



Crimson Dragon Slayer

REVISED



“It’s your life... you don’t know how long it’s going to be, but you know it’s got a bad ending. You have to move forward as soon as you figure out what that is.” - Don Draper

Overview

Years of running one-shots and short campaigns motivated me to come up with something that bridged the gap between old school D&D and 5e.

Crimson Dragon Slayer D20 is a minimalist, plug-and-play RPG. Sure, choices are limited. But on the plus side, there’s no analysis paralysis. For those just learning how to play D&D, or veterans wanting a quick pick-up game, it’s been invaluable.

Character sheets are not required! Want to attempt something? Narrate what you want to do, let the GM handle the rest. Immersion is key. This is about pretending that fantasy is real in our collective imaginations, if only for a few hours.

Most rolls are made using a d20, with higher numbers being better. Instead of using modifiers, I use **Advantage** (roll 2d20 and take the highest result) when circumstances are favorable, and **Disadvantage** (roll 2d20 and take the lowest) when they’re unfavorable. If the favorable and unfavorable even out, neither is applicable.

The Gods are ever watchful. They take an interest in mortal affairs... even those who’ve renounced them. In fact, a few deities only concern themselves with humanoids who reject spiritual pursuits. Every **Player Character** (PC) gets one point of **Divine Favor** at the beginning of every session. Divine Favor can be spent to re-roll any die.

PCs start at 1st level and grow in power until reaching their adventuring peak at 10th level. Levels are gained after every other adventure.

At 3rd, 7th, and 10th level, players get to pick a **Special Ability** or feat that relates to their character’s class, race, noteworthy characteristic, or adventuring experience. This can be something pulled from a book (such as **Cha’alt Ascended**) or made up on your own.

Character Creation

You need to choose a **Name**, **Class**, **Race**, **Alignment**, and **Something Noteworthy** about your PC. Names are subjective and not bound to rules or game mechanics, so let's dive into the four basic **Character Classes**.

Your vitality, willpower, and endurance are conceptualized by Hit-Points (HP). This is how much punishment you can take before falling unconscious or dying.

Fighter

Are you a cut-throat mercenary, bloodthirsty barbarian, or valiant defender of the weak?

Fighters get 1d10 HP / level (max HP at 1st level) and inflict 1d10 damage.

Fighters **Crush Their Enemies**, adding their level to both attack and damage rolls. For example, a 3rd level fighter will get +3 to hit, as well as, +3 to resulting damage.

Wizard

Arcane scholar, mysterious sorcerer, or sinister demonologist?

Wizards get 1d4 HP / level (max HP at 1st level) and inflict 1d4 damage.

Wizards can cast virtually any spell, but each spell cast drains the wizard of HP equal to the spell's level. See the **Sorcery** section for the spell list and additional rules.

If wearing armor, wizards must roll percentile dice for **Spell Failure**. That chance is 10% for every point of non-magical armor. If the spell fails, HP are expended but no effect is produced.

Starting Gear: 1d20 gold pieces (multiplied by PC's level), choice of weapon(s), clothing, canteen of water, three days' worth of food, and professional accoutrements (whetstone and oil rag, grimoire, symbol of your faith, or thieves' tools).

Cleric

Warrior priest, templar knight, or servant of darkness?

Clerics get 1d8 HP / level (max HP at 1st level) and inflict 1d8 damage.

Clerics have a **Healing Invocation** (via touch) that can be used once per round without penalty. At 1st level, clerics can cure wounds, healing 1d6 HP. This healing ability goes up to 1d8 at 3rd level, 1d12 at 5th level, 1d20 at 7th level, and “fully healed” at 9th level.

Additionally, clerics have knowledge of, and power over, infernal entities, undead horrors, and Lovecraftian abominations. Clerics can either blast them from a distance with a lavender-hued **Eldritch Beam** of light or utilize **Venial Influence**, bending them to his will. Roll on the following table to determine results. If you choose to inflict damage, add the cleric’s level to the amount.

D4 ROLL	DAMAGE	SAVE	INFLUENCE	SAVE
1	5	Half-Damage	No Effect	N/A
2	10	Half-Damage	Won't attack the cleric	Negates
3	20	Half-Damage	Won't harm the PCs	Negates
4	30	Half-Damage	Will serve the cleric	Negates

Thief

Wily rogue, cunning assassin, or swashbuckling bandit?

Thieves get 1d6 HP / level (max HP at 1st level) and inflict 1d6 damage.

Thieves can do all the usual **Thief Abilities**...climb, find and remove traps, listening, hide in shadows, move silently, pick locks, and pick pockets. If it's a routine usage, abilities are automatically successful as long as the attempted action is narrated. Trickier tasks are usually narrated and rolled (see Skill Checks below).

Wearing armor may hamper thief abilities such as climbing, listening, and sneaking. Fortunately, thieves add their level to their Armor Class when not wearing armor.

When a thief attacks an opponent that is distracted or unaware of his presence, he's able to **Back Stab!** In addition to gaining Advantage on his attack, roll on the following random table.

D4 ROLL	EFFECT
1	Appropriate damage + thief's level
2	Appropriate damage + thief's level, multiplied by two
3	Appropriate damage + thief's level, multiplied by three
4	Appropriate damage + thief's level, multiplied by four

Race

Several races are available to choose from, each with its own benefit.

But what if you really want to try out that quarter-dragon / quarter-toaster / half-spider-abomination species that can climb walls while toasting bread? You can always come up with your own character race and/or bonus, subject to GM approval.

Human – Humans are adaptable and determined, getting an additional 2 HP each level.

Dwarf – Dwarves are hardy and routinely battle their chief subterranean foe – dark elves. They get Advantage on saving throws from poison.

Halfling – Halflings get a +2 to AC due to their short stature and exceptional agility.

Gnome – Once per day, gnomes may cast an illusion spell. Considered 1st level regarding HP drain; save to disbelieve; lasts as many turns as the caster's level.

Elf – Elves have natural magic resistance and get Advantage on saving throws against spells cast on them.

Dark Elf – These deep-purple skinned elves have used poison for centuries. Dark elves handle poison without risk of self-infliction. Wounded creatures (humanoid only) must save or sleep for 2d4 turns.

Half Orc – Half orcs are big and muscular. Their damage dice using standard attacks are made at one die-type higher than usual. For example, a d4 becomes d6, and a d10 would become a d12.

Demon – Once per day, demons may tempt a sentient being into doing something ill-advised; saving throw to ignore temptation.

Pixie Fairy – Due to their flying ability, incredible speed, and diminutive size, opponents always attack pixie fairies at a Disadvantage. As a drawback, damage dice from standard attacks are always one die-type lower than usual. For example, a d8 becomes a d6, and a d4 would become 1 point of damage.

Crystalline – Crystal humanoids take half-damage from high-tech, energy attacks.

Reptilian – These savage lizard-folk have a strange, cannibalistic rite that can be performed once per day. After eating a defeated enemy's heart, reptilians temporarily (one turn per level) gain a special ability that belonged to the adversary.

Droid – After a droid is destroyed (killed), it can be rebuilt by someone with tech knowledge. The timeframe for repairs is one hour per droid level. Additionally, droids have a 2 in 6 chance of interfacing with technological systems. If droids wish to practice sorcery, they cannot use their own HP to fuel spells.

Alignment

There are 4 alignments, Law, Chaos, Neutral, and Unaligned, providing insight into how characters view the world and their role within it.

Law - If you choose Law, your PC believes in order, justice, and community, and most likely worships the New Gods, namely the Lords of Light.

Chaos - Those aligned with Chaos believe in natural selection, revenge, and individualism, up to and including self-deification. They are more likely to honor the Old Gods, such as K'tulu, Yog-Soggoth, and Uba-Sa'athla.

Neutral - Those of a Neutral alignment balance Law and Chaos within themselves, recognizing both the Old and New Gods.

Unaligned - Unaligned means that the PC doesn't give a damn about Law, Chaos, or the Gods; they have their own idiosyncratic philosophy or passion that guides them through the world.

Something Noteworthy

This is the character's primary distinguishing feature separating him from any other fighter or wizard, elf or human. Now is your opportunity to shine - stand out from the crowd!

A noteworthy characteristic can be a background, possession, talent, hobby, goal, past experience, passion, hatred, personality quirk, or something relating to the PC's appearance... like a black, denim cloak with "Alien Sex Fiend" patch embroidered on the back.

Anything that is either super beneficial or obviously overpowered will be countered by a GM-prescribed flaw or weakness.

Combat

Combat is abstract, not granular. Each **Round** of combat is approximately one minute long. Characters can move, talk, and take one action (in any order) each round. A **Turn** equals ten rounds.

Regarding **Initiative**, whichever side would logically strike first goes and then the opposition goes. If there's no clear victor, the PCs act first.

Armor Class (AC) starts at 10 and goes up to a maximum of 20 (without magical aid). Wearing leather armor improves AC by +2, chain mail by +4, scale mail by +5, and plate mail by +6. Using a shield provides +2 to AC; a helm provides +1.

To **Attack**, roll a d20 and hit your opponent's AC or better. If using a magic weapon, add its bonus to your attack and damage rolls.

- ☞ Wielding a **Two-Handed** melee weapon lets you spread additional, leftover damage to nearby opponents, after the original intended target is killed.
- ☞ **Dual-Wielding** lets you use two lighter melee weapons in order to gain one additional attack per combat.
- ☞ **Ranged-Weapons** let you attack from a distance, keeping fragile combatants away from the front-line of battle. Watch out for **Friendly Fire**...if you roll a 1 on the attack, your companion is hit instead.

A **Natural 20** on an attack roll is a critical hit, resulting in double damage, plus additional bonuses such as magic and fighting prowess.

Epic Acts of Awesome can be attempted instead of a standard action, like an attack. Epic Acts of Awesome aren't about doing the impossible, but doing what is possible in an awesomely epic way. For example, swinging through the jungle on vines while shooting cannibals with your blaster. Normally, you'd have Disadvantage on that type of stunt. However, if the attempted action is crazy, wild, or fun enough to push it over the edge, you can bypass Disadvantage and roll normally.

If the PC reaches **Zero Hit-Points**, or any negative number of HP up to the PC's level, they are knocked unconscious. If their HP goes past that (e.g., -5 HP if the character is 4th level), the character is dead.

Death Sucks, but it happens. Simply create another PC. New PCs will be brought into the game ASAP.

Miscellaneous

Instead of automatically rolling a **Skill Check**, simply describe what your character is doing. **Perception** and **Interaction** (among other things) will be roleplayed. Otherwise, the GM will let you know when to roll. Success on a skill check requires a roll of 15 or better on a d20. If the task is related to a PC's class, race, noteworthy characteristic, or adventuring experience, the character's level can be added to the result.

PCs can use their action to **Assist** another character, granting their comrade Advantage on his action. For instance, the wizard runs up behind a giant scorpion, hootin' and hollerin'... the fighter can then slash at his distracted foe with Advantage.

Saving Throws are made to partially or entirely resist various dangers. The target number for a saving throw is determined by subtracting a character's level (or a monster's HD) from 20. You need to roll that number or better on a d20 to save. A Natural 20 means you're completely unaffected.

All HP **Refresh** after 6 hours of rest. Interruptions are fine – just sleep a little longer.

Unknown magic items must be **Attuned** to an individual. This requires at least 15 minutes of uninterrupted concentration, at which point the item's owner knows what the item does and how to use it. Otherwise, the item's owner can experiment. Certain magic items, such as wands, staves, and rods can only be used by wizards.

Players are encouraged to **Ask Questions!** Legitimate, interesting, and substantive questions (e.g., “Does the robot's head still talk after I ripped it off its body?”) are always welcome and usually have a 2 in 6 chance of being answered in the affirmative.

Sorcery

The following are rules for spellcasting in **Crimson Dragon Slayer D20**. Terms such as wizard and sorcerer are used interchangeably.

I, along with many others, will be playtesting this document before its inclusion in my upcoming book **Cha'alt: Fuchsia Malaise**. If you have any commentary to share, please feel free.

There Can Be Only One

Only a single spell can be cast or maintained by the caster.

That means if the sorcerer has cast detect magic, and then casts invisibility – the effects of the detect magic cease and the effects of invisibility begin. If the sorcerer casts fireball, then anyone they have charmed or dominated would instantly be released from the effects of their previous spell.

The Price of Spellcasting

It costs vitality for a sorcerer to cast spells. One Hit-Point is lost for every spell level that is cast.

For example, a 1st level spell costs a single HP while a 3rd level spell costs 3 HP. If reduced in HP to zero or less from casting, he falls unconscious and must succeed in a saving throw or die. Either way, the spell goes off as desired, but has no lasting effect after the initial round.

Dark Rituals

Sorcerers may perform a ritual that appeases the demons of Hell. Instead of draining their own vitality, sorcerers may sacrifice one or more humanoids with enough HP to cast the spell (no farther than zero HP, at which point death embraces NPCs). An additional benefit is that spells cast via dark ritual do not fade when the sorcerer casts a new spell. Yes, a sorcerer could even sacrifice himself.

The ritual glyph drawing, frantic ululating, and bloodletting takes as many turns to complete as the spell's level.

Sacrificial HP loss is semi-permanent. It cannot be restored by natural or supernatural means; however, the victim recovers those sacrificed HP after one month.

Duration of spells is estimated in rounds and turns.
A round is approximately one minute and a turn is
approximately ten minutes.

1st Level Spells

Detect Magic – The sorcerer can discern what is and what is not magical instinctively. The effect of this spell lasts one turn per caster level.

Identify – The sorcerer can determine the magical details of anything within 10' of himself. The effect of this spell lasts one round per caster level.

Illumination - The sorcerer creates a magical light source that can be focused on his hand, a nearby object, or a small sphere that travels with him. Illumination lasts as many turns as the caster's level.

Language – Using this spell, the sorcerer can read, write, and speak any language he comes into contact with as if he were fluent. This spell lasts one turn per caster level.

Glamour – With this spell, the sorcerer can enhance the appearance of himself, another individual, a plate of food, ensemble of clothing, door, etc. The target of glamor immediately becomes more attractive and pleasing to the eye. The spell lasts one turn per caster level.

2nd Level Spells

Charm – The singular subject of this spell becomes more favorable to the sorcerer than he otherwise would be (save to avoid). Hostile turns to neutral and neutral turns to friendly. This spell lasts one turn per caster level, but if charming a group, the spell lasts one round per caster level.

Ectoplasmic Webbing – Sticky strands of a slimy web shoot out of the sorcerer's fingers. An area up to 10' cubed, and not more than 30' from the sorcerer, is covered in ectoplasmic webbing. Everyone in that area must make a saving throw or become stuck in the web, unable to take normal actions. The web disintegrates after one turn per caster level.

If using theater of the mind, assume 1d4+1 humanoids are caught in the sorcerer's web.

Missile Command – A barrage of colorful (sorcerer's discretion) missiles instantaneously blast from the sorcerer's hands. Roll 1d4 to determine the number of missiles launched. Each missile inflicts 5 points of damage. The wizard may divide the missiles between multiple targets or concentrate them against a single foe.

Preternatural Focus – An unexpected vitality surges through the target of this spell, granting the subject Advantage on all his d20 rolls. Preternatural Focus lasts for one round per caster level.

Sorcerous Shield – The sorcerer or other human-sized subject is protected by a magical barrier. This shield reduces damage equal to one point per level of the caster. So, a 3rd level sorcerer could bestow 3 points of damage reduction on someone or something for up to one turn per caster level.

3rd Level Spells

Fireball – The sorcerer unleashes Hellfire upon his foes. This spell is instantaneous. Roll on the following d6 table to determine the spell's effect.

1	Uncontrollable Blaze – The sorcerer's fireball spreads to both friend and foe. Everyone within 50' of the sorcerer takes 10 points of damage (save for half).
2	Burn Out – The sorcerer's spell all but fizzles, everyone within 50' of the sorcerer takes 1 point of damage (save to avoid).
3	Flurry of Flame – The sorcerer does minimal damage to his enemies... 10 points of damage (save for half).
4	Scorching Blast – The sorcerer inflicts moderate damage to his enemies... 20 points of damage (save for half).
5	Raging Inferno – The sorcerer inflicts heavy damage to his enemies... 40 points of damage (save for half).
6	Incineration – All the sorcerer's enemies are burned away to ash (no save). However, if the sorcerer has targeted a godlike entity, it takes 60 points of damage instead of dying outright.

Flight – The sorcerer can lift himself or another subject off the ground and fly for one turn per caster level.

Mesmerizing Magenta Mist – This spell generates a blanket of glowing magenta-hued fog clinging to the ground and slowly spreading throughout the area, dissipating approximately 30' from the sorcerer. Those not averting their eyes must make a saving throw or become dazzled by the magenta mist for as many rounds as the caster's level.

Dazzled individuals are easily surprised and take actions at a Disadvantage.

Mirror Reflections - This spell manifests 5 images of the sorcerer that are identical to him, except incorporeal. Aside from touching the illusion, it's virtually impossible to determine the real sorcerer from his reflections. When initially attacked, there's a 1 in 6 chance of the enemy attacking the actual sorcerer, but if a reflection is successfully hit, it disappears. This spell lasts as many turns as the caster's level.

Sleep – As many individuals or creatures are put to sleep as occupy a space within 30' radius of the sorcerer (excluding the caster's companions). They wake in the same number of turns as the sorcerer's level.

4th Level Spells

Invisibility – With this spell, the sorcerer or another subject is rendered unseen to the naked eye. Invisibility lasts one turn per level of the caster.

Taking actions, such as slashing with a sword, does not interfere with the subject's invisibility. Those attacking an invisible humanoid have Disadvantage.

Poison Cloud – Everyone within a 30' radius of ground-zero (wherever the sorcerer decides to place the spell - must be within eyesight) becomes nauseous and unable to act. The effects of this spell last as many rounds as the caster's level – even after individuals escape the cloud of poison.

If using theater of the mind, assume 1d4 + 1d6 humanoids are caught within the poison cloud.

Shape-Change – The subject of this spell can be altered to another form, wildly divergent from its own. However, that which has been shape-changed cannot be less than half the original's size nor greater than double. The effect of this spell lasts one turn per level of the caster. Save to avoid.

Teleport - The sorcerer can magically transport himself (or other humanoid-sized person or object) through dimensional space to the location of his desire. However, the subject cannot be conveyed more than 50' from the sorcerer's present location. Additionally, the subject cannot be teleported inside a solid object.

5th Level Spells

Dispel Magic – The sorcerer can nullify magical effects (even the presence of magic itself) upon the target of this spell. The effects of dispel magic last one turn per level of the caster.

Dominate – The sorcerer utterly possesses the will of a singular target, able to force him to do anything within his ability...up to and including murder, suicide, betraying his god, etc. Dominate lasts up to one turn per caster's level. Save to avoid.

Infernal Servant – A hideous demon is summoned and forced to obey the sorcerer's will. The demon will remain in service to the sorcerer for as many rounds as the caster's level. No more than one demon can be summoned at a time by a single sorcerer.

HD: 6 HP: 36 AC: 13 Attack: +6 Damage: 3d6 Save: 14+ Special: immune to fire and heat; takes double damage from cold-based attacks.

Revivification – With this spell, the sorcerer can bring a dying or recently deceased humanoid back to life. The sorcerer has as many rounds to cast the spell as his level before the subject is too far gone to revive.

Additionally, the subject of a revivification spell must succeed in a saving throw. If successfully cast, the subject is conscious and brought up to a single Hit-Point.

6th Level Spell

Wish - The sorcerer may alter reality, albeit in a limited manner, conforming to his will.

Resurrection of a single long-dead adventurer is possible, but not an entire adventuring party. The destruction of 50 humanoids? Yes. The slaughter of an entire settlement or high-tech facility? Not quite. Speed up time? Sure, but no more than six months. The power to sexually enslave a harem of women may be achievable, but not if that number reaches above 23 (it's been tried... many times over).

Due to the reality-warping magnitude of this spell, Hit Points used to cast it cannot be recovered, either naturally or supernaturally, until one year after its casting. If the sorcerer desires to cast this spell as a dark ritual, it costs three times the usual number of HP... 18.

Credits

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Get them while they're hot... and sleazy!

