, AL C
- » **Orc:** AC 0, MV 120', HD ½, #AT 1 (weapon) 11+, Dmg 1d4 or weapon -1, Save NM, ML -1, AL C

These characteristics stack up well compared to those noted in **ACKS**. For instance, in **ACKS** gnoll noncombatants “fight as orcs”; here they have nearly identical characteristics to orcs, save for one additional AC point and hp. In **ACKS** hobgoblin noncombatants “fight as goblins”, and here they are identical to goblins save in movement speed. Lizardman noncombatants “fight as gnolls”; the creatures here are approximately of that strength but there are substantial characteristic differences. Ogre noncombatants “fight as bugbears”, and these rules yield 3 HD monsters of about bugbear strength. Bugbear noncombatants “fight as hobgoblins” in **ACKS**; here they have more HD (2+1 instead of 1+1) but deal less damage.

The only real losers are, perhaps, orcs, whose noncombatants “fight as goblins” in **ACKS** but are more akin to kobolds using these rules. As for the goblins and kobolds themselves, their noncombatants “do not fight” in **ACKS**, so we have no characteristics to compare to! However a creature that has 1d2 hp and -3 ML and deals weapon damage -2 is about as close to “do not fight” as can be modeled with any mechanics so we hope this will suffice.

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