

Background Skills

A Basic Fantasy RPG Supplement

Release 1

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Basic Fantasy Website: basicfantasy.org

INTRODUCTION

This document presents an alternative method for assigning background skills to characters in the Basic Fantasy Role-Playing Game. If you don't have a copy of the Basic Fantasy RPG core rules, please visit www.basicfantasy.org and download a copy... it's free!

The BFRPG core rules allow you to create brave fighters, devout clerics, cunning thieves and brilliant magic-users for the sake of adventuring in varied fantasy worlds. But sometimes adventurers – both during adventures and between them - know how to do things other than fight, pray, sneak or cast spells. These alternative and optional rules try to cover some of these secondary skills.

The Basis for These Rules

The key concept here is "reasonableness" - if it's reasonable, the Game Master should allow it (possibly requiring an Ability Roll).

Adventurers Know How to Adventure

Player Characters (PCs) - as opposed to most Normal Men - are adventurers. While they might be mere upstart adventurers at level 1, they are still assumed to know the basics of adventuring and exploration. Assume that all player characters know how to tie knots, how to climb, how to swim, how to row in a small boat, how to build a reasonable bonfire (usually requiring a tinderbox), how to make minor repairs and maintenance on arms and armor and how to ride a horse. Except for Barbarians (a Fighter subclass from the Old Dungeoneer's Almanack), assume that all PCs are literate in all the languages they speak, know how to read and know math at least at an elementary school level; Barbarians have to take Literacy as a language.

The fact that the adventurer knows how to do each of these basic tasks, however, does not mean that he or she will automatically succeed in doing them. The Game Master (GM) should judge each attempt and rule on its results. Simple stuff (such as climbing a ladder or a rope or lighting a bonfire out of dry wood with a tinderbox) should succeed automatically; difficult tasks (such as climbing a difficult cliff or a wall or trying to light a fire without a tinderbox) should require an Ability Roll (in our examples, based on Dexterity and Intelligence,

respectively). Clearly impossible stuff (such as trying to set stones on fire with a tinderbox and no oil) should always fail - no roll required.

Note that thinking should usually be done by players, not characters. No Intelligence Roll should solve riddles or puzzles - players should try and figure them out themselves (this way is usually far more enjoyable, too). In fact, characters are assumed to be literate and know a bit of math for this exact reason - to allow the Game Master to present the players with interesting and enjoyable challenges without too many problems.

Background Skills

Adventuring aside, talented characters may also be proficient in one or more professions which are not directly related to adventuring. Each character starts at level 1 with a number of Background Skills equal to his or her Prime Requisite Bonus (for a minimum of 0). Characters with low prime requisites have to work harder to learn the basic abilities of their class, and thus have less (or no) time to learn other trades; on the other hand, characters with high prime requisites have an easier time learning their class abilities and thus have more time available to learn additional professions.

Each Background Skill is a broad profession, such as Mason, Carpenter, Gemcutter, Jeweler, Farmer, Woodsman, Blacksmith and so on. It entails all the basic skills involved in this profession. Assume that a character can easily perform the day-to-day tasks of each his or her Background Skills as long as he or she has access to the required tools, equipment and materials; there is no need to roll dice in such a case. Only difficult tasks require an Ability Roll. For example, a character with the Blacksmith background skill can easily produce horseshoes, pots, and even average-quality arrowheads as long as he or she has access to a functioning forge, coal, iron and so on; only making a special item (such as a high-quality sword suitable to be later enchanted) will require an Ability Roll.

NPC Normal Men, of course, are as skilled in their professions as the Game Master needs them to be.

Some Examples of Background Skills

Percentile dice can be used to determine background skills, if desired, or the player may simply choose from the list (or make something up, with the agreement of the GM).

01-04	Advocate
05-08	Alchemist
09-12	Armorer
13-16	Blacksmith
17-20	Bowyer/Fletcher
21-24	Brewer
25-28	Cobbler
29-32	Carpenter
33-36	Cook
37-40	Engineer
41-44	Farmer
45-48	Gem Cutter
49-52	Herbalist
53-56	Jeweler
57-60	Mason
61-64	Merchant
65-68	Navigator
69-72	Physician
73-76	Potter
77-80	Sailor
81-84	Tailor
85-88	Tanner
89-92	Weapon Smith
93-96	Weaver
97-100	Woodsmen

Learning New Background Skills

Learning a new profession takes time. A lot of time. And sometimes a considerable amount of money, too. There are two ways to learn a new Background Skill: hiring a teacher or becoming an apprentice.

A hired teacher can provide intensive training, taking a single season (for example, an entire winter) to teach a Background Skill. This option, however, is expensive as the teacher cannot do anything else during that time; the cost for intensive training is thus 2,000gp. The student, too, cannot do anything else (including adventure) during that season. Alternatively, a skill can be taught from time to time between adventures, taking a whole year to fully learn it; in this case, the cost is 1,000gp. Note that finding teachers for some professions (such as Alchemist or Engineer) might be more difficult (and expensive!) than for others.

Being an apprentice is free of charge as the apprentice works for his or her master. On the other hand, the master has to work as well, and many of the tasks that the apprentice has to do are various menial jobs rather than dedicated learning. Full-time apprenticeship (which does not allow adventuring in the meantime) requires a whole year to learn a single Background Skill. Part time apprenticeship (allowing adventuring) takes three years.

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