

The Courts of WaterDeep Legal Primer

For D&D 5th Edition

- *Courts of WaterDeep*
- *Legal Procedures*
- *Definitions*
- *Famous Court cases*



Legal Philosophies of WaterDeep

Every Man Free, Every Man a King. An ideal that sees both Guild Courts and High Lord courts as useless and evil leftovers from a bad era. People who subscribe to this belief tend towards heavy sympathy towards acts of random violence and property of the rich.

The Law Provides Nought. An outlook that views mediation as a first response and court as the last resort. Followers of this school prefer guild courts, plea bargains, and other court avoiding procedures. If they sit on a jury they are almost certain to rule guilty and recommend harsh penalties since if it got to trial you are already guilty.

The Mob is what we are. An outlook that whenever possible all parts of the justice and enforcement system would be deemed right by the majority of WaterDeep residents. Followers of this school

There is not us without us. A widespread view in WaterDeep that everyone must be tried by people of their race, class, and station and in cases where both parties are the same that case should be dismissed to keep it within the “family”.

As in Heaven so on City. A philosophy that all aspects of the legal system from appeal to capture should adhere to the best in WaterDeep. Followers of this school ask for reform over retribution, are inclined to strict legal views over property regardless of the end result.

Animal Court

Animals are property. As such they do not get a trial. If found to be a danger to the public WaterDeep animal control may euthanize the animal with or without compensation to the owner at their discretion. This decision can not be appealed.

Commoner Criminal Court Procedure

Step 1: A declaration is made by City Watch that a crime has occurred.

Step 2: A judge, jury, defending lawyer, and prosecuting lawyer is assigned. The accused is typically denied bail and in jail at this time.

Step 3: The defending lawyer may make a motion to dismiss at this time on multiple grounds including but not limited to Unde Este Corpul. If no motion is granted or sought the defense may only make another motion for dismissal if new evidence comes to light. The prosecuting lawyer may make a motion to dismiss at any time.

Step 4: The presiding judge confirms with the defense that motions of dismissal are no longer admissible unless new evidence appears and the defense verbally acknowledges this fact.

Step 5: Defense makes opening remarks.

Step 6: Prosecution makes opening remarks.

Step 7: Defense may call a witness and cross examine. After Defense is finished Prosecution may cross examine. Then Prosecution may call their witness cross examine and defense can cross examine. This process continues until all witnesses have been called and examined.

Step 8: Prosecution closing remarks.

Step 9. Defense closing remarks.

Step 10: judge instructions to jury

Step 11: jury deliberations

Step 12: sentencing if found guilty at least in particular

Step 13: appeal to high lords if desired by defense.

High Lord Punishment Procedure

One High Lord in an emergency may order the death of another High Lord. The ordering High Lord will be put to Death afterward.

Three High Lords can put to death another High Lord on a 3-to-2 vote. All three will lose status.

Five High Lords can put to death another High Lord on a 4-to-1 vote. They will retain status and suffer no penalty.

A High Lord trial on all matters that do not involve the death penalty shall constitute 3 High Lord tribunal. Without appeal. With the exception of Apel Raḡional all proceedings in High Lord court shall proceed similar to regular court.

Guild Court

As Guild Court rules only on guild related matters and civil suits many of the normal procedures do not apply.

Step 1: Court matter is referred by WaterDeep court for consideration

Step 2: Injured Party, or their proxy, provides opening argument and rolls for persuasion.

Step 3: Defendant, or their proxy, provides rebuttal argument and rolls for persuasion.

Step 4: The judge make a wisdom roll.

Step 5. Both parties, not proxies, are given an ordeal related to their guild.

Step 6: A calculation is done to determine the winner based on the following procedure

Persuasion roll + ability check + (optional judge wisdom roll)

Step 7: The highest calculated result has the ruling in their favor.

Example:

Step 2 yielded 17 for party A

Step 3: yielded 16 for party B

Step 4: yielded 3

Step 5: gave party A “9” and party B “12”

The judge found B to make a better argument and gave the points to B.

A: $17 + 9 = 26$

B: $16 + 12 + 3 = 31$

Judgment was given in favor of party B.

Guild Ordeals

- Baker's Guild: Bake a cake so hot that even a beholder has to blow on it. Nature check.
- Carpenters', Roofers', & Plaisterers' Guild. Determined by judge.
- Cellarers' and Plumbers' Guild. Convince a crazed dwarf that digging into the sewer is a bad idea. Survival check.
- Coopers' Guild. Jump over a series of small wooden barrels thrown at you by an angry monkey. Acrobatics check.
- Council of Farmer-Grocers. Food Fight! Athletics check.
- Council of Musicians, Instrument-Makers, & Choristers. Con a bard into buying a jug. Deception check.
- Dungsweepers' Guild. Describe what magical jewel you found at work. Sleight of Hand check
- Fellowship of Bowers and Fletchers. Explain how you first learned not to arc in an arrow into a crowd. Insight check.
- Fellowship of Carters and Coachmen. Make up a story to a tourist. History check.
- Fellowship of Innkeepers. Convince people that your inn is haunted and attract a certain crowd. Arcana check.
- Fellowship of Salters, Packers, and Joiners. Find something joined and render it asunder. Investigation check.
- Fishmongers' Fellowship. Explain the best way to cook jellyfish. Survival check.
- Guild of Apothecaries and Physicians. Convince someone that leeches can cure what ails them. Deception check.
- Guild of Butchers make a reverse turducken. Animal Handling check.
- Guild of Chandlers and Lamplighters. Acrobatics check.
- Guild of Fine Carvers. Make a wooden leg for an elderly angry person. Medicine check.
- Guild of Glassblowers, Glaziers, and Spectacle-makers. Stained glass for a church. Religion check.
- Guild of Stonecutters, Masons, Potters, and Tile-makers. Fix a ceiling. Acrobatic check.

- Guild of Trusted Pewterers and Casters. Make a knife that everyone agrees is quite nice, not very nice but quite nice. Performance check.
- Guild of Watermen. Go into a well for a long time. Survival check
- Jesters' Guild: Make a Kobold laugh. Performance check
- Jewelers' Guild. Predict if earrings or necklaces will be the next session's big thing. Insight check
- Launderers' Guild. Wash clothing in a swamp with alligators. Athletics check.
- League of Basket-makers and Wickerworkers. Underwater weave a basket. Sleight of Hand
- League of Skinners and Tanners. Make a Kobold skinbag. Nature Check
- Loyal Order of Street Laborers. Old School boxing. Athletic check.
- Master Mariners' Guild. Tell a grisly sailor story. History check
- Most Careful Order of Skilled Smiths and Metalforgers. Drinking contest with a Dwarf. Survival check.
- Most Diligent League of Sail-makers and Cordwainers. Determined by Judge.
- Most Excellent Order of Weavers and Dyers. Create royal purple dye and get someone to say it. Intimidation check.
- Order of Cobblers and Corvisers. Sell a pair of shoes to a beholder. Persuasion check.
- Order of Master Shipwrights. Determined by judge.
- Order of Master Tailors, Glovers, and Mercers. Make an elegant Orc outfit. Performance check.
- Saddlers' and Harness-makers' Guild. Make a dino-saddle. Animal handling check.
- Scriveners', Scribes', and Clerks' Guild. Write a poem describing how you hate your job and wanted to dance. Performance check
- Solemn Order of Recognized Furriers and Woolmen. Trim the hair of a giant. Stealth check.
- Splendid Order of Armorers, Locksmiths, and Finesmiths. Make a lock that only a holy person can open. Religion check.
- Stablemasters' and Farriers' Guild. Determined by judge.
- Stationers' Guild. Determine how you knew a bank note was a forgery. Perception check
- Surveyors', Map-, and Chart-makers' Guild. Construct a map based on the insane ramblings made by a person escaping the Yawning Portal. Arcana check.
- Vintners', Distillers', & Brewers' Guild. Convince flies that they should like vinegar more than honey. Persuasion check.
- Wagon-makers' and Coach Builders' Guild. Tell a long winded story about a race that had to get canceled due to weather. History check.
- Watchful Order of Magists and Protectors. Explain how you got that scar. History check.
- Wheelwrights' Guild. Overcharge a customer for routine maintenance on a cart. Intimidation Check

Other Courts

The legal realities of WaterDeep being what they are an official court of criminals does exist sporadically. Criminal Court differs from official courts as the emphasis is on compromise between criminal factions. Typical procedure is as follows

Step 1. A sufficiently powerful criminal invokes the right of *Stabilit Pe Strāzi* during combat and will need to roll a +18 on history as an action. All combat will stop at this point. A long rest will occur and neutral ground in city sewers will be chosen.

Step 2. A High Lord with underworld connections will generally preside in judgment. As only a High Lord has the ability to enforce rulings.

Step 3. As few criminals in WaterDeep are completely unfamiliar with the court system. A lawyer, lapsed or active, will be provided to both parties.

Step 4: Each party presents their arguments with the party who asked for the Criminal Court speaking first.

Step 5: The Judge rules and both parties are given safe passage to their respective territories.

Definitions

Action Surging: During trial the defense or prosecution, if capable of doing so, may action surge to re-cross examine a witness.

All men all equal (*Toate Egale*): The testimony of all is equal notwithstanding expert witness testimony. E.g. A High Lord's word is worth the same as bird.

An appeal to Gender ambiguity. No witness may be called whose gender is in-doubt due to magic or curse.

Bag of Holding Sovereignty: A bag of holding may not be searched by City Watch. If unlawfully searched no evidence obtained may be used in proceedings of any sort.

Charisma Check (*Carisma de Verificare*): the defense may employ a team member of their choice at any point during court proceedings to deliver remarks.

Citing Precedence: an argument that the current matter has already been settled in previous court case

Compromised Mental State (*Stele Călătorie Situație*): When used by the defense an argument that due to magic and/or curse that defendants action's were not what they normally would have done. When used by Prosecution the argument is defendant deliberately entered said state to escape legal consequences thereof.

Court Scope: All crimes and civil matters that come to the attention of WaterDeep court system are to be ruled on in said system unless presiding judge rules that they are moved to another court. E.g. A judge rules that civil dispute falls under Guild Court or Tribunal of High Lords. Changing of the venue can not be appealed once ruled on.

Criminal Court: An official court created by and for the WaterDeep underworld.

Dog with a bad name (*Caine Rau*): Motion of dismissal given by the defense that suspect was targeted by City Watch for previous offenses and as such has had civil liberties defacto removed. Requires a +18 persuasion and an example of pursuit or stalking by CityWatch or their proxies.

Dungeon Crawl Imperative: An argument by the defense that the unique circumstances of being entrapped in a Dungeon Crawl made the crime lawful. Requires +8 on persuasion.

Far Away (*Departe Argument*): crimes committed below the surface and out of the legal bounds of WaterDeep can not be ruled on. Provided said crimes were not committed on a WaterDeep citizen.

Final Word (ultimul cuvânt): the defense shall always be allowed to speak last during any hearing or trial.

A Gang is not a Guild: in no matters may a gang or a member of a gang claim guild law unless said member is an actual member of said Guild.

Guild Appeal: An argument used by defense that said court matter is the providence of relevant Guild and not WaterDeep. Requires +10 on persuasion.

Guild court: A court run by the local legal monopoly of WaterDeep.

Guild overstep: In court procedures the prosecution or the defense may make the argument that a particular Guild has overstepped their monopoly and ask for restitution to the injured party.

High Lord Peers: A High Lord's trial shall consist of a tribunal of High Lord on High Lord matters.

Judge Recommendation: A jury may recommend that sentencing be determined by bench alone without appeal to higher lords. Found in particular gruesome crimes.

Jury philosophy. At any point during proceedings of a commoner court either of the opposing councils may demand to know which of the schools of philosophy the jury subscribes to.

Limitation on stolen property (*Fura Dupa ce a Furat*): No citizen of WaterDeep shall be held accountable for theft or receiving of property that has been previously stolen. Return is all that is required.

Not Citizen Not Valid: An argument that a non-citizen's of WaterDeep can not provide evidence or testimony during or prior to court proceedings. Requires +18 on persuasion due to its dubious nature.

Outside Scope: An argument that matters surfacing during trial are beyond scope of crime accused. Judge discretion.

Property can not own property (*Articolele Proprii*): A non-sentient can not own property. All property they hold is considered lost.

Racial appeal (*Apel Rațional*): an argument used by the defense that the jury can not sit in judgment of the accused due to insufficient members of defense's race or class. The presiding judge can reject or accept the appeal.

Right to Defense (*Avocat Gratuit*): No entity may face judgment without a WaterDeep provided defense.

Right to Fire (*Dreptul la foc*): Damages awarded due to fire shall not exceed intent of starter.

Right to Parity: An argument that defendant needed to brandish weapons as opponent they faced had natural or magical abilities far exceeding their own. Requires +5 persuasion.

Right to Protection: all witnesses called by the city or by the defense have a right to reasonable levels of protection by city watch pre-trial and post.

Right to Silence (*Dreptul la Tăcere*): The accused shall not be forced to testify.

Right to Translation: the accused, the jury, the judge, witnesses, and all other interested parties have a right to hear proceedings in their native tongue. Translators shall be provided.

Rogue Watchman: Any ex or current CityWatch official with broad power's.

Settled on the Streets (*Stabilit Pe Străzi*): During combat a truce is called and criminal court is setup on neutral ground. Rulings by said court have no legal standing with WaterDeep city government.

Thoughts and Prayers. A claim made by the prosecution that defendant repeatedly refuses to correct behavior and as such is a menace to the community.

Where is the body (*unde este corpul*): it is a burden of the city to prove that a crime has actually been committed.

Witness Compensation: A witness may be compensated for giving testimony provided they are deemed an expert on the subject matter by the presiding judge, such payments shall be reasonable and in accordance with local rate.

Witness Intimidation: Anyone caught rolling for intimidation during trial will be escorted out of court room and may face charges.

Advice for the Prosecution

- People like blood, they are already on your side before you offered it.
- When in doubt accuse the accused of Failure to Give a Hidden High Lord their proper respect.

Advice for the Defense

- If the facts are against you, argue the law. If the law is against you, argue the facts. If the law and the facts are against you, pound the table and yell like hell
- No lawyer in WaterDeep history has been held responsible for advising their client to run.
- Do not agree to let your barbarian have a dance-off against a Bard to settle the matter out of court, play to your players strength's

Common Law Rulings Criminal

In Quorion v. City Watch it was ruled that the City Watch lawfully terminated Officer Quorion's employment for failure to aid in putting out patrons on fire at a tavern and instead pursue fleeing suspects. The court however ruled he could appeal for reinstatement at any time.

In Bard Battle v. Some Random Bard it was ruled that during a Bard Battle of the Bands instructions drunkenly written on a napkin carried legal weight.

In Eddy C v. Riveredge it was ruled that head injury was a valid defense for blowing up a bridge despite the accused having been aware of oil barrels placed under bridge prior to explosion.

In Mort v. Helispot it was ruled that failure to save a life at sea could result in lifetime banishment.

In Hafling Thomas v. Bakers Guild it was ruled that Thomas was not criminally libel for the theft of the golden roller only that Thomas return said roller to Bakers Guild and provided compensation for the transaction.

In Manning the Wererat v. City Watch it was ruled that crimes committed by Manning as a Wererat were outside the scope of WaterDeep courts. [1]

In Dungeon Party v. Old Man it was ruled that placing said Old Man into a bag of holding did not constitute attempted murder as air producing mask was fashioned for said Old Man. [2]

In Wererats v. Vandals it was ruled that Wererats could not own property if said property was obtained as a Wererats.

In Party v. WaterDeep it was ruled that creating objects of value off the corpses of dead animals (specifically a reptilian in turducken-style) was no different than leather work. This case was further used in WaterDeep v Lastman Standing tavern pickled beholder.

In High Lord Tolem v. WaterDeep it was ruled that as the crime was committed before Tolem achieved the status of High Lord he would not be awarded a High Lord Tribunal and was tried as a commoner.

In Officer Valdmore v. Blind Artists it was ruled that Officer Valdmore was a Rogue Watchman and had the right to draft 3 Blind Artists he encountered during a Dungeon Crawl to aid in completion of a quest given to a party of WaterDeep Citizens.

Water-boarding: While controversial currently not considered torture. Multiple cases.

Common law Rulings Civil

In Dung Collectors Guild v. Janne the Wealthy it was ruled that the act of throwing out or otherwise disposing relinquished all claims to said object or objects

Blackcoats v. WaterDeep Tax Revenue Board gang membership did not satisfy legal guild monopoly for tax break purposes. Further court rulings have enshrined the principal of a Gang is not a Guild (*banda nu este o breaslă*)

Footnotes:

[1] Manning was followed by WaterDeep animal control and when he reverted to his Wererat form was subsequently euthanized.

[2] Current whereabouts remain unknown

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