Dark Fantasy Basic

Player's Guide

by Eric Diaz

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What is this book about?

This is an old school, dark fantasy roleplaying game (or adventure game).

If you're reading this, chances are you already know what a roleplaying game is. If you don't, find the answer before proceeding. Just look it up online.

Dark Fantasy Basic pays homage to a classic roleplaying game from the early eighties, which is still, for many fans, one of the most concise, clear and well-written RPGs ever published.

This book uses the same system as the world's most popular RPGs – six abilities, classes, levels, etc. – and it is meant to be compatible with games from that era. Or any OSR game, really. It also has some modern influences, including all of the OSR and the most recent version of this game.

Like many retroclones and neoclones, this game begun as a collection of house rules, with one difference: my main goal was to make a set of one page rules that you can combine freely. The idea is to get multiple OSR authors to write their own pages that can be assembled by the reader into a full book. Check this out: http://methodsetmadness.blogspot.com/2016/03/one-page-rules-or-taking-page-from.html.

Eventually, all my pages grew into one complete book. It is meant to be straightforward, not minimalist. You won't find the definition of "sword" or "human" in this book, but you'll find all you need to play (from the player's side). Even if you don't use the book as a whole, I hope you will find at least one different idea in each page that you can adapt to your games.

Or, even better, write a page yourself. This game is what you make of it.

Acknowledgments

This book is dedicated to all great RPG designers and creators of the books that sparked my imagination when I was younger, especially Tom Moldvay, Gary Gygax, Dave Arneson, Dave Cook, among many others.

To everyone in the OSR, for the never-ending creation of adventures, settings, games, classes, monsters, and so on, thanks for showing me the way.

I'd like to thank the people who maintain websites such as Monster Brains, Old Book Illustrations, and the British Library Flickr for giving the public easy access to public domain illustrations.

To all the nice folk that support and follow my blog, and everyone who has given me praise, advice, criticism and feedback, I really appreciate it.

For all the alpha readers, especially Paul C. who offered me (much needed) proofreading, Rene Hendrick, Stephen Grodzicki, Kyrinn S. Eis and Paolo Greco, thank you for all your valuable opinions.

Special thanks to Rick Troula for the book cover, layout, art direction and for helping me through all the process. This book wouldn't be the same without his inestimable support.

Credits

Written by Eric Diaz. Book cover, design and layout by Rick Troula. All art except for the cover is from the public domain. You can find more of my work at methodsetmadness.blogspot.com.

1. Introduction

What is this book about?
See above.

How is it different from the original games?
Besides embracing some dark fantasy tropes, this game offers a degree of character customization you don't often find in retroclones and neoclones - although this idea is almost as old as our hobby. The system itself is not original, but each page has something that differs from the original games.

How dark is it?
Not that much darker than the original game, if you think about it. The Player's Guide has a few hints of dark fantasy (in alignment, spells, classes, etc.), but most of the flavor will come from monsters, adventures, setting, etc.

Why is it so concise?
To save you time, entice your imagination and encourage house-ruling. It is still a complete game. Use it as written, or make it your own.

Where are the optional rules?
I eventually decided not to mark (most of) the optional rules, since all rules are optional in a way or another. These are only guidelines. Use them at your own peril.

But where is the...
This game has no different XP charts or HD for different classes, no demi-humans, no prerequisites, no prime abilities. There are also no monsters and no GM stuff in this book. It is a Player's Guide. But if you really like, well, we might have something like that in the future.

Can my PC...
YES. You can wield a sword regardless of class, use any armor, hide in the shadows without having the skill, and so on. You can also use sorcery without studying it first, if you find a lost grimoire somewhere. Good luck with that.

But why did you...
If you want to understand why I chose a mechanic over another, I often explain this is my blog (check methodsetmadness. blogspot.com). I didn't include designer's notes here, since it would take valuable space.

What do I need to play?
COMMON SENSE. Also, some dice and paper. But mostly common sense.

What do characters do in this game?
Try to get richer and tougher while fighting the terrible things that lurk in the shadows. Go through ruins and unknown lands in hope of treasures. Sometimes they get killed.

What if my PC dies?
Create another one.

Why start at level 3?
First level characters are desperate victims. Traditionally, they can die fighting house cats or falling from a tree. This game is about tragic heroes, so they start at level 3.
Also, you might use the extra HP.
However, if you prefer to start at the bottom and climb your way up, you have my approval and respect.

Why stop at level 10?
To keep it gritty, dark, and focused on low level challenges. High level characters might use a similar system, but they deal with different issues: building castles, ruling lands, facing demigods, etc. You can extrapolate higher levels from this book, or find alternate rules for expert or immortal characters elsewhere.

Why would I play a Hopeless character?
Maybe you wouldn't. Leave that to players looking for a challenge or just a change of pace.

What about that tone?
I've added some dark humor and hubris to make reading this book more pleasant. Don't take it too seriously.
Just kidding. I'm dead serious.

The Basics

Whenever a PC tries to accomplish something and the result isn't obvious, the GM will tell the player to roll a d20, add an appropriate ability modifier and skill bonus (if the PC has an adequate skill), and compare it to a **Difficulty Class (DC)** set by the GM. If the roll matches or beats the DC, the action was successful. This is called a skill check.

The DCs
The difficulty class for most tasks follows the table below:

Difficulty	DC
Very Easy	5
Easy	10
Average	15
Hard	20
Very Hard	25
Legendary	30

A few tasks have different DCs: combat, spellcasting, opposed rolls. But the method is always similar and the numbers are in the same ballpark.

When NOT to roll
If something is too easy or completely impossible, or the result of an action is obvious for any reason, there is no need to roll. Do not roll to remember common knowledge, for regular conversations, etc. Assume you rolled a 10 if you need a number.

Advantage/disadvantage
Some character features give you advantage or disadvantage. The GM might also impose you one of the two under especially favorable or unfavorable circumstances.
Advantage means rolling two d20 and picking the best; disadvantage means you roll two d20 and pick the worst. They cancel each other out (two advantages and one disadvantage is the same as one advantage, for example).
If you have multiple sources of advantage, you can roll more than two dice, and pick the best (same for disadvantage).

Natural rolls
A natural 1 happens when the number 1 is rolled on the d20. It is always a failure and, if you fail by 5 or more, it is a fumble (see below). Conversely, a natural 20 is always success, and if you succeed by 5 or more, it is a critical hit (see below).

Critical hits and fumbles
Critical hits are exceptional successes. They might be faster, more precise or more impressive than ordinary successes (GM's call). They happen when you succeed by a margin of 10 or more (or a natural 20 – see above).
Fumbles are horrible failures. They might be costlier, riskier or more embarrassing than ordinary failures (GM's call). They happen when you fail by a margin of 10 or more (or a natural 1 – see above).
Combat has slightly different rules and usually no fumbles.
Examples: a character may fall midway when climbing a wall, be caught by surprise when sneaking around or picking a pocket, break his or her lock picks, etc.

The price of failure
Failure often creates some minor setback, or a need to find another method of dealing with a problem, but only fumbles will create serious problems immediately.
The GM might treat failures with a small margin (5 or less) as partial successes: the goal is achieved if the PC is willing to spend more time or resources than expected, or it causes a minor setback.

Trying again
Some activities may be attempted more than once by spending extra time or resources; this must be judged on a case by case basis.
If the object of the action is inanimate (for example, a lock, a door, etc.), it is usually impossible to try again, even for different characters. Treat every repeated attempt with the same object as if it had resulted in an identical roll, so that success can only be achieved by more skilled characters or after a few levels are gained.
Example: if a thief is trying to pick a lock (DC 15), rolls a natural 3, and fails, another thief will always roll a 3, and thus only more skilled thieves will succeed. Likewise, if a fighter fails to break down a door, success can only be achieved by someone stronger, of if conditions change (bring an axe, for example).
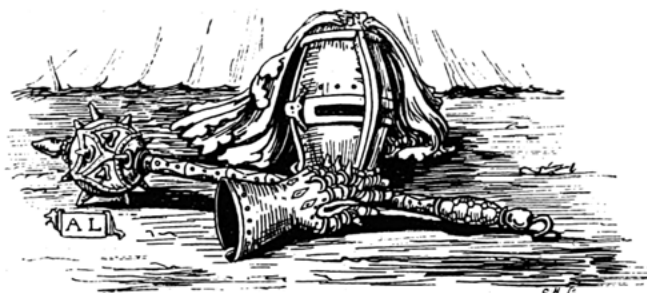
Opposed Rolls

Whenever two characters are taking actions with conflicting goals, their rolls are made against each other. Both sides roll and the highest roll wins; ties go to the defender (or the highest ability score if there is no clear defender).

The GM can decide beforehand not to roll for the NPCs and treat then as if the always roll a 10. Creatures that have no stats or skills add their HD or other number to their rolls.

Example: if a thief wants to pick a 6th level NPC's pocket without being noticed, the DC is 16.

Skill Challenges

Challenges and contests that are not instantaneous can be resolved with multiple repeated rolls (GM's call). The standard method is repeating the roll until one side reaches three successes or three failures. A critical hit allows the character one extra roll with no possibility of failure (i.e., if the check is failed it is ignored instead of being counted against three failures); a fumble does the opposite.

This method can be used for chess matches, archery contests, chases between characters with the same speed, etc. It can also be used to avoid deadly effects such as a medusa's gaze (GM's call); one failed save might not mean instant death, but three will.

If you want a faster method, roll five dice at once and compare successes to failure (a natural 20 allows you to reroll one of the failures, etc.). Or use 3d6 instead of 1d20, and so on.

Group rolls

Group rolls are made when the whole party tries to accomplish a single task as a group. They are so diverse that they must be treated on a case by case basis. Some rolls will be hindered by the number of characters (add a penalty equal to this number when hiding, for example), while other are benefited by this (add a bonus instead).

As a general rule, the whole group can succeed if half or more of the PCs succeed (GM's call).

Rolling in secret

The GM may roll in secret if the result of the check would not be immediately obvious to the PC.

Saving Throws

Saving throws (or "saves") are special checks made to protect the character from a special attack, spell or circumstance.

If a character wants to do something to harm or hinder another character, the target can often use a save avoid the some or all of the effects. Regular attacks against AC receive no saving throw, but spells, grappling, and other special maneuvers do. In this case, the save DC is determined by the attacker, like any opposed roll.

Saving throws can also protect the character from traps, natural hazards, poison, and so on. In this case, the save DC is predetermined or chosen by the DM.

Saving throws don't use skills; instead, when rolling a save you add you level plus one ability modifier to the roll. A natural 20 is always a success, a natural 1 always a failure. Critical hits and fumbles also apply (GM's call).

The most common saves are based in Constitution, Wisdom and Dexterity.

Constitution saves protect the PC from poison, disease, starvation and similar effects.

Wisdom saves protect the PC from indirect or mind-controlling spells, fear, charm, etc.

Dexterity saves protect the PC from dangers that can be avoided by dodging, specially area attacks such as dragon's breath or fireballs.

Strength saves protect PCs from being grappled, bound (by ropes, webs, etc.), paralyzed, etc.

Intelligence saves are used to protect the character from illusions and some mind-affecting spells.

Charisma saves protect the PC from bad luck when there is no skill or talent involved.

2. Player Characters

It is easy to create a new PC. Don't think too much about a starting character. The fun part about the game is playing it, not character building. You can customize your character as you level up, if you survive that long. You have to earn it. Here are the simple steps to create characters (be aware that the Hopeless class uses different rules).

1. Generate your six ability scores using **the yin-yang method**: roll 3d6 for your Strength and subtract that value from 21 to find out your Intelligence (for example, if your Strength is 15, your Intelligence is 6). Do the same for Wisdom and Dexterity, and then Constitution and Charisma.

2. Change your highest ability score to 17 (if lower than 17) OR one ability score of your choice to 8. Then swap abilities around if you wish, provided no more than half your abilities are changed.

3. Choose a class for your character.

4. Choose your skills. You start the game with one primary skill, two secondary skills and three tertiary skills. Some skills are defined by your class, but you can choose the rest of them freely.

5. Choose one extra feat (optional).

6. Write down your XP and level.

7. Calculate your maximum HP: **4 + constitution modifier per level** (thus, a 3rd level character with +1 Constitution modifier has 15 HP). Write this down.

8. Calculate your starting money by rolling 3d6, adding your Charisma modifier and multiplying the result by $10.

9. Buy your equipment.

10. Write down your Armor Class (AC), weapon damage, encumbrance, skill bonuses, etc.

11. Give your character a name. Don't get too attached to it.

Additional considerations

A stating character can be created as a blank slate and developed through adventure. If you want to write a backstory, just keep in mind that what makes your character special is what he or she does when adventuring, not past glories. In any case, all character must have a reason for adventuring (and to continue adventuring) in order to participate in the game. If this reason is lost, find a new one – or create a new character.

Abilities & Modifiers

A character's ability modifiers affect most of his or her rolls. Compare your ability to the table below to find its modifier. Ability scores are seldom used with die rolls; whenever you read "add your Strength to the roll" assume it is the Strength modifier and not the Strength score, unless the text explicitly says otherwise.

All abilities affect some skills and saving throws, but some of them have additional effects, as explained on this page. There are six abilities, described below.

Ability score	Modifier
1	-5
2	-4
3	-3
4-5	-2
6-8	-1
9-12	No modifier
13-15	+1
16-17	+2
18	+3
19	+4
20	+5

Strength
Strength represents raw physical power, muscles and encumbrance capacity.

The Strength modifier affects the damage the PC deals with all weapons and fists. It also affects Combat ("to hit" rolls), except when using missile weapons.

Intelligence
Intelligence represents smarts, creativity, knowledge, and memory. It affects magic-user spells and languages.

Wisdom
Wisdom represents intuition, faith, willpower, and perception. It affects cleric spells.

Dexterity
Dexterity represents speed, agility, and hand-eye coordination, specially for delicate tasks.

Dexterity modifiers are applied to initiative and Armor Class (AC). They are also applied to Combat with missiles ("to hit" rolls when using bows and crossbows), but damage is still determined by Strength.

Constitution
Constitution represents health, stamina, and, up to a certain point, the will to live.

Constitution modifiers are applied to hit points (see above)

Charisma
Charisma represents personal magnetism, charm, leadership, and sometimes luck and favor from the gods (or demons).

Charisma determines the maximum number of retainers that will accompany you to dangerous places (four plus your Charisma modifier).

Skills

Every character starts the game with one primary skill, two secondary skills and three tertiary skills. Some skills are determined by class (especially the primary skill), but the player can choose the remaining ones freely.

Primary skill bonuses are equal to character level, while secondary skills are equal to 2/3 of character level and tertiary skills 1/3 of character level.

Level	Primary Skill	Secondary Skill	Tertiary Skill	XP Needed
1	+1	+1	+0	–
2	+2	+1	+1	2k
3	+3	+2	+1	4k
4	+4	+2	+1	8k
5	+5	+3	+2	16k
6	+6	+4	+2	32k
7	+7	+5	+2	64k
8	+8	+5	+3	128k
9	+9	+6	+3	250k
10	+10	+6	+3	500k

Skills explanation

These are the most common skills, but some characters may have different ones. Ordinary, "non-adventuring" skills are usually reserved for NPCs, but the players may create new ones with GM's approval. Skills are associated with one or more abilities, but may be used with different abilities in uncommon circumstances (GM's call). Simply add your ability modifier to your skill bonus; a fifth level fighter (Combat +5) with Strength 18 (+3) and Dexterity 14 (+1) has a Combat skill of +8/+6.

Athletics (Strength/Dexterity) is used for any physical activity that uses the whole body (except combat), and it can be combined with any physical ability. It includes acrobatics, riding and tumbling (Dexterity); climbing, breaking doors, and other feats of strength (Strength); and so on.

Combat (Strength/Dexterity) is a special skill described in the Combat section. It is used in any type of Combat: grappling, striking, dueling, missile weapons, etc.

Lore (Intelligence) is used to remember and interpret laws, mythology, history, unknown languages, arcane signs, and other "soft" sciences. Any knowledge created by man or not predominately reliant on natural laws uses this skill.

Nature (Wisdom) is used to find food and water in the wilderness, deal with animals, and other outdoor activities. The wilderness has rules of its own, and this skill helps understanding it.

Persuasion (Charisma) is used for leadership, deception, diplomacy, intimidation, etc. All rolls made to influence intelligent beings through discourse use this skill.

Perception (Wisdom) is used to hear noises, find traps, notice hidden things, avoid ambushes, etc. It can also be used to discover if someone if someone in lying (roll against Persuasion).

Science (Intelligence) is used for healing, identifying potions, understanding architecture, and other "hard" sciences. Any knowledge that relies predominantly on natural laws uses this skill.

Spellcasting (Intelligence/Wisdom) is a special skill detailed in the Spellcasting section.

Thievery (Dexterity) is used to hide, move silently, pick pockets, open locks, disarm delicate traps, backstab (see the thief's description) etc. Many activities that require precise, swift or delicate movement use this skill.

Turn undead (Wisdom) is a special skill detailed in the cleric's description.

Character Classes & Feats

There are five main classes in this game: the fighter, the cleric, the thief, the magic-user and the hopeless. Each class is described in the following pages.

Your starting class is only the beginning of your journey, not a fixed path. Your skills, abilities, feats, and equipment are as important as your class.

Feats

Each class (except for the hopeless) has a selection of feats to choose from as you level up. You can create your own feats or take feats from different classes with GM's approval, provided they don't stack, directly contradict one another, invalidate an obvious flaw of one another, etc. (GM's call). You usually cannot take a feat more than once. Think "customization" more than "optimization".

There are also feats that anyone can take. Here are some examples:

1 – Alertness: You have advantage when rolling to avoid surprise and rolling initiative.

2 – Leadership: Add three to your maximum number of hirelings, and your hirelings get +1 to morale when you hire them.

3 – Innate Power: You memorize a single spell. When you use this spell, you don't roll: it always works as if you rolled 10 + half you level + one ability modifier (Intelligence, Wisdom or Charisma – your choice).

4 – Cunning Linguist: Add four to your maximum number of languages. You can also learn any language despite your alignment.

5 – Dark Vision: Within 60feet, you can see in the darkness as if it was dim light, and you treat dim light as if it was bright light.

6 – Resilience: You get a +1 bonus to all saving throws.

7 – Seasoned: You can choose one additional background, one additional language and one additional tertiary skill.

8 – Metamagic: When you cast a spell you memorized, you can change the duration, range, area or number of targets (targets must be somewhat near each other), with a penalty of -2 (e.g.: for doubling the duration) to -10 (e.g.: for affecting ten targets at once).

Spells and feats

Memorized spells count as feats. Only magic-users and clerics start the game with spells, but all classes can memorize spells by spending feats. In any case, the mechanics are the same.

A single character might have both cleric and magic-user spells at the same time, but it will usually require some in-game explanation or fit the character's concept (GM's call).

Losing and changing feats

It is possible to replace some of your feats with new ones, provided there is some in-game explanation (GM's call) and that you don't replace more than one feat per level.

Likewise, if you lose a perk granted by a feat (for example, if your Animal Companion is killed), the GM should let you pick a new feat for free when you gain another level (or a new Animal Companion, and so on).

THE FIGHTER

You might call yourself a knight, a barbarian warrior, a soldier or a ranger, but it makes no difference: your main skills are violence and murder. Handy skills to have in this wicked world.

Fighters must take Combat as a primary skill, and Athletics as a secondary skill. Other useful skills are Persuasion, Thievery and Nature.

Fighters start the game with the Battle Master feat: they gain 1 extra HP per level and deal 1 extra point of damage per die when attacking in combat.

Fighter feats

1 – Fortitude: You have advantage on all Strength and Constitution saves.

2 – Armor master: When you are wearing armor, you can ignore its weight for encumbrance purposes, up to 10 units plus your Strength modifier (for example, a Strength 16 character can ignore up to 12 units of weight while wearing armor).

3 – Unarmored defense: Choose either your Constitution modifier or a +3 bonus (your choice). It is now added to your AC. Also choose light armor or a shield; every other kind of armor is near useless to you (halve the AC bonus).

4 – Berserker: Whenever you wish, you can enter a state of rage, during which you get advantage to all your Strength and Constitution checks (including combat, skills, saves, etc.), and halve all the damage dealt to you, but any attack against you gets advantage. You can finish this state at will, but you suffer 2 points of Constitution damage unless you make a DC 20 Constitution save (+1 to the DC for every rage in the same day).

5 – Animal companion: You have an animal ally that follows you around, and will help you and fight for you (the player controls it) as long as you treat it well. It must be an ordinary animal (a wolf, horse, hound, hawk, etc.), although it is an extraordinary example of the species, and its HD is equal to your level divided by 2 (round down).

6 – Favored enemy: Choose a type of enemy – undead, humans, demons, animals, giants, dragons, etc. You have advantage whenever you try use any skill related to your enemy (tracking, perception, etc.). In combat, this only gives you one advantage per turn.

7 – Finesse: When you use light weapons (dagger, short sword, etc.) or attack unarmed you can use your Combat (Dexterity) bonus instead of Combat (Strength). Damage is still determined by Strength.

8 – Shield Expert: You can add your shield bonus (+1 or +2) to saving throws in circumstances where a shield would be useful. You also have twice the usual bonus to AC (+2 or +4) if you're in a shield wall (allies with shields on both sides). As a reaction, you can use your shield to defend an adjacent ally, giving him or her with a +1 or +2 AC bonus until your next round provided neither of you moves away.

9 – Healing Hands: You have a pool of healing points (2 per level) that you can use to heal yourself or others with an action, spending one healing point per HP. You can heal 1 point of Constitution, one poison or one disease by spending 10 healing points. This pool heals at the same rate as HP.

10 – Warlord: your followers gain +1 morale as long as you're nearby (maximum 11), and you have advantage when making a rallying cry.

11 – Weapon Proficiency: Choose a type of weapon or a fighting style (blades, two-handed weapons, light weapons, missile weapons, dual wielding, sword and shield, grappling, etc.). While using this weapon or style, you can re-roll one missed attack per round, and choose what result to take..

12 – Extra Attack: Whenever you use your action to attack, you can make two attacks instead of one, but you get a -2 penalty to both attacks when you do.

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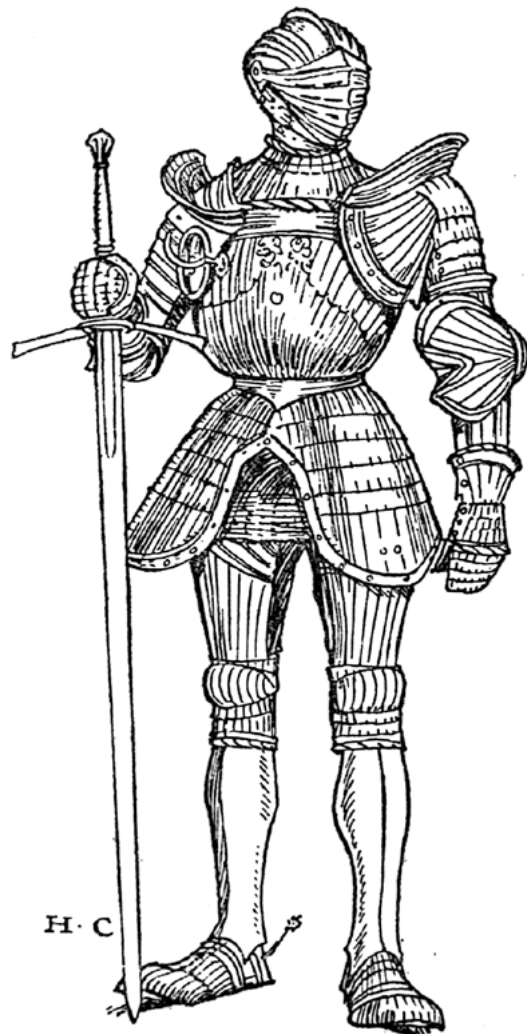
THE CLERIC

With the power granted to you by your deities, you protect the innocent and the weak from the forces of darkness, fight against the dying of the light, and smite the wicked creatures that roam the earth.

Clerics must take Turn Undead as a primary skill and Combat and Spellcasting as secondary skills. Other suggested skills are Science, Persuasion and Lore.

The baseline cleric is a Lawful follower of the gods of order, good and light, vows to not use sharp weapons (swords, arrows, etc.) and may learn spells related to healing, protection and light. By choosing some of the feats below, one can create a different version of the cleric (see below).

Turn Undead: you can display a symbol of your faith to make the nearby undead (up to 30') flee for 3d6 rounds. The undead are allowed a saving throw; if they fail by 10 or more, they are immediately destroyed, but if they succeed they cannot be turned by you in this combat. Evil creatures from other planes (demons, devils, alien aberrations, etc.) might be affected, but they don't have to flee (although they cannot move closer or attack you and adjacent allies) and they are banished instead of destroyed if they fail by 10 or more.

Clerics start the game with one spell chosen randomly or otherwise (see the magic chapter), but no other feats.

Cleric feats

1 – Will: You have advantage on all Wisdom and Charisma saves.

2 – Druid: You are a (neutral) cleric of Nature, and can affect animals instead of undead. The results are the same of Turn Undead (a turned animal will follow its path peacefully), but a "destroyed" result makes the animal serve you for a day instead. An animal with more HD than half the PC's level cannot be controlled, and each animal should serve a maximum of three days. You have no taboo against sharp weapons, but must avoid carrying too much iron (swords, medium or heavy armor, etc.).

3 – Chaos Disciple: You are a (Chaotic) worshipper of evil deities. You can choose to command the undead whenever the Turn Undead roll would indicate destruction. This lasts for a day; a new roll must be made every day, but every repeated success grants a +1 bonus (a failure resets the process). Controlling undead is despised in most societies. You can use every weapon but not shields or heavy armor.

4 - Crusader: As a chosen champion of your deity, you can ignore all your weapon or armor taboos with no ill effects, and deal +2 damage with all weapons when defending your faith or attacking its enemies (undead, cultists, demons, etc.).

5 – War Priest: When you cast a spell in combat, you don't have disadvantage if there is a foe within 5 feet, nor do you cause opportunity attacks.

6 – Blessed: You can use Charisma instead of Wisdom to cast cleric spells.

7 – Divine Aid: You can invoke your deity to cast one spell you know as if your rolled a natural 20, or one spell you don't (within your deities' domain or theme – GM's call) as if you rolled a natural 10. When you do so, roll a d20. This is the number of days you must wait until using this feat again. If you rolled high, the GM can determine that the deity manifests in the world and takes other appropriate actions to help the current situation, if needed. If you roll a natural 1 or call upon your deity before this time, you cannot use this power for one month and your deity will be displeased with your hubris – see "Spell Mishaps" in the Spellcasting chapter. You can choose a new spell to cast every time you use this feat.

8 – Divine Authority: You have the power and authority to perform marriage ceremonies, build churches where needed, bless water, listen to confessions, grant sanctuary, excommunicate the guilty, and so on. Under normal circumstances, these acts will be accepted as valid by both your church and you deity.

THE THIEF

Con man, pick pocket, burglar… What you did in the past no longer matters. You chose a life of adventure, and there is none more skilled.

Thieves must take Thievery as a primary skill and Combat and Perception as secondary skills. Other suggested skills are Athletics, Spell-Casting, Persuasion and Lore.

Thieves start the game with the Backstab feat: once per round, when you hit an enemy that you have advantage against, you can add your Thievery skill to the damage you deal with a melee or missile attack.

Thief feats

1 – Reflex: You have advantage in all Dexterity and Intelligence saves.

2 – Skilled: Take an additional secondary skill, or two additional tertiary skills.

3 – Poisoner: You can apply poison to bladed or piercing weapons without risking yourself (see the Hazards section).

4 – Disguise: You can use the Thievery skill with your Charisma bonus to disguise yourself as a person of a different nationality, profession, social class, etc., in order to avoid being identified. You cannot impersonate a specific person your mark knows. The mark gets an opposed (Perception) roll to see through the disguise.

5 – Performance: You can use the Persuasion skill to enthrall someone, as per the Charm spell (by making a scene, playing a musical instrument, etc. – choose when you take the feat).

6 - Dodge: You can use your reaction to make a Dexterity save against one attack (the DC is the attacker's roll). If you succeed, you take no damage, and the attacker has disadvantage in all attacks against you until the beginning of your next turn.

7 - Parry: You gain +2 AC in melee when using a quarterstaff or one weapon in each hand, unless you cannot see the attack coming.

8 – Acrobat: You have advantage when using Athletics with Dexterity. Once per round, you can make a DC 20 check; if it succeeds, you ignore all difficult terrain for one round.

9 - Mountebank: You have advantage when using persuasion to fool or distract somebody, and you can distract someone in combat with a bonus action. Treat this as an opposed roll. If it succeeds, you or an ally (your choice) gets advantage in the next attack against the target.

10 – Nimbleness: You can use your bonus action to run, disengage, or hide. If you use your bonus action to run, you cannot use your main action for the same purpose (your maximum speed per round is unaffected).

11 – Arcane Dabbler: You do not suffer disadvantage when casting a spell you haven't memorized. In addition, when you would memorize a spell you can choose to avoid memorizing it by not casting the same spell in the next 2d6 months.

12 – Dual Wielding: When you have one weapon in each hand, you can make two separate attacks with the same action.

THE MAGIC-USER

Common men fear you because you dare to cross the boundaries of morality and superstition. When adventurers descend into the abyss of ancient ruins, you are the only one who really knows what lurks in the darkest places.

Magic-users must take Spellcasting as a primary skill, Lore as a secondary skill and Combat as a tertiary skill. Other suggested skills are Science, Perception and Thievery. Magic-users start the game with one spell chosen randomly or otherwise (see the magic chapter), but no other feats.

Magic-user feats

1 – Arcane Artillery: You can throw small missiles (bolts of fire, energy, etc. – choose when you take this feat) from your fingertips. They cause 1d6 damage plus your Intelligence modifier, 60' range and use the Combat (Dexterity) skill. Treat them as weapons; there is no possibility of spell mishap.

2 – Sorcerer: You can use Charisma instead of Intelligence to cast wizard spells.

3 – Battle Mage: When you roll for damage caused by your spells, you can add one extra damage die for every natural 1 you roll, "ad infinitum".4 – Chaos Warlock: Whenever you cause a spell fumble, you have a chance of controlling it, by rolling again and taking the second roll.

5 – Silent Witch: You can cast spells without speaking.

6 – Artifact: you have a special item that can cast a single spell (choose one when you take this feat; you don't need to memorize it beforehand). Anyone can use it (they get disadvantage), but you get a +2 bonus while doing so. The item must be big, heavy, obvious, or fragile (choose two), and usually not useful for other things (a wand, orb, jeweled skull, a heavy staff, etc.). If it is lost or broken, you can create another in 2d6 days, but the original one stops functioning when you do so.

THE HOPELESS

With no powers, no special skills, and no possessions, you are part of the forgotten majority. Even though the mighty despise you, you have a small chance of doing great things if you survive long enough. It's not like you have many options anyway.

Hopeless characters may choose their skills freely. The hopeless have no starting feats (but can take general feats, or feats from other classes), only a few setbacks.

Hopeless characters start on level 1 and with no money or possessions except for the dirty clothes on their backs.

Their abilities are rolled with 3d6 in order, and if the sum of the modifiers is greater than +1, they must change their greatest ability score to 12.

As the hopeless rises in level, he will naturally become as powerful as other classes.

Hit Points & Constitution Damage

Hit Points

Hit points (HP) are a measure of the character's capacity to withstand and avoid physical wounds, caused by violence or magic. The amount of HP is defined by a character's Constitution (i.e., physical toughness) and level (i.e., experience in avoiding harm).

The maximum HP is calculated each time the character gains a level by multiplying 4 plus the Constitution modifier by the character's level. Thus, a level 5 character with a +2 Constitution bonus has a 30 HP maximum.

Defeat & death

A character reduced to 0 HP is defeated, and must roll on the Death's Door table below every turn until at least 1 HP is healed (unconscious PCs needn't roll again; disabled PCs only roll if they move). Any excess damage after all HP is lost is transferred directly to Constitution on a 1-for-1 basis.

Death's Door table (1d10)

1-5. The PC is **dying**, but able to act normally. Take 1d6 points of Constitution damage and roll again next turn.

6-7. The PC is **unconscious** and can be easily slain, but will wake up in 1d4 hours (with 1 HP) if undisturbed.

8-9. The PC is **disabled**; conscious but barely able to move. Move is halved and rolls are made with disadvantage.

10. Fight on! Recover 1 HP and suffer no ill effects for now.

Constitution damage

When you have no HP left, you may suffer serious wounds. In addition, most injuries that aren't caused by violence or spells (for example, poison, starvation, falling, etc.) affect the Constitution score directly instead of affecting HP first. Losing constitution lowers current and maximum HP accordingly. If your Constitution modifier goes from +1 to +0, you lose one hit point per level (alternatively, just halve HP when you lose half Constitution). This cannot take HP below 0; any excess is discarded.

If you lose more than half of your Constitution, you must roll in the Death's Door table every time you take damage. A character reduced to 0 Constitution is immediately dead, barring exceptional circumstances.

Healing & rest

A PC with 0 HP can be healed back to 1 HP with a Science skill check (DC 10) that takes one round to perform, or other spell or circumstance that recovers HP. After recovering 1 or more HP, the effects of the Death's Door table no longer apply.

Each morning, PCs recover HP and Constitution provided they are hurt, have rested for most of the day before, slept in a safe haven, or had one hour of medical attention (DC 20, one roll per day per wounded character). For each condition that applies, recover 10% of maximum HP and Constitution – 40% if all apply (round down, minimum 1 per day).

Some wounds heal quickly or instantly (GM's call) if the PC survives. Sleep deprivation is healed within hours, suffocation within minutes, etc.

Recovery can only take place if the source of damage is removed (e.g., you need to eat to recover from starvation). Not even spells can remove damage otherwise.

Creatures and Constitution

If a creature has no Constitution score, treat them as if they had Constitution 10. Most creatures are not necessarily better or worse than people at surviving starvation, dehydration, falling, etc.

If weight is an issue (or if the GM wants giants to survive a fall form their own height), creatures of different sizes take HP damage instead of Constitution damage. It will take lots of poison to kill an elephant, but not a cat, for example.

Alignment & World View

The universe hangs in the balance of the cosmic struggle between Law, the infinite unifying principle of order and conformity, and Chaos, the unrelenting entropic force of freedom and change.

It is up to you to pick a side or remain neutral. You can choose to be Lawful, Chaotic, Neutral or Unaligned, unless the PC's class or other features require a certain alignment. Alignment is not a straitjacket for character behavior, but a summary of the PC's philosophy, world view, and sympathies.

Lawful characters believe in heavenly order. There are divine laws, legitimate rulers, and faithful prophets, although there are also false idols and usurpers. Unholy magic is better left alone, and the undead must be destroyed, along with other aberrations. Some lawful creatures, such as the Ironweb Spiders, are very dangerous, but that is because the universe has mysterious rules that the mortal mind cannot fully comprehend. To defy Law is to bring destruction upon the world.

Chaotic characters believe in freedom and chance. There are no legitimate kings or queens, no perfect doctrines, no reasonable taboos. The universe is ruled by randomness. The strong rule the weak with power and lies, as it has always has been. Magic, people and creatures are just tools for the clever. Some demons, at least, will offer you a deal – which is more that can be said of the silent Stone Angels that seem to want to turn the world into a tidily organized jail block.

Neutral characters believe in Balance. They believe both Law and Chaos are inimical to humankind, as both visions of paradise will turn this world into a living hell. The gods of Neutrality, if they exist at all, are bound by nature and want to preserve reality as it is. Life is more important than order or freedom.

Many people are agnostic to this struggle and remain unaligned, whether because they don't fully understand it, because they feel they cannot affect it, or because they don't care.

People don't necessarily act in accordance to their alignment all the time, and sometimes it is often hard to distinguish one alignment from another. All alignments contain good and evil people. A Lawful character may choose to wage war against other Lawful sects for religious or mundane reasons, for example, or always choose justice over the slightest mercy. Chaotic characters may cooperate with Neutral or Lawful characters to achieve a common goal. A Neutral character can pray to the Lawful gods against the hordes of Chaos in a moment of need.

Lawful and Neutral beliefs are more common amongst humankind, although Chaos is often worshiped simultaneously (or secretly).

There are plenty of nonhuman creatures that identify themselves as forces of Law, Chaos or Neutrality. It is often hard to say if they're telling the truth. As a general rule, Lawful creatures are a bit more predictable since they are always seem to be following one some kind of rules, although those rules will often contradict one another.
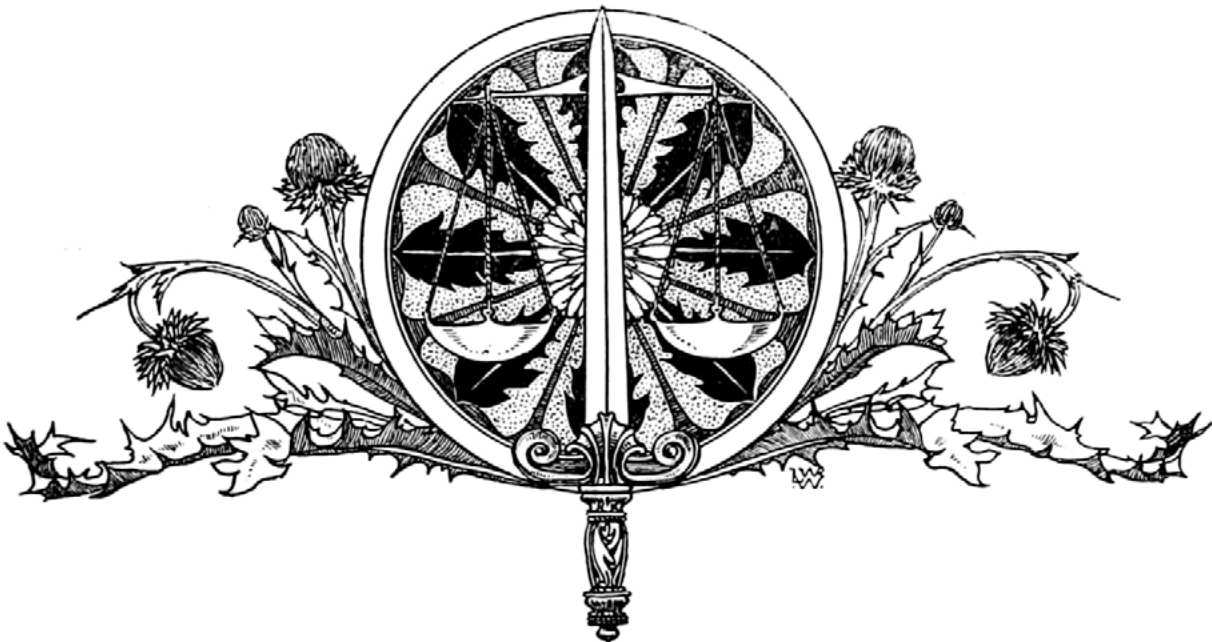
Languages

There is an indefinite number of languages in the world. These are the ones the PCs are most likely to find. Each PC knows three languages plus Intelligence modifier, unless some special feature dictates otherwise. Each alphabet also counts as a language, so to write and talk Imperial counts as two languages (Written Imperial and Spoken Imperial). Languages without written form can be transliterated if necessary.

Dialect: Each people, tribe, region, etc. has its own dialect. There are thousands of them, but there is a good chance that nearby dialects are similar enough to allow fluent communication. The greater the distance, the smaller the chance of being understood. Most dialects do not have their own alphabets, using Imperial or simple signs for their records instead. Most PCs will choose a dialect as their first language.

Darkspeak: The spoken/written language of demons and the mightiest inhabitants of the Abyss. Only chaotic characters can learn it without a significant risk of going mad, and even they avoid using it too often, lest they become monsters themselves.

Debased: The guttural, often unpleasant, spoken language of aberrations, minor demons and other beings that associate with Chaos.

Devani: The spoken/written language of Elysium. Learning this language for any character that isn't lawful is like looking directly into the sun, and many will not survive the experience. Every mortal treats this language with reverence and awe and avoid using it in vain.

Imperial: the spoken/written language of the fallen Empire, especially common in religious (lawful) texts and legal documents.

Fae: The spoken (sung) language of fairies and the spirits of the wild. Anyone can learn it, but characters that are not Neutral suffer greater risk of being charmed by sylvan spirits if they understand their words.

Vulgi: The widespread spoken/written language used by different peoples of the realm, especially travelers and merchants, that allow people from different places to talk to each other.

Thieves' Cant: The secret language spoken by many criminals, beggars and outcasts. It can be discretely inserted in regular conversation to pass hidden messages along.

Runo: The written language of magic-user's spells. Anyone can learn to read it phonetically (it does not cost one language), but speaking the words out loud is very dangerous for people that are not versed in magic.

Trail Signs: The symbolic language of rangers, druids and wilderness explorers marked on trees and stones to identify dangers, pathways, etc. People from different backgrounds often use similar signs, but even when they don't the variations are quickly memorized by the ones that are familiar with the language.

Backgrounds

Backgrounds are an optional rule for character customization. It shows where your character came from, and what he or she did before becoming an adventurer. It will help you to pick skills and languages.

Choose a background for you character from the list below, or make up your own. Whenever your background is relevant to a roll, you gain advantage. This seldom applies to combat or magic, but it is very useful to specific applications of skills and saves. For example, if you are a barbarian from the frozen lands, you gain advantage when saving versus cold, carousing with barbarian tribes, climbing mountains, and tracking enemies in the snow.

In addition, you automatically know common elements of your background and succeed in doing anything that would be easy for anyone with a similar history, without a roll. A noble will automatically identify the banners of the most famous houses, while a peasant might be able to tell if a land is good for farming (or has been farmed recently). The players can always find interesting, creative ways to use their backgrounds.

You can take a background from the list below, pick one randomly, or make up your own. Favor specific backgrounds, like "Barbarian of the Frozen Wastes", instead of "Outlander", for example.

Just remember that your past is not as important as what you do from now on.

1 – Peasant/Slave: Folk Hero, Escaped Slave, Village Champion.

2 – Military: Hero of the Great War, Hedge Knight, Sword for Hire.

3 – Nobility: Fallen Aristocrat, Second Son, Usurped Heir.

4 – Clergy: Herald of the Dying Gods, Former Cultist of the Great Old Ones, Zweihänder Preacher.

5 – Outlander: Desert Nomad, Barbarian of the Frozen Wastes, Clan Outcast.

6 – Criminal: Professional Assassin, Sly Pickpocket, Charlatan.

7 – Artist: Minstrel, Wandering Actor, Circus Freak.

8 – Artisan: Blacksmith, Leatherworker, Tinker.

9 – Commerce: Merchant Traveler, Fence, Trader of Exotic Goods.

10 – Arcane: Scholar of Forgotten Lore, Diabolist, Shaman.

Money & Equipment

This games uses silver coins (represented by a $) as a standard. Each silver coin is enough to feed someone for a day with cheap food, or rent a bed in a collective room for one night. One thousand coins weigh one unit of encumbrance. Copper coins are worth ten times less, and a gold coin is worth ten times more, but they all weigh the same. Prices will vary according to supply, demand, location and quality. See the "encumbrance" section for more information on weights.

About items and weapon detail

Most items are simplified because the game doesn't focus on cost and weight. Weapons (see next page), armor and shields received more attention to make combat more diverse and interesting.

Armor

Armor comes in three types: light (+2 AC, $40, weight 6), medium (+4 AC, $160, weight 12), and heavy (+6 AC, $360, weight 18). Unarmored characters have AC 10. The Dexterity modifier is always added to AC.

Shields

Shields may be light (AC +1, $10, weight 2) or heavy (AC +2, $24, weight 4; AC +4 against missile weapons). If used offensively, they deal 1d2 damage.

Reinforced shields, made mostly of iron or heavy wood, add 50% to weight and cost; they are somewhat tougher but grant no extra bonuses to AC.

Food

Fresh food for one ($1, weight 1) must be eaten within a week. Preserved food ($3, weight 1/3) lasts for one month. A hot meal or cold beer in a tavern cost $1.

Miscellanea

Light tools ($5, weight 1): arrows (30), board games, simple clothing (winter clothing: $10, weight 2), backpacks (holds 10 weight), bedrolls (winter bedrolls: $10, weight 2), blank books, cooking tools, block and tackle, winter blankets, candles (10), climbing gear (for trees or similar surfaces; stone climbing gear is $10, weight 2), chain (10 feet), crowbars, hammers, healing kits (10 uses), lock picks (10), poison (10 uses), fishing tools, hunting traps, grappling hook, basic camping gear (flint, small blade and hammer), hooded oil lantern, rope (20 feet), small musical instruments (drums, horns, trumpets – larger and more complex instruments cost $10 or more), steel mirrors, shackles, merchant's scale, holy symbols.

Heavy tools ($5, weight 3): caltrops (enough for 10 square feet), shovel, pick, tent (1 person).
Cheap wood ($1, weight 3): 10 torches, 10' pole.
Liquids: water for one day (usually free, weight 1, weight 2 under very hot weather), pint of oil ($1, weight 1/3, can be lit with a bonus action and thrown 20' for 1d6 fire damage), holy water ($25, weight 1/3, can be thrown 20' for 1d8 damage against undead, demons, etc.).

Skill & tools

Skills will often require tools such as a healing kit, climbing gear, lock picks, etc. Improvised tools will often cause disadvantage. Some tasks will be impossible without tools (GM's call).

Item breakage & saving throws

It's up to GM to decide how items will resist damage, using common sense. Sometimes a saving throw (variable DC) will be rolled. Here are some rough guidelines.

A creature killed with a spear might leave armor that is worth fixing, but one killed with a fireball probably won't. Parrying damages weapons only if one weapon is much heavier and stronger than the other. Shields are useless after a few fights (one adventure). Arrows can be recovered half the time. Axes and maces are good against wood, but blades may shatter against stone. Wood is frailer than iron, but even silk can be impossible to destroy with a club.

If you want that much detail, maintaining an item costs 10% of its price for adventure (except for consumables, of course).

Weapons

Weapon damage, price and weight are determined by their size.

Weapon Size	Damage	Price	Weight	Notes
Tiny (t)	1d4	$5	1/3	OH, thrown.
Short (s)	1d6	$10	1	OH, thrown.
Medium (m)	1d8	$20	1	1H, thrown.
Large (l)	1d10	$30	2	1½H.
Great (g)	1d12	$40	2	2H.

Notes: some weapons can be used in the off-hand (OH), some require the main hand (1H), and others require two hands (2H). Large weapons (1½H) should be used with two hands, but can be used with one hand for less damage (1d8 instead of 1d10, etc.). Weapons with the "thrown" property can be hurled against enemies (20'). Expensive weapons (swords, pole weapons) double the cost.

The character must choose a specific weapon from the list below. Each weapon has a few perks and can be found in one or more sizes.

Swords (s, m, l, g) are expensive but fast (get an additional attack if a natural 19 is rolled). They cannot be thrown effectively. Daggers (t) get the same perk, but can be thrown.

Spears (m, l, g) can attack from the second row (5' extra reach) and do double damage when charging or set up against a charge (use a ready action). Short spears ($5, thrown 30') don't get these perks. Large and great spears have disadvantage when attacking nearby enemies (within 5').

Axes and maces (m, l, g) gain +1 "to hit" against opponents with shields, medium or heavy armor (and also dragons, skeletons, creatures made of stone or other hard materials,

etc.), and are very useful for breaking down doors (add 1d6, 1d8 or 1d10 to the attack roll).

Pole weapons (l, g) are expensive but have all the features of a spear and get +1 against shields, heavy armor, etc. (or some other perk, depending on the type – bill, glaive, halberd, naginata, etc.).

Clubs (s, $0) have no special features.

Quarterstaffs (g, $1, 1d8 damage) are very versatile. They have extra reach (like spears) and +1 to AC (treat as small shield).

Exotic weapons are hard to master. The specific exotic weapons available are up to the GM. Some examples are flails and other chained implements (as mace, but ignore shields) and double weapons (a combination of two identical or different weapons). They always have some unique drawback (hitting yourself on a fumble is the usual effect).

Unarmed attacks deal a single point of damage (plus Strength modifier, as usual). Kicks (on a natural 1, make a DC 20 dexterity save or fall prone) and brass knuckles (t) deal 1d2 damage.

Missile weapons require two hands to shoot, with the exception of the very expensive ($40) pistol crossbow (s). Crossbows (s, m, l) can shoot up to 40', 60', or 100', depending on size. Bows (s, m) have better reach (80', 150') and twice the cost. Slings (t) can shoot up to 30'. Bows and crossbows use arrows (30, $5, weight 1), while slings use bullets (10, $1, weight 1).

Optional: Great weapons require Strength 15 to use effectively (otherwise, the damage is limited to 1d10 instead of 1d12), and short weapons require Dexterity 15 to use in the off-hand. Both large and great weapons deal +1 damage against opponents that are bigger than human, but -1 to hit opponents that are smaller than human. Attacking with two weapons at once lets you roll for damage twice and pick the best result.
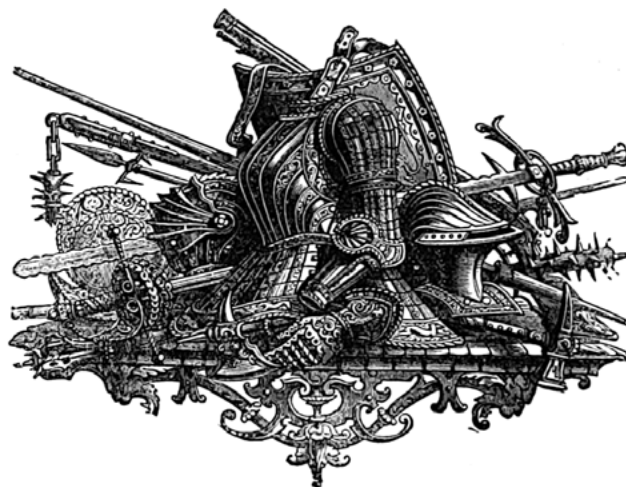
Experience (XP) & Levels

PCs get experience points (XP) for acquiring treasure, defeating monsters and surviving extreme circumstances. When they acquire enough XP, they gain a level. It takes 2.000 XP to get to level 2, for example. Most characters start on level 3 (4.000 XP), so they need to acquire 4.000 additional XP to get to level 4.

Acquiring XP

There are several ways to gain XP, each with its own special rules.

Treasure: For every $1 in treasure the characters acquire, they get 1 XP, no matter how they spend it. This applies to coins, gems, antiques, etc., but not to items the PCs permanently add to their inventory. Thus, weapons and armor (magical or otherwise) only grant XP when sold; potions, etc. grant XP when used.

Monsters: Defeating monsters will grant the characters XP equal to the monster's HD squared, times 10 XP. A 3 HD monster is worth 90 XP, a 9 HD monster is worth 810 XP, etc. The GM may also grant extra XP for each special ability the monster has and each aggravating circumstance that makes the fight harder to the PCs (being ambushed, trapped, etc.). This extra XP is equal to fighting a monster of 1 HD less. Special abilities are often marked along HD (an 8** HD monster has two special abilities, for example).

Example: fighting a 4 HD monster is worth 160 XP, plus 90 XP (i.e., the same as a 3 HD monster) for each special ability the monster has.

Survival: Surviving a fight or peril that forces the PC to roll in the Death's Door table adds 10% to current XP. The GM can assign similar awards for other grave dangers, especially if the life of the PC hangs on a roll of the dice.

Achievements: The GM may also give the PCs XP for completing important missions or tasks, pulling impressive stunts, significantly altering the world (building a castle, starting an organization, destroying an empire, etc.), etc. The suggested amount is equal to 10% of current XP.

Dividing XP

XP is usually divided in equal shares among the group, unless one or more of the PCs didn't participate or ran away in the beginning of the fight, got a smaller cut of the treasure for some reason, etc. Retainers may get a smaller cut of the treasure and XP gained, especially if the PCs leave them out of harm's way. As a rule of thumb, a retainer will receive half the treasure (and XP) assigned to each PC.

Maximum XP

A character can never get more XP than he or she already has in a single occasion. For example, if a PC has 3.000 XP and finds a chest with $4.000, he or she only gains 3.000 XP. If the money is divided in two $2.000 chests, separated by rooms, traps, monsters, etc., she will get the full 4.000 XP if she finds both.

Leveling up

Leveling up gets the PC more hit points, better saving throws, skills, etc. Also, it might potentially increase his or her abilities and feats.

Whenever a PC gains a new level, if the sum of all ability score modifiers plus the number of feats a character has is smaller than current level, the player can choose to add one or two points to one ability score (his or her choice) or take a new feat, provided that the new sum doesn't exceed their current level.

Example: If your ability modifiers are +2, +1, 0, 0, 0 and -1 (total +2) and you have no feats, you can add a one or two points to one of your ability scores or take a new feat when you reach level 3, but you cannot add two points to an ability score if it would change one modifier from +2 to +4. A 10th level character might have +4, +3, +1, +0, +0, -1 ability modifiers plus 3 feats (total 10).

Training

The GM may decide that some training is required in order to gain some feats (especially from different classes) or raise an ability over 18. In order to do so, the PC must hire a trainer of a higher level for one month (see the "services" section). Some trainers will accept services from their apprentices instead of money.

The GM should ignore this rule if the feat or ability raise is justified by the PC's previous adventures, or if he or she finds it too fiddly.

Death & Taxes

Material inheritance

If the PC left money and a will, any person he or she has chosen will receive the money upon death, after a 10% tax imposed by the authorities. The heir is preferably a first-level character aligned with the dead PC's goals, either preexisting or created on the occasion by the player who lost his or her character.

XP gained this way is only 10% of the usual because the heirs didn't have to fight or adventure for it (i.e., someone who inherits $2,000 gains 200 XP).

There is also a 10% chance (more or less, depending on the circumstances) that the estate of the deceased will be taken by an enemy, impostor or thief. In this case, it is up to the other PCs to decide if they will pursue it, since at least half of it will probably already be spent when they do.

Any treasure recovered from the deceased has the same effect, although the XP reward doubles (to 20%) if the money is given to a cause in alignment with the deceased's inclinations but not directly benefit the surviving PCs (this includes burying or burning the treasure with the deceased if that was custom of his or her people).

Immaterial inheritance

When a PC dies, his or her legacy often lives on, and part of the XP acquired can be recuperated by allies and loved ones that benefited from the example, lessons or experiences of the deceased.

Up to 50% of the deceased's XP can be distributed by the GM upon death among the people listed below. There is no need to be exact or count every XP; this is only a general guideline for the GM.

Sacrifice: Anyone the PC sacrificed himself or herself for.

Survivor: Any survivor of the same event (battle, creature, trap, etc.) that killed the PC.

Organization: The members of a single organization (realm, criminal gang, guild, revolutionary movement, conspiracy, etc.) the PC was part of, preferably one that was involved in the affair. If the PC screamed the name of the organization ("For the Realm!") right before dying, double their share.

Immediate family, unless the PC has no family or that they are so estranged that no one cares.

Alignment: The Cosmic Forces of the same alignment of the deceased get a part of the XP in some mysterious way.

Burial: The ones who take responsibility for retrieving the body and giving it a decent burial.

Revenge: Anyone who swears or takes vengeance, or fulfills the mission the deceased was in.

Remembrance: The first ones who give sincere praise for the deeds of the deceased or build a decent memorial.

Spiritual heir: Anyone the GM deems to a spiritual successor of the deceased.

Oath: Anyone who fulfills a meaningful deathbed promise to the deceased.

Nemesis: The PC or NPC that slayed the deceased gets a part of the XP. An NPC might gain one or two "levels" as if it were a PC (interpretation of this rule is up to the GM). This doesn't work against NPCs; they have their own XP rules.

Example: When Baldwin dies fighting a demon from the pit, the GM decides 20% of his XP goes to his allies, 10% for various NPCs in his church and family, 10% for the lawful deities he spent his life fighting for, and 10% to the demon that slayed him. As the GM isn't interested in counting the NPC's XP, he just distributes 20% of the XP among the surviving PCs and gives a few more HD to the demon chief – which becomes the leader of many weaker creatures of the Abyss, since he is now one of the strongest around.

3. Spellcasting

A spell is a way of bending reality in accordance to one's desires. Anyone can learn spells, but they are very dangerous to use, especially to those who don't have the Spellcasting skill.

Casting a spell requires a spellcasting check with either Intelligence (for magic-user spells) or Wisdom (for cleric spells). The DC is defined by the spell's level: 10 + (spell level x2), according to the table below.

Memorizing a spell requires spending a feat; it then becomes a part of the character and can be used freely. In any case, the spell must first be found through adventuring (see the next page).

Level 0 spells are called "cantrips" and, unless they are cast against a foe, require no dice rolls (and can be cast as bonus actions). Unless the spell says otherwise, the effects of a cantrip are up to the GM and should be very minor. For example, a magic-user that has memorized Fireball can light a torch instantaneously.

Anyone can cast spells if they have a grimoire or scroll (see below).

Spell Level	Spell DC	Spell Power
0	10	1
1	12	2
2	14	4
3	16	8
4	18	16
5	20	32
6	22	64
7	24	128
8	26	250
9	28	500

The spell's level is chosen freely by the spellcaster upon use, regardless of character level. A level 3 magic-user can cast a level 7 spell, for example, although that might be dangerous.

All spell effects are based on spell level, not caster level. For example, some spells cause "1d6 damage/level". This means a fifth level spell would cause 5d6 damage. Some spells get exponentially stronger with level; for example, a spell could teleport the spellcaster "up to Spell Power in feet", meaning a sixth level spell would allow the magician to transport himself across 64 feet.

Characters need to have at least one free hand to cast a spell. They must also be able to speak. Encumbrance affects Spellcasting negatively.

The range and duration of each spell are described after their names.

Spell saving throws

Any unwilling target of a spell may make a saving throw to avoid some or all of its effects. Unless otherwise stated, a successful save avoids all effects. The DC is equal to the spellcaster's roll, regardless of spell level.

Example: A cleric casts a 3rd level spell (DC 16) against a creature. She rolls the dice, gets 21, and succeeds. The creature's saving throw DC is 21.

Only the spells that affect the target directly can be resisted this way. A character hit with a magical sword, for example, or attacked by a summoned bear gets no saving throw against the spell.

Spell mishaps

Failing a spell check can be dangerous. A simple failure costs the spellcaster 1 hit point per spell level. A fumble causes other dire consequences in addition to this loss; this is called a spell mishap. The effects of a spell mishap must be previously agreed upon with the GM. As a standard rule, use the effects below.

A magic-user has the spell completely wiped from his or her memory and cannot cast it again until he or she spends 1d4+spell level hours in study and meditation in order to relearn the spell. Magic-users must carry spell books ($100, weight 1/3) around for this purpose – they start with a "free" book for each spell they have.

If the spellcaster is a cleric, his or her deity is displeased with the PC's hubris, and the PC is unable to recover the spell before spending 1d4+spell level hours in prayer. They need a holy symbol to do so. Afterward, the cleric must complete a simple task (such as fasting until taking 1 point of Constitution damage) or risk angering his or her deity (GM's call). Clerics of evil deities often perform sacrifices instead!

A second fumble before the spellcaster recovers from the first one (when trying to cast another spell, for example), causes a spell catastrophe. The exact effects are up to the GM, but possibilities might include the inability to cast spells until a greater quest is fulfilled, the summoning of a great demon, the destruction of all the party's items or the building they are in, etc.

A fumble caused by someone that hadn't memorized the spell can always cause a spell catastrophe (GM's call).

Acquiring and Changing Spells

Each class has its own of acquiring new spells. Spells must be found through adventuring before the PC can use a feat in order to memorize them. Most spells are learned through deities, patrons or spell books.

Deities and Patrons

Clerics learn their spells from divine inspiration, after many days of prayer and meditation. Ordinarily, all spells that are in line with his or her deities' domain are available, but sometimes a quest will be demanded in order to learn a new spell.

Not all gods are that kind. Casters that worship evil and chaotic deities will sometimes trade dark services and sacrifices for spells.

Even magic-users can learn spell from patrons – gods, demons, dragons and other supernatural beings. While many require faith and worship, others prefer offering deals, instead. As a general rule, lawful beings will often require loyalty and adherence to the higher laws (i.e., the cleric must act righteously in order to acquire new spells), while most chaotic beings are more flexible in their demands.

Forsaken casters still keep the spells they learned before falling out of grace, and can find new patrons and deities (although most Lawful deities will eschew such characters).

Spell books & scrolls

Magic-users often learn their spells by searching and studying ancient grimoires and lost volumes of forgotten lore... or by stealing them from their rivals.

Magic-users must keep spell books ("grimoires") in order to recuperate spells after a spell mishap. These books are dangerous and jealously guarded. Anyone who studies a grimoire for 1d6 hours has advantage in spell saving throws against the author, and can cast any spells from the book (with disadvantage) while reading it.

Repeated casting (1d6+3 times) will make the user memorize it (and thus spend a feat). There is no choice – spells have a way to invade people's minds. The spells are still cast with disadvantage until the caster spends 2d6 hours copying the manuscript in order to create his or her version of the spell. Scrolls are like grimoires, but they contain a single spell of a predetermined level and are destroyed after one use. It costs the wizard $100 times spell power to create a scroll, and it weights 1/3 unit per spell level.

Accumulating spells

When a spell is cast, some of the caster's energy is tied to it for the duration of the spell. The caster can automatically end the spell's effect at any time. Otherwise, the caster suffers a penalty equal to spell level in order to cast new spells. For example, if a magic-user wants to cast a fireball while maintaining a level 3 spell, he or she takes a -3 penalty while casting the fireball.

Instantaneous spells do not cause this effect.

Changing spells

The GM is encouraged to let spellcasters use their spells in creative ways and make small alterations on the fly. For example, you can use Portal to snatch an object from the other side of the room moving only your hand, or create a single tentacle with Black Tentacles. Bigger alterations might cause penalties to the roll. The exact mechanics are up to the GM.

Ritual Spells

Ritual spells allow the spellcaster to produce results that are exponentially more powerful, but the costs in time in resources also rise exponentially, and it might require specific moments (when the stars are right, etc.), difficult quests or rare materials. There are no predetermined rituals; the specifics of each single ritual must be negotiated with the GM.

Cleric Spells

Cleric spells are rolled with the Spellcasting skill and Wisdom modifier.

Healing (touch, permanent)

You heal a creature of 1d8 hit points or 1 point of Constitution damage per spell level. Curing poison or disease is also possible; spell level is 3 (or more for particularly gruesome cases). A level 6 spell cures petrification or similar effects.

Each subsequent healing spell cast at the same creature in the same day receives a cumulative -1 penalty (-2 for the third casting, etc.).

Circle of Protection (touch, 10 minutes/level)

The target is surrounded by a circle of protection, adding +1 per spell level to the target's saving throws and AC when dealing with supernatural attacks (spells, etc.) and any attacks from supernatural creatures of Chaotic alignment (undead, demons, etc.) or creatures from other planes.

Detect (self, 10 minutes)

You can sense the presence of dangers and supernatural things. Choose what you want to detect: magic, poison (including poisonous creatures), traps, invisible beings, blessed/cursed objects, or supernatural creatures (undead, fey, aberrations, etc.). While the spell lasts, you can locate and roughly identify it (i.e., general information: "he has fey ancestry", "there seems to be fire magic in this sword", "there is a trap in this chest") within 10 feet per spell level. This spell ignores most doors and walls, but not thick metal, stone, or more than three feet of wood or earth.

Light (touch, 1 day/level)

You touch an object, making it shed a light, similarly to a torch's. If you keep holding the object, treat this spell as level 0, and it lasts indefinitely; otherwise, the duration is one day per spell level.

Alternatively, you can create a beam of light into a creature's eyes (level 3 spell). If the creature fails a saving throw, it is blinded for one minute.

Resist Elements (touch, 1 hour/level)

A creature you touch is protected from the detrimental effects of heat, fire, cold, etc., adding +1 per spell level to saving throws against such hazards (whether natural or magical), for one hour.

Dispel Magic (120 feet, permanent)

You can undo a spell created by someone else. The spell level is the same for both spells, but in order to succeed, your roll must also equal or surpass the original caster's roll.

Alternatively, you can use your reaction to stop another caster's spell, in the same way. The GM may rule the original spell turns against the spellcaster if you get a critical hit.

Purge (touch, permanent)

This spell can purify spoiled, rotten or poisoned food and water, enough for one day per spell level (a level 2 spell purifies 2 units of fresh food, for example). It can also be used to turn clean water into holy water (3 vials per level). It takes ten minutes to perform.

Alternatively, this spell can be used against undead and

demons as a bonus action when the caster hits them with a melee weapon, causing 1d6 extra damage per level (save halves), but no more than once per combat against the same target.

Speak All Languages (self, 1 hour/level)

You can talk to humans, animals, plants, and monsters for the duration of the spell, although their thoughts, knowledge and behavior are still limited by their natures. It doesn't make these beings smarter or friendlier. The more complex the language, the higher the level spell: 1 for plants, 2 for animals, 3 for humanoids, 5 for speech-based alien languages, 7 for celestial tongues (ignore alignment restrictions). This doesn't allow you to read other languages.

The maximum number of extra languages you can understand at once is equal to spell level (each animal has its own language, intelligent species may have many).

Commune (self, 1 hour)

This spell allows you to gain knowledge directly from your deities. The number of questions that may be asked is equal to the spell's level, and the answers will usually be "yes", "no", or some form of "I don't know". It takes an hour to cast the spell in this form.

Alternatively, it can be used to ask for divine intervention in a particular problem (level 9 spell). Most forms of intervention will be subtle, often resembling other cleric spells (GM's call; good examples would be targeting a whole group of enemies with Light, healing a dozen people, etc).

In any case, if the spell roll is successful (or a fumble), this spell cannot be cast again for a week.

Silence (120 feet, 10 minutes/level)

You create an invisible 30' diameter sphere of silence where no sound is emitted (people within it can still hear, but not talk). Alternatively, this spell can be cast on a creature to make it silent (advantage on stealth rolls) and mute (cannot talk).

Magic-user Spells

Magic-users spells are rolled with the Spellcasting skill and Intelligence modifier.

Fire Ball (240 feet, instant)

You throw a small flame against any point within range. Upon contact, it explodes, causing 1d6 damage per spell level to anyone within 20' of the target. A successful Dexterity saving throw halves damage.

Sleep (240 feet, 10 minutes/level)

This spell causes 2d6 creatures within range to fall asleep for the duration of the spell if they fail their saves. Weaker creatures are affected first; you don't get to choose and allies are not exempt (when in doubt, decide randomly until 2d6 creatures fall sleep or make their saves). Alternatively, you can target one single creature (effects are identical). Creatures with more HD (or levels) than the spell level are unaffected.

Black Tentacles (120 feet, 10 minutes/level)

You can use this spell to summon several black tentacles, 10 foot long each, from the ground, making a 40 diameter circle on the ground that counts as difficult terrain and requires a Strength or Dexterity saving throw (the victim chooses) in order to cross. A failure means the creature falls prone, is unable to move for the round, and suffers one point of damage per spell level for each round it stays on the area.

Charm (120 feet, 1 hour/level)

When you use this spell against a humanoid creature, it becomes convinced that you are an ally. This makes the creature friendly, not a slave or automaton. Any attack (or other obviously hostile actions) from you or an ally against the target breaks the spell. The target may fight for you against strangers, but not against its allies. Once the duration is finished, the creature realizes it has been charmed.

Invisible Hand (120 feet, 1 minute/level)

You can move objects around (maximum weight is 10 items, or 30 pounds, per spell level) with the power of your mind. If the object is an unwilling creature, it gets a Strength saving throw. Speed is 20' per round.

You can use this spell to hold opponents or crush them as if they were stricken by a giant hand (1d6 damage per spell level, Strength save halves damage).

Fly (self, 10 minutes/level)

This spell allows you to fly through space, disregarding gravity. Spell level is 1 to fall slowly, 2 to hover a feet above the ground, 3 for two-dimensional levitation, and 4 to fly freely. Speed is unchanged (double the spell level for double speed).

Mage's Armor (self, 10 minutes/level)

You are surrounded by invisible armor that grants you an AC of 10 + spell level. Armor and shield bonuses to AC are ignored, but the Dexterity modifier still applies.

Magic Missile (240 feet, instant)

You create a number of magical projectiles equal to spell level. Each causes 1d6 damage unless the target succeeds in a Dexterity saving throw. You can divide your missiles between multiple targets, focus on a single one, etc. (your choice).

Portal (self, instant)

You can create a ripple in space-time that allows you to teleport yourself to any place you can see, up to a maximum distance equal to spell power times 5 feet. Alternatively, you can teleport yourself to a familiar location that you cannot see (maximum distance is spell power times 100 feet). High-level rituals can be used to teleport you to other dimensions (GM's call).

Polymorph (self, 1 hour/level)

You can turn into animals, monsters or humanoids (but not one specific person) for the duration of the spell. The resulting HD cannot be greater than your current character level. You keep you mental characteristics (including Wisdom, Intelligence and Charisma) but most physical characteristics will become those of the new form, including HP and attacks (specifics are up to the GM). Spell level is up to the GM (usually 1 for humanoids, 3 for ordinary animals, 5 for most creatures, +3 if there is a significant change in size).

Summon (120 feet, 1 hour)

You summon beings from different planes of existence. The level of the spell is equal to the creature's HD, or higher if it has more than one special ability. You cannot summon a specific entity unless you know its true name or it wants to be summoned by you (in which case the spell level is halved); you must name a generic monster ("I summon forth a Fire Elemental!"). You do not control the summoned creature automatically, although you can draw a containing pentagram or circle before casting the spell (it costs ten minutes and the creature can only break it with a saving throw against the spell, one single chance); roll reaction and try to make a deal if possible, or run away quickly and let your foes deal with it. Some powerful beings might become annoyed if you insist on summoning them without offering something in return.

4. Adventuring

Adventures take place when the PCs decide to explore a dangerous location or take a risky mission in order to acquire wealth and power, protect humankind or destroy foul things. It is up to the players to create characters with plenty of reason for adventuring, and it's up to the GM to create opportunities when the PCs seek them.

THE ADVENTURING PARTY

The adventuring party is made of multiple PCs with similar (or converging) goals. The party is often more important than any single PC. If a PC dies, it can be immediately replaced by a retainer if one is present. Otherwise, the player can create a new PC when the party is back to civilization.

Sometimes, a player can control multiple characters at a time (usually, a PC and some retainers, or multiple PCs if the GM allows). If a PC dies and has no retainers left, other players should offer their retainers to allow the player to continue in the game.

Retainers

Retainers are NPCs that will follow the PCs into adventure. They are not simple journeymen or mercenaries, but (relatively) loyal adventurers that are willing to face the weird, the unexpected and the dangerous. They are built like PCs of any class. The maximum number of retainers is defined by a PC's Charisma. A PC's retainers must always be of lower level than the PC.

It's up to the GM to say how much control the players have over retainers, but usually the PCs can order retainers around within reason and control them during combat provided they don't make the retainers act suicidal. Retainers treated unfairly will usually walk away or even act against the PCs.

Hiring

Retainers will work for a share of the treasure if they know and trust the PCs, which will usually take at least a couple of adventures. Most people will charge around 10% of the XP needed for their current level ($200 for level 2 retainers, $400 for level 3, $800 for level 4, etc.), in advance, for each single mission (no more than one week), instead of a share of the treasure, at least until they trust the PCs. Of course, not all the NPCs are trustworthy themselves! Retainers are created randomly by the GM, and not all types are available at all times or all locations.

When the PCs try to hire someone and the result isn't obvious, the GM will roll 2d6 in secret to see how the NPCs react to an offer. A successful DC 15 Persuasion check from a PC will grant advantage on the check (roll 3d6 and discard the lowest); especially good or bad offers (or circumstances) can cause similar advantages or disadvantages. Each PC must hire his or her retainers.

Roll	NPC Reaction to the Offer
2	Hostile (see below)
3-5	Refusal
6-8	Bargain (requires more money, shares, etc.).
9-11	Acceptance
12	Enthusiastic acceptance

If the roll is 2, the GM flips a coin: the NPC either refuses the proposal and gets suspicious of the PCs, making future offers in the region harder, or accepts the offer but will eventually betray the PCs, trying to steal treasure, selling secrets to enemies, etc.

If the roll is 12, the NPC gets a +1 bonus to morale (see below). The NPC will also get +1 to morale if he or she is of the same alignment as the PC, or if the PC persuades him or her of the importance of the mission (DC 15 Persuasion check, one try per retainer).

Morale (optional)

Most ordinary retainers start with morale 7, but this number can be raised or lowered from 5 to 11 depending on circumstances (if morale falls lower than 5, the retainer is likely to quit or run away). Here are some suggestions; use them with common sense.

Circumstance	Bonus
Each successful expedition	+1
Significant treasure found and shared	+1
Each event that causes PC or retainer death	–1
Abuse or carelessness from the PCs	–1
Good/bad working conditions (pay, danger, etc.)	+1/–1

Morale must be tested whenever retainers face extreme circumstances (GM's call): the first PC or retainer death in a battle (only the PC who hired the retainer, and other retainers from the same PC, count), when half their side

is defeated or heavily wounded, when fighting seemingly impossible odds or unbearably bizarre creatures, etc. It should be tested no more than once for each combat or situation. Likewise, creatures will also test morale when put in a bad situation. PCs never test morale – it is up to the players to decide if they will choose a fight to the death or a tactical retreat.

When morale is tested, roll 2d6 – if the result is greater than current morale, the test is failed. Retainers will lose 1 point of morale and retreat or run away (they will escape if possible, otherwise they will hide until killed or convinced to that the danger is over). Otherwise, they will continue following orders. A PC can spend an action to rally his or her retainers, giving them a second opportunity after a failed roll (DC 20 Persuasion check).

Underground Adventures

Here are the most common procedures and challenges for adventuring in dungeons, lost ruins, chaotic caves, evil citadels, etc. They are complemented by wilderness rules (next page).

Exploration turns

The GM will decide how long each activity takes using common sense, but as a default use 10 minutes for a whole combat, conversation, meal, careful activity (picking a lock, exploring a small room), short rest, etc. This is called one turn or ("exploration turn"). Combat has different rules (a combat "turn" has a different meaning).

Rest

Indoors exploration is usually slower and less strenuous than marching, but characters must take a short rest of one turn per hour or suffer exhaustion (see the Hazards section).

Sleeping indoors is seldom a good idea unless one can find a safe and comfortable place.

Traps, Doors and Hidden things

Locked doors can be picked open (DC 15 Thievery check) or forced (DC 15 Athletics check, DC 10 if using an axe, mace, or crowbar). While the first option is slower (10 minutes versus 1 minute), the second one creates significant noise, alerting nearby creatures.

Finding secret doors or traps is a DC 20 Perception check.

Hearing noises through a closed door is the same. In all cases, the process takes 10 minutes and requires the PC to describe what he is doing (looking for traps, listening to the door, etc.). If the PC looks in the exact place (e.g., if there is a secret door under the rug and the PC pulls the rug), no roll is necessary.

Light & darkness

Candles provide bright light on a 10' radius, torches 20', and lanterns 30'. They also provide dim light at double these distances. Torches and candles last for one hour. Lanterns run on oil, and a pint is enough for 6 hours.

Dim light causes disadvantage to most checks that rely on sight (especially Perception), but usually not Combat. Darkness makes sight – and most tasks that rely on it - impossible, or imposes disadvantage if they are possible. Melee combat is possible if you know where the enemy is, but shooting in the dark bound to fail.

Carrying a light in the darkness will ruin most PCs' chances of stealth, but other characters in the party might be able to move around undetected.

Moving

Moving through unknown dungeons is slower than moving outside or in combat (see the Movement section). Rules for difficult terrain, climbing, swimming, etc. are found in the Wilderness Adventures section.

Wilderness Adventures

These are the rules for adventuring in the perilous wilds. Check the dungeon rules for the effects of light and darkness, finding hidden things, etc.

Rest

Characters exploring the wilderness must rest one day per week (without marching, fighting, etc.) or suffer exhaustion (see the Hazards section).

Light

A full moon (or fog, heavy rain, etc., during daytime) with a clear sky will create an area of dim light. Otherwise, night and very thick fog will create darkness. See the Dungeon Adventures section for the effects of darkness.

Getting Lost

When hiking through unfamiliar lands and without good roads or clear landmarks, avoiding getting lost takes a Perception check by the leader of the group (DC 10 for plains, 15 for mountains, forest and sea, and 20 for deserts, jungles and swamps). A failure will make the group lose half a day before finding their way, but a fumble will make the group follow a slightly (45°, or GM's call) different direction for the whole day without realizing it.

Hunting and foraging

Foraging in the Wilderness without losing speed is a DC 15 Nature check and generates enough food for one person (DC 20 or more for desolate terrain).

Hunting uses the same DCs, but also requires a whole day without travel and a DC 15 "to hit" roll with an adequate weapon (missile or thrown) or similar check. It generates enough food for 2d6 days or people.

Climbing and swimming

Climbing and swimming require no roll under normal circumstances (knotted ropes, still water, etc.), but speed is halved. Depending on the circumstances, it might require a DC 15 (rock climbing, fast moving rivers), 20 (sheer walls, extreme currents), 25 (climbing upside down) or more, and appropriate equipment.

Fumbling a climbing check may cause the PC to fall halfway through, and fumbling a swimming check causes 1d6 minutes of drowning (see the Hazards section for the effects of air deprivation).

Difficult Terrain

Moving through difficult terrain (snow, swamps, thick jungles, mountains, steep stairs, caltrops, etc.) halves speed (see the movement section) in comparison to good terrain (plains, decent trails, etc.). Average terrain (desert, hills, wooded areas) reduce speed by 1/3. When hiking outdoors, a decent road can increase speed up to 50%, or transform difficult terrain in average terrain.

In combat, going over an obstacle counts as difficult terrain (for example, if you have to move over a 10' of caltrops, it counts as 20').

Some obstacles (big chasms, high fences, etc.) must be dealt with on a case by case basis.

Hazards

There are many things that can hurt a character. Here are some of the most common ones

Air, fire, food, water, shelter, sleep

A character that spends one day without water or sleep, one hour under extreme weather (heat or cold) without adequate clothing, or one minute without air suffers 1d6 damage to Constitution. Four days without food cause 2 points of damage to Constitution. One round within a big fire deals 1d6 Constitution damage. Lesser hazards (e.g., eating once every three days) will also cause adverse effects (GM's call).

A DC 20 Constitution save halves damage (minimum 1). Raise the DC by 1 for every new roll against the same hazard.

Exhaustion

Exhaustion is caused by strenuous activity or a lack of rest, as described in other sections of the book. When a character suffers exhaustion, he or she takes 1d6 damage to Constitution, exactly as described in the previous section (Air, fire...).

Poison & disease

There are many kinds of poisons and diseases, each with different effects. The main difference between them and other hazards is that the DC is lowered by one point with each new roll, and a successful save will not only halve damage but also cure the affliction (but not the damage) and prevent further rolls.

The standard ingestible poison causes 1d4 Constitution (1d4 HP if the creature is not human) damage per minute (DC 20), and the standard disease 1d4 per day.

Venomous creatures usually cause the same damage immediately after a successful hit and every minute thereafter. A PC with the Poisoner feat can apply poison to their bladed and piercing weapons (one action) with the same effect, but it wears off after one minute in the weapon or one successful hit (whichever comes first). In both cases, the DC is equal to 10+level or 10+HD.

Falling

Falling causes 1d6 Constitution damage per 10 feet fallen (maximum 10d6). Roll a DC 20 Constitution and Dexterity save. If one succeeds, the damage is halved; if both succeed it is divided by three.

Petrification & the three strikes rule

Some monsters can turn people to stone immediately if they fail a saving throw. PCs (but not retainers) have the chance of dying slowly. Instead of being petrified outright, a PC that fails a save against petrification suffers a minor setback (their speed is halved) and must roll again next round. Another failure imposes a major setback (speed is reduced to 0), and a third failure means being turned to stone. A success at any time stops the process, but doesn't protect the PC from further attacks from the same source (e.g., if the PC keeps looking to the Medusa he or she must roll again while the monster is present). Destruction of the source often heals the PC unless the process is complete.

Similar "three strikes" rules can be used with death rays, disintegration and other deadly attacks, but not milder effects such as sleep, charm, etc.

In addition, the GM may also rule the PC takes 1d6 Constitution damage for every step of the process (making healing harder).

Encumbrance & Movement

Most of the time, the weight a character is carrying can be ignored unless it is metal armor, bulky or numerous items, or any heavy burden. If this is the case, the GM might assign consequences based on common sense, or use the rules below.

A character can carry a number of items (or units of weight) equal to his or her Strength score before being slowed down. Additional items will cause speed to drop and hinder various activities.

Weight Carried	Speed	Penalty
Less than Strength	100	–
Strength or more	3/4	Disadvantage
Strength x2	1/2	Disadvantage, –2
Strength x3	1/4	Disadvantage, –3
Strength x4	0	Disadvantage, –4

Disadvantage applies to several skills, including Spellcasting, Athletics, most uses of Thievery and any time it would make sense. Penalties apply to those and also to AC and Combat. Some activities will be impossible when encumbered (GM's call).

Example: a PC with Strength 12 can carry 11 items with no problems, 12 or more items with ¾ speed, etc. Carrying 24 items or more will cause him to get disadvantage and a -2 penalty to his stealth checks, but only a -2 penalty to his attacks and AC. Carrying 48 units will stop him from walking.

Equipment weight

A standard "item" weights up to three pounds; examples are one-handed weapons such as sword or mace (with belt, scabbard, etc.), a winter blanket, climbing gear, a backpack, a grappling hook, 40' of rope, 20' of chain, clothes, a toolkit (for hiking, healing, disguising, fishing, or other specific purpose), a bedroll, an iron pot, and so on.

Heavy items such as two-handed weapons, 10 foot poles, a shovel, winter clothing, etc., count as two or three items (or more, depending on the case – see the equipment section). A thirty-pound sack will count as ten items, for example.

Armor weights 3 items per point of AC. Shields are lighter: 2 items per point of AC (if you're using more than one type). Small things may be bundled together and count as one single item (for example, three knifes, 30 arrows, 1000 coins). Things that fit in the palm of your hand usually count as small items.

A PC without equipment weights an average of 35 units plus Strength score.

Movement

Most characters move 120' for each 10 minutes while exploring unknown, dangerous locations such as dark dungeons. Triple that speed for outdoor environments. During combat or chase, a PC can move up to 40' per round (240' per minute). Hiking speed is 24 miles per day (walking 8 hours per day), but see the Wilderness section for difficult terrain. Climbing, crawling, swimming, and sneaking around halves speed (or worse) for the duration of the activity.

Consider an ordinary mule ($30) or horse ($40) to have Strength 40 for encumbrance purposes. A warhorse ($200) will ride into battle. Mules and horses with Strength 60 are also available (triple the price). Base speed is the same as human.

Horses can double their speed for up to eight hours. Humanoids and mules can add 50% to daily speed by marching for up to 12 hours in a day. In all cases, they suffer exhaustion by the end of the day (see the Hazards section). Likewise, a character can triple his combat speed for 5 minutes, but must immediately rest for half an hour after that, or suffer exhaustion.

Hirelings & Services

Hirelings are mercenaries and laborers that will do ordinary work for the PCs in exchange of money. Unlike retainers, they will not follow the PCs to adventure, travel to unknown locations, explore forgotten ruins, etc. A PC can hire as many hirelings as he or she can find, regardless of Charisma.

Services

Menial work costs at $5 a day. Specialized work costs at least $10. Ordinary workers are level 1 and most can be hired by the month at twenty times the daily cost. Few workers will accept serious risk without a significant raise (at least triple).

High level hirelings are seldom available and their daily pay is usually equivalent of $10 times their level.

Hirelings usually work in a single, specialized skill. When making a skill check, they get a bonus equal to their level and they have advantage. For example, a level 2 scribe rolls with advantage and a +2 bonus when translating fragments from a damaged scroll.

Mercenaries

Mercenaries are built like PCs (fighters) and cost the same as other services when used for guard duty, etc., but they will charge triple if they are expected to get into dangerous fights or actual war. Add 10% of the cost of their equipment, horses, etc., to the monthly cost as maintenance. Thus, a heavy horseman with plate and lance will cost more than a pikeman in light armor.

Starting morale is identical to retainers (7). Special elite units might have higher starting morale; double the cost for each +1 (maximum morale 10, multiply the cost by eight).
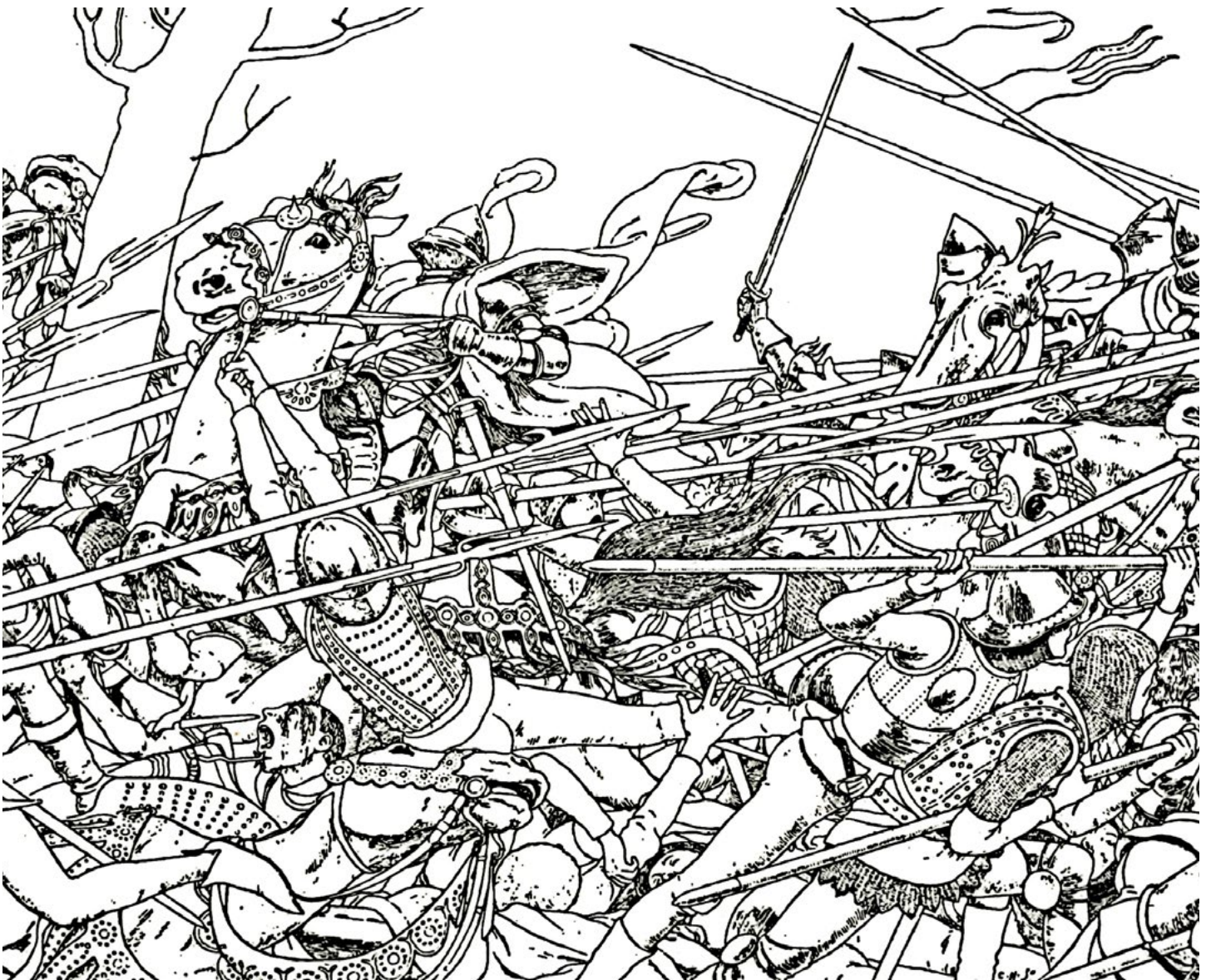
ENCOUNTERS

An encounter happens when the PCs meet a creature (or person) for the first time. Some creatures will be hostile, others friendly. Encounters can end in negotiations, mutual agreements, alliances, combat, etc. The GM will role-play creatures using common sense, improvisation, character traits, etc., like the players do with their PCs.

Creatures are chosen by the GM beforehand or added randomly. They can be found wherever their presence makes sense.

Remember: not all encounters are combat and not all combats are fought to the death (see also "avoiding combat", below).

Distance

A creature's initial distance to the PC's is determined by the GM according to circumstances. As a rule of thumb, use 2d6 times 10 feet for indoor encounters and 2d6 times 30 feet for outdoors.

Reaction

A creature's initial attitude towards the PCs will be determined by the GM according to circumstances, personality, etc., or by using the table below when in doubt. A PC can change the creature's attitude with enticing offers, Persuasion (DC 20 check), etc. A creature's attitude will not always be obvious – sometimes, the PCs might prefer to wait and see instead of attacking by surprise, for example.

Roll	Attitude
2	Attack on sight
3–5	Hostile
6–8	Confused, unsure
9–11	Friendly
12	Very friendly, cooperative

Surprise

Creatures and PCs can be surprised if they are not expecting specific trouble (e.g., guarding a door) and there is no sign of it (loud noises, etc.). Each character that is unaware makes a DC 15 Perception check; failure means they are surprised. Surprised characters cannot take any actions in this round of combat ("surprise round"), and attacks made against them get advantage for this duration. If everybody is surprised, or nobody is, skip this surprise round.

Initiative

After the surprise round is over, PCs roll initiative. This is a Dexterity check against a DC defined by the GM. A good rule of thumb is using the creatures movement divided by 10 feet (DC 12 for a monster that moves 120' per round, for example). Circumstances may dictate that the some or all of the PCs automatically succeed (if they somehow strike the creatures in the middle of a conversation, for example) or automatically fail. PCs that succeed the check can act in the initiative round. If all PCs fail, skip this round.

Starting on the next round (and until the end of the fight) monsters always act before the PCs (i.e., all monsters take their actions, then all the PCs). The order of actions between characters that are in the same side is usually not important, but if you need a fixed order characters with higher Dexterity can go first.

ROUNDS, TURNS AND ACTIONS

Combat is managed in 10 second rounds. In every round after the first (see above), each character takes a turn in which he or she can perform one action: attacking, casting a spell, using a skill, etc. Combat turns are (evidently) different than 10 minute exploration turns. Combat actions are described in the next page. In addition, the character can also move around, take a bonus action and a reaction, explained below.

Combat Actions

In each round, you can move, take a bonus action, a free action, a reaction, and a main action (everything that is not a movement, bonus action, free action or reaction: attack, defend, spells, skills, etc.). You usually cannot take more than one action of the same kind in the same round (you cannot attack and cast a spell, for example, but you can move and attack).

Movement (1/round)

A character can move up to his combat movement (usually 40') in his turn. Movement in flexible: within reason, the PC can move 10', attack, move another 10', take a bonus action, and move 20 more, or even save half his or her movement to use in reactions. To get back up after being prone takes 10' of your movement.

Bonus actions (1/round)

A bonus action is a faster, secondary action that characters may take in their turns. A PC can only use his or her bonus action for something that takes a couple of seconds but requires no rolls, unless he or she has some special feature that says otherwise. Examples are drawing a heavy weapon, exchanging a couple of sentences, taking something from a bag, etc.

Under special circumstances, the GM may allow using a bonus action to take a "standard" action that usually requires a roll, but it is made with disadvantage; this includes spells, attacks, etc. There is no disadvantage if the PC has a power or feature that explicitly says it can be used as a bonus action.

Reactions (1/round)

A reaction is a response to someone else's action or a particular event. Reactions can be taken at any appropriate time (unless the character is surprised), even in other character's turn, but not more than once per round.

Unless you have a special power or circumstance that says otherwise, reactions can only be used for dodging/parrying (+2 AC against a single foe, must be declared before the creature rolls) and readied actions (see below).

Free actions (1/round)

Actions that take no longer than a second and involve no dice rolling are usually free; drawing a one-handed blade, small weapon, or arrow, dropping something to the ground or picking it up, looking to the sides to search for other enemies, saying a short sentence, etc.

Actions (1/round)

Actions (or "main actions") are attacks, skills, spells, defense, etc., or any other reasonable thing a PC wants to do. Here are some examples.

Attack

To make an attack, choose a target within reach (usually 5' for melee weapons, more for ranged weapons) and roll 1d20 plus Combat skill. If the result is equal to or greater than the target's AC, you hit and roll for damage.

You have disadvantage when making ranged attacks if you're within 5' of a hostile creature.

Defend

If you take a defensive stance, all attacks against you have disadvantage and all your Dexterity saving throws have advantage provided you can see the attack coming (i.e., not against hidden opponents, backstabbing, etc.).

Spells and Skills

You can use your action to make a Spellcasting roll or use other skills. For example, you can Turn Undead, make a Lore roll to try to remember a creature's weakness, use Perception to find something hidden, use Thievery to hide or pick a lock, etc.

You have disadvantage when casting spells if you're within 5' of a hostile creature. This also applies to most skills (GM's call).

Disengage

Creatures engaged in melee must take this action to leave the fight or suffer an Attack of Opportunity (see below).

Run

You can use your action to move, in addition to your normal movement, which in practice doubles speed per round (this assumes you're in combat).

Ready

In lieu of taking an action, you can prepare a reaction. Choose a trigger and action, such as: "if someone passes through the door, I attack!", "if the creature approaches me, I'll run away". In this case, the action is taken immediately after the trigger. If the trigger doesn't happen until your next turn, the reaction is lost.

Combat Tactics

Here are several rules to make combat more detailed and tactical. These are highly recommended, but use them at your own peril. They also cut both ways: most creatures will play by the same rules.

Critical Hits and Fumbles

A critical hit in combat allows you to add your level to damage. A natural 20, whether it is a critical hit or not, allows another attack immediately, against the same creature or another if you're using a melee weapon. This second attack is made with a +2 bonus if you make it with a different weapon (off-hand weapon, shield, kick, etc.). If you make multiple attacks (see below), you might take multiple "second" attacks too.

Under usual circumstances, there are no fumbles when making an attack. PCs are competent enough to avoid looking stupid in every fight.

Special attacks

You can attack multiple foes in melee (but not with thrown or missile weapons – GM's call) at once by taking a penalty equal to the number of targets. The targets must be of lower level (or HD) than the PC. For example, a 4th level Fighter with +7 combat bonus can attack four goblins in the same round with a -4 penalty (i.e., with a +3 bonus to each attack). This doesn't allow you to attack a single goblin four times! You can move between attacks provided the total movement per round is respected. It is recommended that such attacks are limited to four per round, and no greater than the Combat skill. If you already have an extra attack, you can still take it (for example, the Fighter could attack four goblins with +3, and then another foe with +7).

You can also do a bashing/precision attack (with any weapon, including missile and thrown weapons) against any

opponent by dividing your attack bonus in half and adding half to damage. For example, if you have a +8 attack bonus you can attack with +4 and add +4 to damage.

Other special attacks are up to the GM.

Grappling and Special Maneuvers

You can use Combat (or other skills) to grapple or perform special maneuvers against your foes to cause minor adversities: make them prone, disarmed, dismounted, pushed 5' away, etc. Targets are allowed a saving throw, and even if it fails they can easily recuperate in their next turn with a bonus or free action (by simply getting up, picking up the weapon, etc.).

A critical hit (or another minor adversity while the target still hasn't recuperated from the first) causes major adversities: the target might be restrained, pinned down, etc. This is usually equivalent of taking disadvantage to all rolls. To escape from this condition the target must use an action and succeed in a check against the attacker. Unless the target succeeds, the attacker can keep this condition by simply spending a bonus action, without further rolls.

If the target is attacked again while still suffering a major adversity and fails the saving throw, he or she is defeated (unconscious, helpless, incapacitated, etc.). By this point, the combat is ended for the victim.

Advanced Movement

As a general rule, movement doesn't require rolls, unless a character uses his or her movement for some wild, risky maneuver. The DC is 15 to 20 and there will a risk/reward element to the roll most of the time. For example, swinging from a chandelier might give advantage or disadvantage on the main action depending on the result of the roll, while ignoring obstacles might cause speed to be halved on a failure. Passing through an Enemy's space will require a contested roll. Such movement stunts usually require a bonus action.

Attacks of opportunity

If a creature casts a spell, uses a missile weapon, moves away without using the disengage action, or takes another action that makes it more susceptible to getting hit (GM's call), a PC that is within 5' can take a reaction in order to make an attack against it. Instead of dealing damage, the attacker can choose to disrupt the spell or skill (the victim must succeed in a Wisdom saving throw against the attacker's roll or lose its action).

Backstabbing

When you attack a surprised enemy, one that can't see you, or one that cannot defend adequately (e.g., is prone) you get advantage on your attacks. You can hide from a foe during battle only if he is fighting someone else at the time; this is usually an opposed roll of Thievery versus Perception.

Facing and Flanking

If a creature gets surrounded by two or more PCs, the PCs can divide themselves in two groups in order to flank/backstab the creature. The creature chooses which group to face. The other group has advantage when attacking the character. The number of PCs that can attack a creature at once is limited by their size, position (no backstabbing creatures who have their backs to a wall), and the length of their weapons.

Reach

If you can see a creature coming and you have bigger reach, you can ready an attack against it and use your reaction before it attacks you. As a general rule, bigger weapons have greater reach, but spears are considered one step bigger and maces/axes one step smaller. Thus, a 1d8 sword, 1d10 axe and 1d6 spear have all the same reach.

Ending & Avoiding combat

There are multiple ways to finish a combat; total annihilation isn't the only option. Here are some examples.

Morale failure

Creatures, like retainers, must check morale when they realize they are losing a fight. If they fail, they will withdraw or run away. PCs don't check morale, but they may decide to leave anyway.

Fighting withdrawal and retreat

To slowly move away from a fight, one must move backwards at half speed. Turning around and moving at full speed (retreat) allows an attacker of equal or greater speed to chase the defender and attack with advantage.

Chase

If one side decides to flee, the other side can chase and catch them provided their speed is equal or greater. It's up to the PCs to decide if they'll chase slower creatures (as faster creatures usually cannot be cashed effectively) – cornered creatures are likely to fight back. It's up to the GM to decide if faster creatures will chase the PCs (when in doubt, roll the reaction table, with a low result indicating pursuit).

When being chased, PCs may drop food (for animals) or treasure to distract NPCs, or use burning oil and caltrops to slow them down. These tactics will work about 50% of the time (GM's call).

Parley and Surrender

Any side can suggest a parley or surrender during combat. The side that is losing is likely to accept a parley or truce, or even surrender if they realized they cannot win and cannot escape. The GM will decide according to circumstances, or use the morale and reaction tables to decide. The defeated may offer treasure and information to the other side in order to stop the violence. Intelligent creatures often prefer to ransom adversaries instead of killing them, provided the prisoners behave.

It might be better to stop a meaningless fight before losing a comrade, but surrendering to a merciless or irrational enemy is often foolish and suicidal.

Total Annihilation

If a side is completely defeated (reduced to 0 HP or through other means), combat ends. If that is your side, the adventure probably ends as well – unless your enemies have good reasons to take hostages or leave you behind.

Conversion Notes

This game is meant to be compatible with most OSR and original old school RPGs. You can pick and choose what spells, feats, classes and mechanics to import for this or other games. Here are a few notes on how to do that.

Levels

This game has ten levels, but characters may want to continue their careers up to level 20 or more. After level 10, it is likely that the PCs become so powerful that they will turn into conquerors, kings, or legends. The progression is easy enough to follow, but a level 20 character in this system is a lot more powerful (and requires a lot more XP) than a level 20 character in other games.

If you want a less steep climb through many levels (say, 36), use a different progression for skills, saves, feats, etc. For example, 2/3, 2/4, and 2/5 (which is actually better than 1/3, of course) for primary, secondary and tertiary skills.

Spells

Spells in DFB are very flexible and a bit abstract. If you want to use spells from other games, with fixed levels and concrete effects, consider giving 4 different but related spells for each feat spent, instead of one, and let casters switch a few spells from time to time.

You'll also notice that some spells are somewhat weaker in this game. This is made for a number of reasons, including the fact that magic-users have more HP and can use any equipment here. Use the version that better suits your games.

Feats

You can easily use feats from other games in this one. A feat in this game is roughly equivalent to a +1 modifier to one ability, so it's better to take feats from games that use the same reasoning.

Classes

Classes in this game are a bit different than usual. They all have the same HP, XP progression, etc. When importing a new class, try to transform its main features in feats, and choose one of the five basic classes to begin with.

Races

Although this game doesn't use non-human characters, you can add them by taking their special abilities as feats. It is okay if they have more feats at the beginning; eventually, humans can catch up and surpass them. Which is the point.

Skills

There are infinite ways to deal with skills; DCs are just one. You can choose to roll a d30 under ability score plus skill, give a 1-in-6 chance for most skills (+3 for primary skills, +2 for secondary, etc., plus ability modifier), and use 1-in-8 and 1-in-d10 for harder stuff, and so on. Each method has its own advantages (my blog has about seven…); choose whatever suits you.

Short and Long Rests

If you're using a system that requires short or long rests, we suggest synching new rules with classic ones. In an underground environment, a short rest takes 10 minutes and is required every hour. In the wilderness, a short rest takes one hour (since you're marching, fighting outdoors, etc.), and a long rest (24 hours) is required every week. A long rest can be taken in 8 hours in a safe haven (think "Rivendell", a civilized city, or a "clear" section of the dungeon or wilderness). This solves a number of issues with new school "resting" rules.

The End?

This is where the book ends and your adventure begins. Thank you for reading! Let me know if you have any comments, questions, and so on. I have more books in the works, including adventures, monsters and settings that are compatible with this one. Keep updated by visiting my blog: methodsetmadness.blogspot.com.