

5e

CRITICAL MEDIOCRITY DECK

WEN!



52-IN-52

Owen K.C. Stephens

5e Compatible

CRITICAL MEDIOCRITY DECK

Welcome to the Critical Mediocrity deck, the ultimate tool for severe averageness.

WHAT THE HECK IS CRITICAL MEDIOCRITY?!

This deck is specifically designed to introduce some randomness and rare, interesting events to a campaign, without being as extreme or punishing as critical hit and critical fumble options. So the impact of the critical mediocrity deck is felt more often but represents the kind of minor give-and-take common in combat rather than examples of the very best and very worst things that can happen. This has the advantage of shaking things up with unusual and unexpected events without everyone cringing and preparing for the entire combat to take a sudden turn when a card is drawn. The idea is to shake things up a little and add some flavor and interesting opportunities, rather than inject wild swings of radical results.

WHEN DO YOU DRAW A CARD AND APPLY THE RESULTS?

The base rule is that anytime an attack roll is a natural 10 or 11 (the d20 rolled for the attack shows a 10 or 11), you draw a critical mediocrity card and apply the results.

Each card has a Hit result, and a Miss result, indicated by the

- ✱ icon for a hit, and the
- ⊘ icon for a miss.

If the triggering attack hit its target, you apply the Hit effect, if it missed you apply the Miss effect.

A GM can change when critical mediocrity cards are drawn as desired. The entire deck might only be used for specific encounters with unusual circumstances. For example, the deck might be used to inject additional randomness into a combat if fighting on the heaving deck of a ship being hit by enemy fire, or during a torrential downpour, or on the edge of a volcano spewing ash and cinders into the faces of the combatants. Used in this way the deck becomes a way to signal to players that the

fight is less predictable than typical conflicts in neat 10-foot wide corridors and level floors.

A GM could also connect the Critical Mediocrity Deck to specific numbers or circumstances tied to a campaign or location. For example, if lucky numbers are an important part of a campaign, the deck might be triggered by natural d20 attack rolls of 7 and 13, rather than 10 and 11. If a trickster god has a holy day, the deck might only be used for fights occurring on that day (or, alternatively, within the trickster god's shrine). If a specific battlefield is famously haunted, or infused with misfortune and legend, any conflict there might use the deck. A truly powerful supernatural force might even apply critical mediocrity cards more often—the steps to the Temple of Minor Annoyances might have the power to force a critical mediocrity card be drawn with every attack (perhaps combined with one of more of the effects from the book *101 Minor Daily Annoyances*).

WHAT IF THE RESULTS CAN'T BE APPLIED?

Critical mediocrity cards are never designed to change the core rules of the game any more than they specifically note. If an opportunity offered by a critical mediocrity card can't be fulfilled by the attacking or defending character (as noted on the card), it just doesn't happen. Sometimes the circumstances of the attack make the results pointless, such as granting a free unarmed attack against your target when you were making a ranged attack. The fact a card says you get a free unarmed attack doesn't change the other rules of unarmed attacks—if the legal targets allowed by the card aren't in range for you to make an unarmed attack, the opportunity is just lost.

That's fine. These are examples of mediocrity, after all.

IS THIS DECK DESIGNED TO BE USED INSTEAD OF CRITICAL HITS AND CRITICAL FUMBLES?

The *Critical Mediocrity Deck* is clearly inspired by the long tradition of critical hit and critical fumble card effects, and it can certainly be used in

conjunction with them. It's absolutely not necessary to use such decks with critical mediocrity cards, however. Many groups of gamers find the impact of most critical hit and fumble cards too heavy-handed to be enjoyable for long-term use, and for those groups adding critical mediocrity effects on top of critical this and fumbles may be too much.

You can also treat the critical mediocrity deck as a "light" critical hit and fumble deck, by having its effects only apply to natural 20s and 1s on the attack die. This means the [Hit] effect will always apply on a 20, and the [Miss] effect on a 1, which adds a little extra spice to such events but doesn't have the huge impact of traditional critical card decks.

WHAT IF I DON'T WANT TO CUT OUT THE CARDS?

Each card has a number from 1-100 on it, and they are presented in order. Just roll 1d100 and flip to the page with the relevant card, rather than printing, cutting the cards out, and shuffling them.

CARD RULES

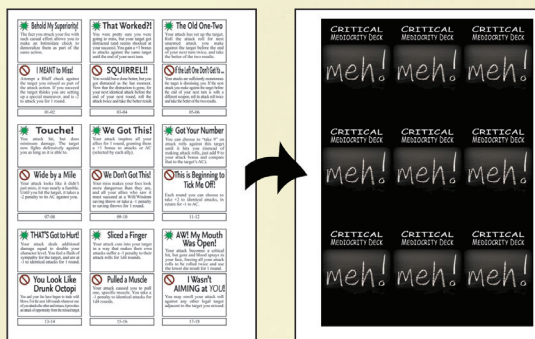
Since space is limited on cards, there are some universal rules that apply to all the cards, as follows:

- If an effect calls for an ability/skill check, the DC is 15 unless the card says otherwise.
- If an effect calls for a saving throw, the DC is 12 unless the card says otherwise.
- An identical attack is making the same attack (with all the same weapons, options, and modifiers) against the same target. If circumstances change so the modifiers are different or you don't have the resources to re-use a specific ability or option that was part of the attack, you cannot make an identical attack.

PRINTING THESE CARDS AT HOME

This deck of cards is perfectly usable as simple printed-out pages. You do not need to print them and cut them out. Eventually, there will be a print-on-demand version of this product if you'd prefer a more professional-looking deck. Until then, if you would like to print these and cut them out for yourself, we have put backs on every other page. If you print double-sided, this should come out matching the fronts. If you print one page at a time, just print the even pages, turn them over horizontally, put them back into the printer, then print the odd pages. Try this with one page only until you've worked it out.

We also recommend you use the heaviest cardstock your printer can handle in order to make the cards sturdy enough to play with.





Behold My Superiority!

The fact you struck your foe with such casual effort allows you to make an Intimidate check to demoralize them as part of the same action.

01-02



That Worked?!

You were pretty sure you were going to miss, but your target got distracted (and seems shocked at your success). You gain a +1 bonus to attacks against the same target until the end of your next turn.

03-04



The Old One-Two

Your attack has set up the target. Roll the attack roll for next unarmed attack you make against the target before the end of your next turn twice, and take the better of the two results.

05-06



I MEANT to Miss!

Attempt a Bluff check against the target you missed as part of the attack action. If you succeed the target thinks you are setting up a special maneuver, and is -2 to attack you for 1 round.

07-08



SQUIRREL!!

You would have done better, but you got distracted as the last moment. Now that the distraction is gone, for your next identical attack before the end of your next round, roll the attack twice and take the better result.

09-10



If the Left One Don't Get Ya ...

Your attacks are sufficiently monotonous the target is dismissing you. If the next attack you make against the target before the end of your next turn is with a different weapon, roll its attack roll twice and take the better of the two results.

11-12



Touche!

You attack hit, but does minimum damage. The target now fights defensively against you as long as it is able to.

13-14



We Got This!

Your attack inspires all your allies for 1 round, granting them a +1 bonus to attacks or AC (selected by each ally).

15-16



Got Your Number

You can choose to "take 9" on attack rolls against this target until it hits you (instead of making attack rolls, just add 9 to your attack bonus and compare that to the target's AC).

17-18



Wide by a Mile

Your attack looks like it didn't just miss, it was nearly a fumble. Until you hit the target, it takes a -2 penalty to its AC against you.

13-14



We Don't Got This!

Your miss makes your foes look more dangerous than they are, and all your allies who saw it must succeed at a Will/Wisdom saving throw or take a -1 penalty to saving throws for 1 round.

15-16



This is Beginning to Tick Me Off!

Each round you can choose to take +2 to identical attacks, in return for -1 to AC.

17-18



THAT'S Got to Hurt!

Your attack deals additional damage equal to double your character level. You feel a flash of sympathy for the target, and are at -1 to identical attacks for 1 round.

13-14



Sliced a Finger

Your attack cuts into your target in a way that makes their own attacks suffer a -1 penalty to their attack rolls for 1d4 rounds.

15-16



AW! My Mouth Was Open!

Your attack becomes a critical hit, but gore and blood sprays in your face, forcing all your attack rolls to be rolled twice and use the lower die result for 1 round.

17-18



You Look Like Drunk Octopi

You and your foe have begun to trade wild blows. For the next 1d4 rounds whenever one of you attacks the other and misses, it provokes an attack of opportunity from the missed target.

13-14



Pulled a Muscle

Your attack caused you to pull one, specific muscle. You take a -1 penalty to identical attacks for 1d4 rounds.

15-16



I Wasn't AIMING at YOU!

You may reroll your attack roll against any other legal target adjacent to the target you missed.

17-18

CRITICAL
MEDIOCRITY DECK

Meh!

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To Remember Me By

You can carve a single initial into your target's flesh.



The Pointy End Goes in Your Foe

Your attack revealed a weakness in your foe's defenses. You can keep it to yourself, gaining a +1 bonus to all attacks against that foe for this encounter, or share it with allies, in which case they all gain the bonus but the bonus only lasts 1 round.



Beltcutter

In addition to your normal damage, your attack adjusted your foe's gear or posture in an uncomfortable way. The foe takes a -1 penalty to attack rolls until it takes an action to adjust itself.



Dance a Little Dance

You can move to any space within your speed without taking any additional action or suffering reactions from the movement.



Watch My Hands Carefully

Your attack missed, but gave you a spare second with some breathing room. You can swap what gear you are holding in all your hands without taking any additional action to do so.



Look What I Can Do!

Your flailing was ineffective, but distracting. The next creature to attack you for before the beginning of your next turn treats it as flanked.

19-20

21-22

23-24



One Pebble Can Begin an Avalanche

When you hit your foe, you also caused them to step back and step on a pebble, or other bad footing. Any action that would knock them prone gains a +2 bonus to its rolls, and they take a -2 penalty to resist any such action. This lasts until the end of your next turn.



Follow Through

Your attack went so smoothly, you can make an identical attack immediately without taking an additional action, though your attack roll suffers a -5 penalty.



Add Insult to Injury

You don't just hurt them, you make them look bad. Make a Diplomacy check. If it succeeds, none of your foe's allies treat them as an ally for game rule purposes for 1d4 rounds.



SHINY!

Your attack missed, but you did manage to reflect some light in the foe's eyes. They take a -1 penalty to attack rolls for 1 round.



Accidental Rune of Total Invulnerability

Your attack missed, but in the process you placed yourself in a strong defensive position (or, you know, accidentally created part of a rune of total invulnerability with your arm movement). You gain a +1 to AC and all saves for 1d4 rounds.



It Was a Feint ... Yeeaaaah

You missed, but you also faked out your opponent. You are considered to have successfully feinted with this action, and can apply the result to your next attack against the same target before the end of your next turn.

25-26

27-28

29-30



Reflecting Shot

If the attack was a ranged attack, you can repeat it (without expending any additional actions or resources) immediately against a target within 30 feet of your original target.



BACK OFF!

You may drive the target 5 feet directly away from you, as long as that does not put it in a trap or hazard of some kind. It remains standing, and does not suffer any negative consequences from the forced movement.



Pommel to the Noodle

You gain an opportunity to damage your target in an unusual way. If your attack does bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage, you may change the damage type of this attack to any of those three options. If it does energy damage, you may change the damage of this attack to fire or electricity.



Ignore ME Will You?!

The target decides you are not a serious threat, and is flat-footed against your attacks until you successfully damage them.



Stumble Usefully

You may move 5 feet as long as you are not moving into difficult terrain or out of a trap or hazard, without suffering any negative consequences from the movement.



Pulled a Groin Muscle

You take a -1 penalty to all Strength ability and skill checks for 1 day.

31-32

33-34

35-36

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meh!

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A Little Flourish

Your attack was not just successful, it set you up nicely for a bit of style. You gain a +2 bonus to the next Strength- or Dexterity-based ability or skill check made before the end of your next turn.

37-38



Keep Your Guard Up

Your attack also put you in a strong defensive situation. You gain a +1 bonus to AC for 1d4 rounds.

39-40



Beat Away

Your attack knocks your foe's weapons out of alignment for a counter attack. They take a -1 penalty to all attack rolls for 1 round.

41-42



Ballet of Awareness

Sure, your attack missed, but in the process you got a good look around you. You cannot be flanked for 1d4 rounds.



Who's Cutting Onions?

You missed because something got in your eye. You take a -2 penalty to Perception checks for 1d4 rounds.

39-40



Need New Strategy

The fact that attack missed weakens your confidence in those tactics. You take a -2 penalty to identical attacks for 1d4 rounds.

41-42



That's GOT to Hurt!

Your attack slammed into a particularly sensitive, painful location of your foe. The target takes a -1 penalty to all attack rolls and checks for 1d4 rounds. Creatures immune to critical hits are immune to this effect.

43-44



ALMOST Gouged Your Eyes Out

Your attack came very close to hitting your target right in the eyes. As a result they fight very cautiously, taking a -4 penalty to attack rolls to gain a +2 bonus to AC, for 1d4 rounds.

45-46



Easy Peasy

You are filled with confidence you can defeat this foe. Maybe overconfidence. You attacks against this target take a -1 penalty until you miss at them least once, but any attack that hits with this penalty does additional damage equal to half your level (minimum +1).

47-48



Fumble Fingers

You didn't drop your weapon... you just almost dropped your weapon. You take a -1 penalty to all attacks and checks for 1 round as you recover and make sure your grip is firm.

43-44



Bless You

You sneezed. Loudly. You may sneeze again. Look, it happens. You have a 20% chance of failing to successfully say any specific thing for 1 round (and anything dependent on your speaking has a 20% chance of failure).

45-46



Never Give Up Never Surrender

Your failure inspires you to try harder. You gain a +2 bonus to an identical attack made before the end of your next turn, and to saving throws against any effect that would paralyze, kill, or knock you unconscious before the end of your next turn.

47-48



Set Them Up Take Them Down

If you wish, you can choose for your next successful attack against this target to knock them prone. If you do so, you are also knocked prone.

49-50



Elbow to the Face

Your attack set you up to immediately make an unarmed attack against the target (if they are within reach), or another foe (if one is in reach), without taking another action to do so or suffering any reaction as a result.

51-52



That Smarts

You hit, but the attack had a little more power than you expected. You do 1d6 additional damage, and take half that damage yourself (round down).

53-54



Tripped Over An Invisible Brick

You have no idea what you tripped over, but now you are off-balance. For one round, any effort to knock you prone gains a +1 bonus to its attack or save DC.

49-50



Missed it by THAT Much

Your attack came so close to hitting, your foe had to throw themselves slightly off-balance to dodge it. The foe takes a -1 penalty to all attack rolls for 1 round.

51-52



Thrown Off Balance

You really through your attack would hit, and now that it missed you are off balance. You take a -1 penalty to identical attacks until you take an action to re-center yourself.

53-54

CRITICAL
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Sparks Fly!

Your attack creates bright sparks (or a spray of blood, shower of splinters, cloud of dust—whatever makes sense in this imaginary combat) that cause the target to take a -1 penalty to attack rolls until it takes an action to wipe its eyes.

55-56



No Problem at All. Barely an Inconvenience.

You have mastered the knack of hitting this foe. For this encounter, you can treat your attack roll for identical attacks as if you had rolled a 10 on the d20.

57-58



Strike-Parry-Reposte

When the target of this attack next attacks you, you may make an attack roll. If your attack roll is greater than theirs, their attack misses, and you gain a +1 bonus on your next attack roll against them.

59-60



Sparks in my Eye!

While your attack failed to penetrate your target's defenses, you did hit hard enough to create bright sparks (or a spray of blood, or... look, just check the effect above) that cause you to take a -1 penalty to attack rolls until you take an action to wipe your eyes.

55-56



I Don't Like This at All!

Because this attack missed, you think the target is especially difficult to hit. Until you successfully hit the target, you cannot choose to make an attack against the same target if the attack would suffer any kind of penalty or disadvantage.

57-58



Suck-Stumble-Retreat

The target has a +1 bonus on attack rolls against you until you manage to increase your distance from that target (even temporarily).

59-60



Kick it Up!

Your attack leaves you in a position to easily kick an object up into your grasp. If there is an unattended object in your space or adjacent to you, you can retrieve it without taking any extra action or triggering any reaction from adjacent foes.

55-56



Ram it Home

If this attack was a melee attack, you may choose to make it a critical hit, but if you do your weapon gets stuck in your foe and torn free from your hands. It takes a successful attack roll and DC 15 Strength check to pull it free, which does the same damage as a normal attack.

57-58



Shin Smash

The target's fastest movement rate is reduced by 5 feet until the damage of this attack is healed.

59-60



Mess it Up!

Not only did your attack miss, you knocked the target out of position for any of your allies to easily attack it, granting the foe a +1 bonus to AC for 1 round.

55-56



Head Butt

If the attack was a melee attack, you may choose to immediately reroll it as a head butt. If you succeed you do damage as if it was an identical attack, but take half that damage yourself.

57-58



Weapon Lock

If this was a melee attack, you missed because your weapon locked with your foe's weapon. Until you win an opposed Strength check (which takes an action), or your foe attacks with that weapon or moves away from you, you cannot use the weapon used for this attack.

59-60



Fire Through

If this attack was a ranged attack, you may immediately make an identical attack but against a target farther from you than your original foe and in a line with that foe (if such a target exists).

55-56



In The Gut

Your attack knocks the target's wind out of it. It has a 20% chance of failing to successfully say any specific thing for 1 round (and anything dependent on it speaking has a 20% chance of failing).

57-58



Framed by the Sunlight

If the attack was a melee attack, for 1 round you do not provide the foe cover from your allies' attacks.

59-60



Don't Knock It

If the attack was one that used ammunition, you dropped one additional piece of ammunition on the ground.

55-56



Flailing Wildly

You have to recover from that wild swing, and cannot take any reactions this turn.

57-58



Do NOT Step in Front of Me

You lose track of where your allies are in combat. For one round your allies treat every space adjacent to you as if you were in them as well when determining if your foe has cover.

59-60

61-62

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69-70

71-72

CRITICAL
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Cleave

If your attack dropped the target, you may immediately make an additional attack against a foe adjacent to the one you just dropped without taking any additional action.

73-74



That'll Leave a Mark

The target's resistance to any one form of damage is reduced by 1 point until all the damage from this attack is healed.

75-76



Frighteningly Good

Your attack is so obviously easy, the target takes a -1 penalty to all saves against fear for 1 round.

77-78



Not Your Lucky Day

You leave yourself open in ways you can't even perceive, and take a -1 penalty to all saving throws for 1 round.



This is Harder Than it Looks

Your efforts are tiring. You take a -1 penalty to saving throws against effects that cause you to gain a level of exhaustion.



Frighteningly Bad

Your attack so clearly missed by a mile that you take a -1 penalty to all saves against fear for 1 round.



Ring Their Bell

Your attack smacked your foe upside the head, and they take a -1 penalty to any check that depends on their hearing until the damage from this attack is healed.



System Shock

Your attack so shocks your foe that for 1 round it suffers a -1 penalty to saving throws against effects that paralyze it.



Fights Sometimes Take Too Long

If the attack left the target at half its Hit Points or less, it takes a -1 penalty to AC until it is back above half its HP.



Blood Boils

Your frustration at missing causes the blood to rush past your ears, and you take a -1 penalty to any check that depends on your hearing for 1 round.



Don't Make Me Angry

Your wrath grows due to this miss, and your next successful attack against the target does additional damage equal 1+ to the number of times you miss it before you next hit.



Deadly Papercut

The attack left a tiny line of damage rather than missing altogether. It doesn't do any damage, but any effect that would have occurred if you did do damage (such as poison) is triggered.

79-80

81-82

83-84



Bloody Nose

Target bleeds 1 HP each round until it receives any healing.



Resistance is Futile

This attack ignores any ability the target has to reduce the amount of damage you do.



Its Achilles' Heel is ... Its Achilles' Heel

You nicked your foes' tendon. All their movement rates are reduced by 10 feet (to a minimum speed of 5 feet) until all damage from this attack is healed.



Location, Location, Location

You are in the wrong place, at the wrong time. The target treats you as flanked for the next attack it makes against you before your next turn.



Stepped in a Gopher Hole

You have to use double movement to get out of the space you are currently in.



Too Close For Comfort

If the attack is a melee attack, you and the target end up sharing the target's space. Neither of you suffer any of the normal penalties for sharing a space of being squeezed, or for moving into that space. If either of you successfully attacks the other you can move out of the space to any adjacent space without taking any additional action or triggering any reactions.

85-86

87-88

89-90

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Meh!

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 **Red Swingline Stapler**

If the attack is a ranged attack, or a piercing melee attack with something you are willing to let go of, the target is stabled in place and cannot leave this space without succeeding at a DC 10 Strength check, which does 1d6 points of damage to it.

 **Smashed Toe**

You missed because, in the chaos of combat, something smashed your toe. Your fastest movement rate is reduced by 5 feet until you receive at least 1 HP of healing from some source.

91-92

 **The Best Defense is a Good Offence**

You gain a +1 bonus to AC against attacks from the target. This lasts until you have a turn where you do not successfully hit the target with an attack.

 **Oops!**

Your bad swing comes close to striking the nearest ally to your target, if one is within range of your attack. You have no chance of actually hitting them, but your ally takes a -1 penalty to all checks and attacks for 1 round.

93-94

 **Top Ten Best Hits**

You have zeroed in on this foe's defenses. You gain a +1 bonus to identical attacks until you miss your foe.

 **What's a Bad Joint Doing in a Nice Hero Like You?**

You hurt your wrist with the bad attack. Attacks using that arm take a -1 penalty until you receive healing from any source.

95-96

 **Float Like a Butterfly**

You can move 5 feet without taking any additional action or triggering any reactions.

 **You Have Studied Your Agrippa**

Your attack does 1 extra point of damage per die, and you gain a +2 bonus to any Dexterity-based ability or skill check before the end of your next round.



 **Pulled My ... Everything**

You really thought that one was going to connect, and when it didn't you overcompensated and pulled a few muscles. All your movement rates are reduced by 10 feet (to a minimum speed of 5 feet) until you receive at least 1 HP of healing from some source.

 **POP!**

Your weapon takes 1 point of damage. If it is a stringed weapon or one with a crucial thin leather or cloth section (such as a sling), it also becomes broken until repaired with an appropriate Craft check.



97-98

99-100



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Product Code: RGG5220Apr17

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