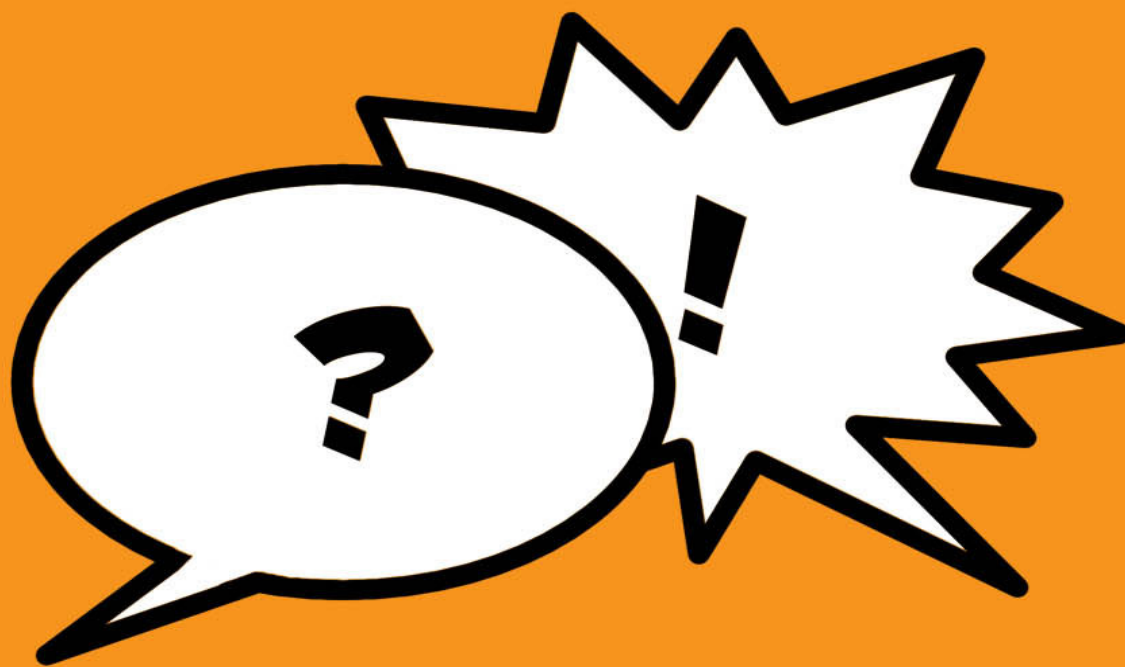
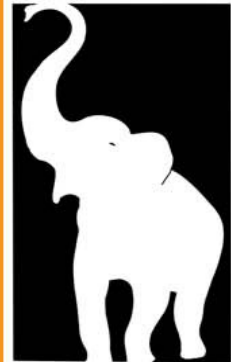


WAR OF WORDS



WHITE ELEPHANT



PUBLISHING

For use with the 4th Edition

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ROLEPLAYING GAME

Requires the use of the D&D Player's Handbook,[®] Monster Manual,[®] and
Dungeon Master's Guide[®] Player's Handbook[®] 2, Monster Manual[®] 2, Adventurer's Vault[™]
core rulebooks, available from Wizards of the Coast, LLC

War of Words

WAR OF WORDS

by
Nick Miller and Darrel Miller

D&D 4E Game System License ©2008, 2009 Wizards of the Coast page 3 of 7

written by Logan Bonner, Eytan Bernstein, and Chris Sims. © 2008, 2009 Wizards of the Coast. All rights reserved. DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Compatibility Logo, D&D, PLAYER'S HANDBOOK, PLAYER'S HANDBOOK 2, DUNGEON MASTER'S GUIDE, MONSTER MANUAL, MONSTER MANUAL 2, and ADVENTURER'S VAULT are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast in the USA and other countries and are used with permission. Certain materials, including 4E References in this publication, D&D core rules mechanics, and all D&D characters and their distinctive likenesses, are property of Wizards of the Coast, and are used with permission under the Dungeons & Dragons 4th Edition Game System License. All 4E References are listed in the 4E System Reference Document, available at www.wizards.com/d20.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS 4th Edition PLAYER'S HANDBOOK, written by Rob Heinsoo, Andy Collins, and James Wyatt; DUNGEON MASTER'S GUIDE, written by James Wyatt; and MONSTER MANUAL, written by Mike Mearls, Stephen Schubert and James Wyatt; PLAYER'S HANDBOOK 2, written by Jeremy Crawford, Mike Mearls, and James Wyatt; MONSTER MANUAL 2, written by Rob Heinsoo, and Chris Sims; Adventurer's Vault,

War of Words

War of Words is for those folks who want rules for social interactions for the Fourth Edition of Dungeons and Dragons that are different from what Skill Challenges offer.

These rules take the same basic mechanics used to adjudicate physical combat, and apply them to social interactions with only a few twists.

A word of note: Just like combat after combat after combat can be BORING, so to is a War of Words after a War of Words. Do not do that to your players, or yourself. This is about fun, its about some drama, its about action. So, just like with combat, use a War of Words when it would be cool to play out the social interaction, otherwise just make a roll once or two and move on.

And that applies to more than just a *War of Words*, it also applies to combat. How many combats have you had, just because it was combat? That does not sound like fun to me, and if it does not to you either, here is a suggestion to get back to the excitement a conflict of any kind should generate in your players:

Run traditional combats like a skill roll.

Thats right, I said it. Just do it. Sure you will speed through the “game”, but when you hit those points where a “real” conflict (social or physical) happens, they will be awesome. Then using either the combat rules, or *War of Words*, you can stretch out those awesome moments and suck out all the marrow you can. Then you will have some truly great things to sit around the table and reminisce about.

This sounds simple, but it is hard to put into practice. Have the players tell you what they want to do and how they plan to do it (which skill they are using). If that sounds good to you as GM, then tell them what will happen if they fail the roll (maybe let them know the DC), and if everyone agrees, roll the dice, interpret the roll. Bingo!

For example, your player Darla, is playing Weelsa a thief. Darla wants to sneak into the keep and murder the Count. You would then want to ask her how she intends to do that. Darla tells you that she is going to use her Stealth skill to slip in

unnoticed and murder the Count. As the GM you decide what is going to happen if she fails her roll. Here are some possibilities: 1) Weesla kills the Count but is caught on the way out; 2) Weesla never gets near the Count (cue a combat or chase scene). Once your player agrees to the conditions of failure, she rolls her dice and lives with the results. And the move on to the rest of the story. Don't hang around the Castle, the Count is dead, cue more story.

Normally the above may take up the entire session, and if that is what your group decides would be fun, then do it.

However, I think Dungeons and Dragons suffers from what I call Story Stalling.

Story Stalling occurs when we try to turn every moment of the game into a *Dramatic Cliff Hanger Awesome Moment Forever to Live in Gamer Memory™*.

The truth is most of what happens in the game, like in life, is just not that cool. But eventually some event, some character, something is going to grab your players attention. Right then and there you can unfold the combat rules or *War*



War of Words

of Words rules and spend some time exploring that interesting person, place or thing. These detailed rules allow you to take your time and build some great memories.

Think of Action Movies. They are full of action, fill your next RPG session with action. Not by having tons of EXCITING things occur, but by move along at a nice pace, just like explained above: Make Killing the Count one die roll, make most of the session One Roll Wonders, and I can almost guarantee that when a combat (physical or mental) shows up it will be *awesome*. And you will see it coming, and it will BEG to be played out, then some real fun will happen.

Say Yes, or Roll the dice once.

Now to the meat of this article: the rules for *War of Words*. Enjoy.

The first step is to determine, as explained above, what each group of debaters want to do (i.e. convince the Merchant to part with that very nice garment cheaply, join our party, run away, and what happens if they fail.)

Next determine principle debaters. There should be a single character per side in the debate. More than one character can be involved in a debate per side, but each side needs a champion to be the main actor and defender.

Each of these principle debaters will provide an argument pool. The argument pool is analogous to hit points, and when the pool is depleted the debater has been defeated.

This pool is calculated by taking the character's charisma and adding to it the highest of the character's intelligence or wisdom. In this sense, a character might be very wise and practical or very crafty and intelligent, but ultimately their presentation and charisma also provide firmament to their platform.

Just like combat, initiative is rolled on the first round of debating. Most debate powers take a standard action that provokes opportunity attacks. The careful planning and deliverance of a thought takes too much time and concentration to allow for any sort of dedicated or vigorous physical movement.

Debate powers are marked with the 'Debate' keyword.

Most debate powers will use a skill as a bonus instead of an attribute. This bonus is added to the result of a d20 roll, just like an attack.

Most debate powers will also have a skill as a target instead of a defense. The target number to hit with the debate power will be 10 + the target's total value for that skill.

A debate power that has an attack of Diplomacy vs. Insight would require a character to roll a d20 + their Diplomacy and score a total greater than or equal to the target's Insight + 10 to "hit" with the power.

When choosing the target of a debate power, the attacker may target any character involved in the debate (even those that are not principle debaters.)

If the power hits, any status affects are applied to the target character, but any derision points come from the argument pool that was established by the principle debater.

In this way all characters that rally behind a cause risk defeat, and their defenses are only as strong as their weakest link. (It is best for people not so skilled at oration to shut their mouth and not get involved.)

Instead of damage, many debate actions cause a number of points of derision.

War of Words

Derision is subtracted from the target's argument pool, much like damage is subtracted from a target's hit points. When an opponent is reduced to zero or less argument points, they have been bested with no chance of rebuttal. In most cases, this means that the opponent is forced to temporarily concede, or that the audience favors one debater's argument over others.

The system requires some new status effects to be defined. These are essentially the debate equivalent of some of the combat status effects. Similar to combat status effects, these debate status effects either end with a save, or expire at the end of the attacker's next turn.

Social Interaction Statuses

Stymied – The target cannot make debate actions during its turn. (Similar to Stunned.)

Provoked – If the target makes a debate action that targets someone other than the provoking character, that debate action suffers a -2 to its attack roll. (Similar to Marking.)

Sputtering – Reduce the derision of the target's debate powers by half. (Similar to Weakened.)

War of Words Outline

1. Determine Goal
2. Choose Principal Debaters
3. Figure Argument Pool; Cha + Int/Wis
4. Roll Initiative
5. Attack/Defend using Debate Powers
6. Repeat step 5 until Argument Pool is 0

Running Debates

Debates are very similar to combat in execution. Use them when you hit a point in your story that just cries out for more than a One Roll Wonder, watch for them, their howls will be unmistakable. Perhaps you may think these rules

are a little anti-4ed-ism: not everyone can contribute to the conflict.

There are three ways to approach this: The first way is to keep the debate short. (This can allow characters that have trained the appropriate skills to shine for a few moments.) The second way is to rule that the target number of a debate attack is not from the target's skills, but instead from the highest skill total in the party. A third way is to make sure that the opposition has a few unskilled characters as well.

A *War of Words* is not mind control. If you debate and are victorious, it does not necessarily mean your opponents suddenly agree or share your beliefs. Winning means you have convinced the audience to see things your way and that you have forced your opponent to concede. This doesn't mean that the merchant you just haggled with will want to do business with you in the future, or that the vizier of the king you just bested won't try to poison you the next time your back is turned. It just means they give into your immediate demands.

Debate Powers

What follows are the standard debate powers open to virtually anyone who engages in a Debate Encounter.

Some of the powers are Feat Powers, and thus require the acquirement of the feat in question to use.

The powers are listed as having a level, but this system does not take into account levels in either argument pool determination nor in acquiring new debate powers.

In many cases, a debate power will have an enhanced or additional effect if the character using the power is trained in a specific skill.

War of Words

Avoid Point

Debate Attack 1

You change the subject.

At-Will * Debate, Skill, Derision

Standard Action Close burst 10

Target: One Creature in Burst

Attack: Diplomacy v. Diplomacy

Hit: 1d4 + Charisma modifier Derision

Effect: Gain a +2 power bonus against debate attacks until the end of your next turn.

Special: If you are trained in Diplomacy you may do 1d6+ Charisma derision.

Discuss Point

Debate Attack 1

You calmly state a point for your case.

At-Will * Debate, Skill, Derision

Standard Action Close burst 10

Target: One Creature in Burst

Attack: Diplomacy v. Diplomacy

Hit: 1d6 + Charisma modifier Derision

Special: If you are trained in Diplomacy you may do 1d6+ highest Charisma, Intelligence, or Wisdom modifier Derision

Bold-faced Lie

Debate Attack 1

You tell a lie that conveniently undermines your opponent.

At-Will * Debate, Skill, Derision

Standard Action Close burst 10

Target: One Creature in Burst

Attack: Bluff v. Insight

Hit: 1d8 + Charisma modifier Derision

Miss: Your opponent catches you lying and you are -2 to all defenses against debate attacks until the end of your next turn.

Special: If you are trained in Bluff and roll a natural 20 on your attack, the target is also Sputtering (save ends.)

Infuriating Insult

Debate Attack 1

You insult your opponent, hoping to shake their mental balance.

At-Will * Debate, Skill, Derision

Standard Action Close burst 10

Target: One Creature in Burst

Attack: Intimidate v. Insight

Hit: 1d4 + Charisma modifier derision and the target is Sputtering (save ends.)

Miss: The target is Provoked until then end of your next turn.

Effect: You risk turning the debate into a shouting match. Until the end of your next turn, if the target uses a debate attack power with the Intimidate keyword against you, they gain a +2 power bonus to their attack roll.

Special: If you are trained in Intimidate you instead deal 1d6 + Charisma modifier derision.

Expert Opinion

Debate Attack 1

You attempt to use your expertise in a related subject to prove your opponent wrong.

Encounter * Debate, Skill, Derision

Standard Action Close burst 10

Target: One creature in burst

Attack: Trained Skill v. Same Trained Skill

Hit: 1d4 derision and the target suffers -2 to all debate attacks (save ends.)

Special: Special: This power may be used multiple times in an encounter, but only once per trained skill.

Finishing Remark

Debate Attack 1

You make a final, flourishing statement, hoping to shut down your opposition.

Encounter * Debate, Skill, Derision

Standard Action Close burst 10

Target: One creature in burst

Attack: Diplomacy v. Diplomacy

Hit: 2d6 + Charisma modifier derision. If you fail to defeat your target you are Stymied until the end of your next turn.

Special: If you are trained in Diplomacy you instead deal 2d8 + Charisma modifier derision.

Misleading Logic

Debate Attack 1

You guide your opponent into a verbal trap.

Encounter * Debate, Skill, Derision

Standard Action Close burst 10

Target: One creature in burst

Attack: Bluff v. Diplomacy

Hit: 2d4 + Charisma modifier derision. Until the end of your next turn, if the target includes you as the target of a debate attack power, you may use an at-will debate attack power against them as an immediate interrupt.

Special: If you are trained in Bluff and you hit with the immediate interrupt debate attack, the target is Sputtering (save ends.)

Overbearing Demeanor

Debate Attack 1

Your presence is so great, your words so threatening, that your opponent hesitates in fear.

Encounter * Debate, Skill, Derision

Standard Action Close burst 10

Target: One creature in burst

Attack: Intimidate v. Willpower

Hit: 2d6 derision and target is Stymied until the end of your next turn

Special: If you are trained in Intimidate, Aftereffect: Target is Sputtering (save ends.)

War of Words

Utility Power

Recovering Concession

Debate Utility 1

You agree to one of your opponent's minor points, hoping it will afford you some bargaining power.

Encounter * Debate, Skill

Standard Action

Personal

Effect: Regain 3 + Charisma modifier argument points. Your defenses against debate powers are +2 until the end of your next turn

Special: If you are trained in Insight you instead regain 6 + Charisma modifier argument points and your defense power bonus is equal to 2 + the highest of your Charisma, Intelligence, or Wisdom modifiers until the end of your next turn.

Debate Feats

Expert Debater

Requirement: Trained in Diplomacy.

Benefit: You deal +1 derision with all debate powers that have the Diplomacy keyword.

Sharp and Heavy Words

Requirement: Trained in Intimidate.

Benefit: Opponents suffer a -2 to saves against status effects inflicted by your Intimidate debate powers.

Honeyed Words

Requirement: Trained in Bluff.

Benefit: Gain Honeyed Words as a per-encounter debate power.

Honeyed Words

Feat Power

Your kind words cause your opponent to soften his blow.

Encounter * Debate, Skill

Immediate Interrupt

Personal

Trigger: You are hit by a debate attack power.

Effect: Re-roll the triggering attack.

Slick Tongue

Benefit: Gain Slick Tongue as a per-encounter debate power.

Slick Tongue

Debate Feat Power

You always seem to fit a word in edgewise.

Encounter * Debate, Skill

Minor Action

Close burst 10

Target: One Creature in Burst

Attack: Diplomacy v. Diplomacy

Hit: 1d4 derision

Special: If you are trained in Diplomacy, you gain a +2 power bonus to your next debate attack power. You lose this bonus if it is not used by the end of your next turn.

Visit Nick at his Blog: <http://mediocreales.com>