

ABILITY CHECK CRITICALS

Let's add a little drama into ability checks!

With these variant rules your table will soon have a dynamic flair alongside important tasks and trials, bringing a new impact to the use of mundane skills. Don't just have adventurers overcome obstacles—have them do so with style!



Writing
Color Art
Editing

Jeff Gomez
Herman Lau
Mike Myler

Whenever a character rolls a natural 20 or a natural 1 when attempting an ability check, the attempt has an additional effect—roll 1d6 and refer to the tables below for the exact critical result.

Note that a natural 1 or 20 does not mean automatic success or failure (as it would for an attack roll). DCs are totaled and compared like any other ability check. Once the success or failure of the check is determined, the additional effect takes place.

Because of the benefits of natural 20s, some players may try a variety of easy ability checks to get a critical effect. The GM is always the arbiter of these critical effects and can rule that if an ability check is superfluous or insignificant, any resulting natural 20s and natural 1s have no special effect.

PHYSICAL FEATS

Includes skills such as Acrobatics, Athletics, Sleight of Hand, and Stealth.

NATURAL 20

- 1. Cool Confidence.** You may take 10 on these skill checks for the next 24 hours, even if it is not normally allowed.
- 2. Impressive Success.** You impress others with your physical feat. For the next hour, you gain a +2 bonus on Charisma (Intimidation) and Charisma (Persuasion) checks against targets who saw your success.
- 3. Lead the Way.** Your allies who attempt a similar check in the next 5 minutes gain a +2 bonus.
- 4. Like Wearing Nothing at All.** For the next hour, you ignore any disadvantage to Dexterity (Stealth) checks gained from wearing armor.
- 5. Satisfying Exhaustion.** You'll sleep well tonight. For the next 24 hours, double the hit points you regain from spending hit dice during a short rest.
- 6. Speedy.** You may move half your speed as a reaction.

NATURAL 1

- 1. Fumble.** You break something held in your hands (GM's choice).
- 2. Jam.** You jam your fingers or toes, and for the next 10 minutes your melee attack bonus or AC are reduced by -1 (GM's choice).
- 3. Loosened Latch.** Something you are wearing inexplicably breaks (GM's choice).
- 4. Off Balance.** You fall prone.
- 5. Pull a Ligament.** Your speed is reduced by -5 feet for the next hour.
- 6. Pushed Too Hard.** You gain two levels of exhaustion. After 1 round, one of these levels of exhaustion is removed, and the other is gone after 1 hour.

SOCIAL SKILLS

Includes skills such as Animal Handling, Deception, Insight, Intimidation, Performance, and Persuasion.

Special: When using a disguise kit, the effect of the natural 20 or natural 1 is "stored" until a particularly opportune or inopportune time.

NATURAL 20

- 1. Clever Banter.** Improve the target's attitude toward you—someone that was put off might become apathetic, and an apathetic person might become friendly.
- 2. Friendly Crowd.** The target calls over some friends that are friendly to you and interested in what you are doing.
- 3. Gift.** The target wants to give you some small gift outside the scope of this conversation.
- 4. Good Reputation.** After this conversation, the attitudes of the target's closest allies towards you by one step (as Clever Banter).
- 5. Loose Lips.** The target accidentally reveals a useful piece of information.
- 6. Love Interest.** The target becomes romantically interested with you.



Open Game Content | The game rule information in this article is designated Open Game Content. All other material in this article, including maps and illustrations (including illustrations in the public domain), in-character and out-of-character narrative and descriptive text, character and place names, trade dress, "EN Publishing," "EN World," "ENsider," EN Publishing product and article titles, and EN World and EN Publishing logos, are designated Product Identity.

NATURAL 1

1. **Accidental Reveal.** You accidentally reveal a piece of information best kept hidden.
2. **Escalating Tension.** The target calls over some friends that are not fans of you and your cause.
3. **False Negative.** You believe something truthful that the target says to be a lie.
4. **Gossip.** After this conversation, worsen the attitude of the target's close allies towards you by one step. Someone who was apathetic might be put off, and someone put off might become borderline aggressive.
5. **Suspicious.** The target believes something truthful to be a lie.
6. **Unfriendly Banter.** Worsen the target's attitude toward you by one step (as Gossip).

FACTS & DISCOVERIES

Includes skills such as Arcana, History, Investigation, Nature, Perception, Religion, and Survival.

NATURAL 20

1. **Doctorate.** This subject is one of your areas of study and some of it is coming back to you. For the next 24 hours, you gain a +2 bonus on ability checks using this skill so long as the check is for similar subjects.
2. **Forgotten Language.** Choose the language most closely associated with the target (if none or if you already know the language, roll again). If this is your first time getting a *facts and discoveries* critical on that language, you remember that you studied that language long ago. Write down the language. The next time you roll this result, you permanently learn the language.
3. **Moment of Revelation.** You gain the benefits of a single *augury* spell (although no magic is involved).
4. **Related Expertise.** For the next hour, you may add half your proficiency bonus (rounded down) to any Intelligence or Wisdom ability check that doesn't already include your proficiency bonus.
5. **Relevant Tidbit.** You recall some important bit of information relevant to the target.
6. **View Auras.** For 1 minute, you gain the benefits of *detect magic* against targets related to your check.

Tool Kits. Whether or not a tool kit is appropriate for an Ability Check Critical and for which type it qualifies is entirely at the discretion of the GM.

NATURAL 1

1. **Aggressive Handling.** If you are examining something, you either break it or worsen a creature's attitude towards you by one step (as Gossip). When this does not apply, reroll.
2. **Arcane Fatigue.** You lose one of your highest level spell slots. When this does not apply, reroll.
3. **Boring Topic.** You find this topic incredibly boring. For the next 24 hours, you take a -2 penalty on checks against similar targets.
4. **Earworm.** You are trying to concentrate but all you can remember is an advertising jingle. For the next hour, you take a -2 penalty on all Intelligence and Wisdom checks.
5. **Frightening Revelation.** You become frightened for 1d4+1 rounds. There is no direct source of your fear.
6. **Misinformation.** You are positive of the veracity of some false bit of information.

MEDICINE

NATURAL 20

1. **Buffer.** The target gains a number of temporary hit points equal to your proficiency bonus. These temporary hit points last 1 hour.
2. **Comprehensive Checkup.** The target heals 1 level of exhaustion (reroll if that doesn't apply).
3. **Expertise.** You may take 10 on Wisdom (Medicine) checks for the next 24 hours, even if it is not normally allowed.
4. **Repeat the Procedure.** You may treat your next Wisdom (Medicine) check as a natural 20 so long as it is made before you complete a long rest. This does not result in a critical effect.
5. **Spur Natural Healing.** The target's natural healing improves dramatically. For the next 24 hours, double the hit points the target regains from spending hit dice during a short rest.
6. **Superb Healing.** The target regains additional hit points equal to your proficiency bonus.

NATURAL 1

- 1. Amputate Toe.** You accidentally amputate the patient's little toe (or similar non-vital extremity). Now, how did you do that?
- 2. Disgusting Procedure.** You and the target are poisoned for 1 minute.
- 3. Harm.** The target takes 1d4 bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage.
- 4. Infect Wound.** The target must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or become infected with sewer plague.
- 5. Open Wound.** The target takes 1 damage at the end of each of its turns for 1 minute. Each turn the target can use its bonus action to make a Constitution saving throw (DC 20 – 1 per previous save) to stop the bleeding. Any amount of magical healing also stops the bleeding.
- 6. Organ Damage.** The target gains 3 levels of exhaustion.

ARCANE

Although it uses Arcana, unlike *facts and discoveries* ability check criticals, an *arcane* critical only occurs when an active magical effect is involved. This might be the response to a *counterspell* or *dispel magic*, the curious activation of a specific magic item, or interaction with a ritual or permanent enchantment.

NATURAL 20

- 1. Arcane Surge.** You gain 1 temporary hit point per point of proficiency bonus. These temporary hit points last 1 hour.
- 2. Comfort in the Arcane.** You may take 10 on Intelligence (Arcana) checks for the next 24 hours, even if it is not normally allowed.
- 3. Expanded Use.** If the magic item or effect targets a set number of targets, you may add one additional target within range. When this does not apply, reroll.
- 4. Free Use.** If activating a scroll or item with charges (such as a wand), you do not use the scroll or any charges. When this does not apply, reroll.
- 5. Lucky Magic.** Regardless of whether or not you are successful, roll twice on the wild magic table and choose the more favorable result (your choice).
- 6. Metamagic Use.** Choose one Metamagic from those found in sorcerer class and apply it to the spell cast. When this does not apply, reroll.

NATURAL 1

- 1. Arcane Feedback.** You take 1 point of damage per spell level. When this does not apply, reroll.
- 2. Break Device.** The item activated is broken (or, in the case of a scroll, destroyed entirely). When this does not apply, reroll.
- 3. Delayed Activation.** At some point within the next 1d12 hours, the magic device randomly activates. The target is chosen by the GM. When this does not apply, reroll.
- 4. Misaligned Aiming.** The device activates, but the target of the items' effect or spell changes to a target of the GM's choosing. When this does not apply, reroll.
- 5. Unlucky Magic.** Regardless of whether or not you are successful, roll twice on the wild magic table and choose the least favorable result (GM's choice).
- 6. Wasteful Usage.** If activating an item with charges (such as a wand), you use 5 charges (even if the device does not activate). When this does not apply, reroll.