

Dark Fantasy

CHARACTERS



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What is this book about?

This book is a collection of tables to inspire the creation of characters. It includes tables meant for player characters, non-player characters, or (frequently) both. You can also use this book to generate characters for stories, comic books, etc.

The focus is on dark fantasy tropes: flawed heroes, terrible villains, corrupting magic, ominous ruins and damned wastelands.

This is system-less book, to be used with any game of your choice. It is especially suited for medieval dark fantasy games, such as my own ([Dark Fantasy Basic](#)). The only exception is the Ability Scores section, which is meant for games that use the “classic” six ability scores: Strength, Intelligence, Wisdom, Dexterity, Constitution and Charisma. Even the sections containing classes can be easily adapted.

How many tables to use?

A quick word of advice: you are not supposed to use all the tables at once. Of course, you can create a detailed character if you have the time, but usually you will only need a table or two, especially when you’re creating NPCs. When you need a name, roll a name; when you’re asked to describe a warrior’s appearance, roll on the appearance table. Do not bother with personality unless she gets the opportunity to talk.

Player characters will need a name, and you can roll for ability scores, but other aspects (appearance, weapons, etc.) are usually chosen by the player. If you want to let everything to chance, notice that not all player characters need a dark secret or flaw, and they can definitely ignore the grievous sins tables – this is meant for villains! And the player characters are not villains... right?

Credits

Written by Eric Diaz. Book cover by Rick Troula.

You can find more of my work in my blog: methodsetmadness.blogspot.com.

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The Tables

Names

There are millions of names to choose from; here is a short list for inspiration. Pick a name (male, female or any) and surname. Add a particle if you want. Make any changes you want to gain endless variations (Andrei, Anders, Andrius, Andrelle, Andrea, Adrielle, Andrina, Eander, etc.) or to generate a result that is pleasing to your ears.

d20	Male	Male	Female	Female	Any	Particle	Surname
1	Andre	Arcturos	Agnes	Aleena	Ali	Al-	Arn
2	Bastian	Bran	Beatrice	Brigid	Blake	Auf	Ashton
3	Corbin	Damon	Cassandra	Christina	Cyan	Ben	Barker
4	David	Dexter	Diana	Elisa	Dana	Dal	Castaigne
5	Eldric	Erasmus	Ember	Emma	Erin	D', de	Cook
6	Felix	Gaius	Fatima	Gaia	Finn	El	Domavyl
7	Gary	Hector	Gwen	Helen	Gwyn	Fitz	Ervin
8	Henrik	Hieronymus	Hilda	Illyria	Hawk	Gil	Groan
9	Ian	Jason	Iris	Jane	Ikram	Hur	Harker
10	Kane	Kael	Joan	Kara	Kay	Kir	Holbrook
11	Leonel	Lucius	Luna	Lya	Jules	Kan	Kirowan
12	Malazor	Malik	Maya	Morgan	Logan	Le	Livingstone
13	Nikolai	Odo	Nebula	Nyx	Maddox	Mac	Morn
14	Orion	Pace	Octavia	Ophelia	Nico	Nin	Otranto
15	Parson	Rickard	Padma	Priscila	Piper	O'	Reuter
16	Rowan	Sigmund	Regina	Rhea	Ryan	-son	Shelley
17	Titus	Tom	Rowan	Scarlet	Strix	Ur	Stoker
18	Tristan	Ulric	Selene	Thalia	Tyler	Van	Wayne
19	William	Yuvan	Ursula	Victoria	Willow	Von	Wells
20	Xavier	Xylar	Xandra	Zoe	Zane	Zu	Zarovis

Ability Scores

Roll three 20-sided dice one for each pair of abilities: Strength and Intelligence, Wisdom and Dexterity, and Constitution and Charisma. For example, if you roll 3, 7 and 10 using the gritty column, your abilities are 12, 9, 8, 13, 12, 9. After you're finished, add a +1 bonus to any ability of your choice for every time you rolled 15 or more on the d20.

The gritty column is recommended for "basic" games. It emulates rolling 3d6 for each ability. Use the hopeless column if you want to create a hopeless character or ordinary level-0 human. If you want more powerful characters (starting or not) use the columns on the right.

Alternatively, you can let the players roll 3d20 and pick three different columns of his or her choice.

d20	Hopeless	Gritty	Advanced	Heroic	Epic
1	13, 7	14, 7	15, 7	15, 8	16, 9
2	12, 8	13, 8	14, 8	14, 9	15, 10
3	11, 9	12, 9	13, 9	13, 10	14, 11
4	10, 10	11, 10	12, 10	12, 11	13, 12
5	9, 9	10, 11	11, 11	11, 12	12, 13
6	9, 11	9, 12	10, 12	10, 13	11, 14
7	8, 12	8, 13	9, 13	9, 14	10, 15
8	7, 13	7, 14	8, 14	8, 15	9, 16
9	12, 8	13, 8	7, 15	14, 9	15, 10
10	11, 9	12, 9	13, 9	13, 10	14, 11
11	10, 10	11, 10	12, 10	12, 11	13, 12
12	9, 9	10, 11	11, 11	11, 12	12, 13
13	9, 11	9, 12	10, 12	10, 13	11, 14
14	8, 12	8, 13	9, 13	9, 14	10, 15
15	12, 7*	12, 8*	13, 8*	14, 8*	15, 9*
16	11, 8*	11, 9*	12, 9*	13, 9*	13, 10*
17	10, 9*	10, 10*	11, 10*	12, 10*	13, 10*
18	9, 10*	10, 10*	10, 11*	10, 12*	10, 12*
19	8, 11*	9, 11*	9, 11*	9, 13*	10, 14*
20	7, 12*	8, 12*	8, 13*	8, 14*	9, 15*

Backgrounds & specialties

This is a list of possible backgrounds for your characters – things he or she did before adventuring. It also contain possible specializations. For example, a fighter can be a knight, a soldier, or a former gladiator. She may also have an ordinary background as a farmer or baker, or a background that is more typical of a different class – e.g., a wizard’s apprentice or hermit. If you roll get any result with an asterisk, roll again in the corresponding table.

d20	Fighter	Thief	Wizard	Cleric	Ordinary
1	Mercenary	Swindler	Apprentice	Acolyte	Farmer
2	Soldier	Cutpurse	Scholar	Preacher	Shepherd
3	Knight	Assassin	Alchemist	Priest	Butcher
4	Guard	Acrobat	Demonologist	Cultist	Mason
5	Gladiator	Bard	Pyromancer	Prophet	Slave
6	Hunter	Actor	Necromancer	Scribe	Merchant
7	Ranger	Forger	Illusionist	Initiate	Beggar
8	Squire	Smuggler	Fortune-teller	Druid	Blacksmith
9	Barbarian	Aristocrat	Summoner	Inquisitor	Baker
10	Duelist	Jester	Enchanter	Monk	Goldsmith
11	Tactician	Thug	Runesmith	Shaman	Tailor
12	Paladin	Burglar	Hypnotist	Hermit	Tinker
13	Brawler	Scout	Sorcerer	Blessed	Fisherman
14	Manhunter	Charlatan	Psionicist	Guru	Leatherworker
15	Berserker	Fence	Medium	Chaplain	Barber-Chirurgion
16	Warlord	Explorer	Witch	Zealot	Sailor
17	Thief*	Fighter*	Fighter*	Fighter*	Moneylender
18	Wizard*	Wizard*	Thief*	Wizard*	Weaver
19	Cleric*	Cleric*	Cleric*	Thief *	Shoemaker
20	Ordinary*	Ordinary*	Ordinary*	Ordinary*	Furrier

Skills

Some games have their own list of skills... and some have none. Dark Fantasy Basic has ten (the first ten on the list). The latter ten are a bit more specific. This table is not meant for player character generation, but to give a quick talent to your NPCs, in order to make them more flavorful or useful.

d20	Skills	d20	Skills
1	Athletics	11	Commerce
2	Combat	12	Performance
3	Lore	13	Languages
4	Nature	14	Sailing
5	Persuasion	15	Gambling
6	Perception	16	Local knowledge
7	Science	17	Carrying stuff
8	Spellcasting	18	Masonry or demolition
9	Thievery	19	Animal handling
10	Turn Undead	20	Writing (travel logs, etc.)

Weapons and equipment

Use this table to describe armed adventures, gladiators, tribes, mercenary companies, etc. Feel free to ignore or re-imagine results that sound absurd (for example, a quarterstaff in each hand looks strange; replace them with short clubs or sticks).

d10	Weapon	Fighting style	Armor	Equipment style	Miscellanea
1	Dagger	Unarmed	Almost naked	Exotic	Rope
2	Sword	One weapon	No armor	Oversized	Crowbar
3	Axe	Two weapons	Piecemeal armor	Magic	10' Pole
4	Spear	Weapon and shield	Leather	Enameled	Torches
5	Mace	Thrown weapon	Hide	Marked with runes	Lantern
6	Flail	Two handed weapon	Scale	Bronze	Iron spikes
7	Polearm	Assassination	Chain	Dark	Oil flask
8	Hammer	Mounted	Half-plate	Spiked	Wine
9	Staff	Bow	Full plate	Colorful	Holy symbol
10	Net	Crossbow	Big helmet, and roll again	Emblazoned	Healing kit

Character flaws

Characters, both malevolent and benign, can have flaws. The difference is one of degree... and often lies in the eye of the beholder.

d20	Flaw	d20	Flaw
1	Drunkenness	11	Recklessness
2	Lust	12	Cruelty
3	Sloth	13	Extremism
4	Gluttony	14	Idealism
5	Wrath	15	Fragility
6	Greed	16	Naiveté
7	Cowardice	17	Tactlessness
8	Xenophobia	18	Bad Luck
9	Power-hunger	19	Arrogance
10	Paranoia	20	Unlawfulness

Dark Secrets

Dark secrets are not only for villains, but also for tragic heroes. Even PCs may chose a dark secret if they want. If the secret is revealed, the character might be shunned, cast away, or even hunted down. Hirelings and followers may have dark secrets if the player characters get unlucky while hiring them.

d20	Secret
1	Family. Your family is made of criminals, monsters, tyrants, or traitors.
2	Crime. You committed a heinous crime that would scare away even your allies.
3	Trauma. You (or someone close to you) has been the victim of unspeakable acts. It haunts you.
4	Birthright. You could rightfully claim a position or thing that is currently into a powerful usurper's hands.
5	Curse. There is a dark prophecy about your future. It may manifest repeatedly (everyone you love will get hurt, etc.)
6	Addiction. You cannot be trusted near a bottle of alcohol (or other dangerous substance).
7	Debt. You owe someone, big time. He or she will come to collect eventually.
8	Cult. You are part of a secret cult. It is secret for a reason.
9	Sin. You committed acts that, while not criminal, would get you shunned if discovered.
10	Insanity. You have bouts of madness, or even hallucinations, that you think you can control.
11	Disease. You have a terminal or infectious disease.
12	Pact. You made a deal with a dark entity, and now you have to fulfill it.
13	Knowledge. You know something that outs you in danger.
14	False identity. You are not who you say you are.
15	Enemy. A dangerous foe is searching for you.
16	Disgusting. You have a (mostly harmless) habit that would make people disgusted.
17	Fraud. Your stories about your deeds and skill are greatly exaggerated.
18	Suicidal. Your bravery hides a strong death wish.
19	Artifact. You are hiding a dangerous object that you are not willing to throw away.
20	Bond. You have a deep affection (or loyalty, etc.) for someone that most people see as an enemy.

Dark motivations

These motivations are dangerous at best and downright villainous at worst. Heroic characters may use these motivations, with a heroic interpretation (for example, protect tradition but bend it to save innocent lives, pursue utopia but not at all costs, etc.), or choose something more altruistic. Conversely, an evil character can pursue “beauty” or “purity” through hideous means.

There is some overlap between character flaws and dark motivations, but the two things are different. A character with a flaw tries to overcome it, a character with a dark motivation uses it as fuel and guidance for his actions.

d20	Motivation	d20	Motivation
1	Revenge	11	Lust
2	Power	12	Xenophobia
3	Utopia	13	Rebellion
4	Immortality	14	Misguided altruism
5	Wealth	15	Fear of change
6	Lust	16	Fanaticism
7	Pride (family)	17	Insanity
8	Pride (selfish)	18	Sadism
9	Fame/glory	19	Envy
10	Hunger	20	Just following orders

Grievous sins

Most villains will commit heinous crimes at some point in their lives. Murder, theft, and lies are all common. This list, however, contains some of the most vile deeds a villain can perform. No one with the vaguest hint of humanity left would commit these acts lightly.

These deeds should be imagined in the worst possible way. For example, cannibalism is not simply eating the body of the deceased to avoid starvation, but actually hunting and killing for pleasure. Likewise, claiming false authority is not merely posing as a town guard to avoid imprisonment, but building an entire kingdom or church by falsely claiming you were chosen by a deity. Deicide might be justifiable if committed against evil gods. And so on.

Needless to say, you should never describe these acts in your game, or even bring them up, unless all players agreed beforehand to deal with these themes.

d20	Sin	d20	Sin
1	Child abuse	11	Terrorism
2	Genocide	12	Treason
3	Torture	13	Warmongering
4	Slavery	14	False Authority
5	Brainwashing	15	Kin-slaying
6	Human sacrifice	16	Oppression
7	Cannibalism	17	Stealing souls
8	Sexual assault	18	Deicide
9	Demonolatry	19	Simony
10	Necromancy	20	Human experimentation

Distinctions (appearance & personality)

Use this table not only to describe, but also to distinguish. There are many characters with dark hair or brown eyes, but few are obese or disfigured.

d20	Appearance	Personality
1	Androgynous	Alcoholic
2	Armored	Boisterous
3	Beautiful	Cheerful
4	Childish	Disrespectful
5	Clean	Enigmatic
6	Dark	Faithful
7	Disfigured	Forgetful
8	Diseased	Funny
9	Disproportionate	Greedy
10	Elderly	Helpless
11	Flamboyant	Impulsive
12	Gaunt	Loud
13	Hairy	Pessimistic
14	Maimed	Quixotic
15	Obese	Scared
16	Ragged	Silent
17	Pale	Sluggish
18	Short	Suspicious
19	Slovenly	Stubborn
20	Tattooed	Traumatized

Wounds and scars

This table has two different functions. You can use it to add old wounds and scars to a veteran character (the “description” column) or as “critical hit table” to establish the effects of a current wound (the “effects” column; the exact mechanics of a critical hit are up to you).

You usually roll three dice when using this table. The first for description or effect, the second to establish what body part is affect (“part”), and the third to describe the wound in more detail (“head”, “torso”, or “limbs”).

For example, if you are describing a wounded character and roll a 3, 5, and 2, the character might have a prosthetic leg, up to the thigh. Ignore or change effects that wound end in obvious death (it is not likely that many people are walking around with no throat, for example, but some warriors may be unable to speak because of their wounds).

If someone suffers a critical hit and you roll 5, 2, and 3, the character endures intense pain in the torso (stomach) – maybe he vomits, is unable to act in his next turn, etc. A shield or helmet can protect certain body parts from these effects, but may get damaged in the process.

d6	Description	Effect	Part	Head	Torso	Limbs
1	Scarred	Permanent scar	Head	Skullcap	Chest	Shoulder/hips
2	Missing	Broken bones	Torso	Eye	Ribs/lungs	Biceps/thigh
3	Prosthetic	Bleeding	Left arm	Ear	Stomach	Elbow/knee
4	Bad / weak	Muscle tear	Right arm	Nose	Sides	Forearm/shin
5	Paralyzed	Intense pain	Left leg	Jaw	Vitals	Wrist/ankle
6	Deformed	Infection	Right leg	Throat	Groin	Hands/feet

Marks of corruption

Contact with dark magic, cursed locations, evil forces, and alien entities can warp one's body and mind (not to mention the soul). These are the most obvious marks of corruption. In the early stages, they might be hidden or disguised, but continued exposure can turn a man into a monster.

d20	Mark
1	Tongue. Bifurcated, long, or purple.
2	Teeth. Sharp, fangs, or horse-like.
3	Hands. Crooked, clawed, or tentacled.
4	Skin. Hairy, pale, or wet.
5	Eyes. Glowing, feline, or dilated pupils.
6	Wounds. Scars, open sores, or bleeding.
7	Feet. Cloven, inverted, or webbed.
8	Organs. Dilated, twinned, or pulsating.
9	Belly. Bulging, moving, or negative.
10	Additional parts (human). Arms, misplaced eyes, or misplaced mouths.
11	Additional parts (other). Tentacles, tail, or horns.
12	Bones. Deformed, apparent, or malleable.
13	Smell. Sulfur, death, or spice.
14	Mind. Hallucinations, rage, or despair.
15	Missing. Mouth, eyes, hair.
16	Surrounded. By insects, smoke, or worms.
17	Scary. To small animals, children, or horses.
18	Rotting. Sours milk, ages plants, or spoils wine.
19	Limbs. Too long, too articulated, or too thick.
20	Torso. Too fat, too thin, or too muscular.

Complicated allegiances

Allies and enemies are not always easy to tell apart. Even when they are, there might be other complications. For example, two of your allies may hate each other, and your enemy might have a faithful following of misguided innocents.

d20	Our ally is...	Our enemy is...
1	A liar	Hidden
2	Reckless	Repentant
3	Deluded	Followed by deluded people
4	Self-righteous	Needed to accomplish a goal
5	Infectiously ill	Aware of a secret we need
6	Without empathy	Friend of our friends
7	Thick as a brick	Also enemy to our enemies
8	Selfish	Loved by many
9	Cowardly	Able to enact revenge upon our loved ones
10	Merciful and naive	Invulnerable to normal weapons
11	Unwillingly dangerous to others	Disguised as an ally
12	A repentant criminal	The last defense against a greater evil
13	Friends with an enemy	Dangerous after death (cursed, toxic, etc.)
14	Secretive and suspicious	Hibernating
15	Weak and dependent	Too powerful to be defeated directly
16	Doomed	Capable of returning from the dead
17	Fanatical	The head of a kingdom, army or church
18	Impossible to tell from a foe	Quick to escape when confronted
19	Suicidal	Craving for martyrdom
20	Friends with an enemy	A righteous and honest person