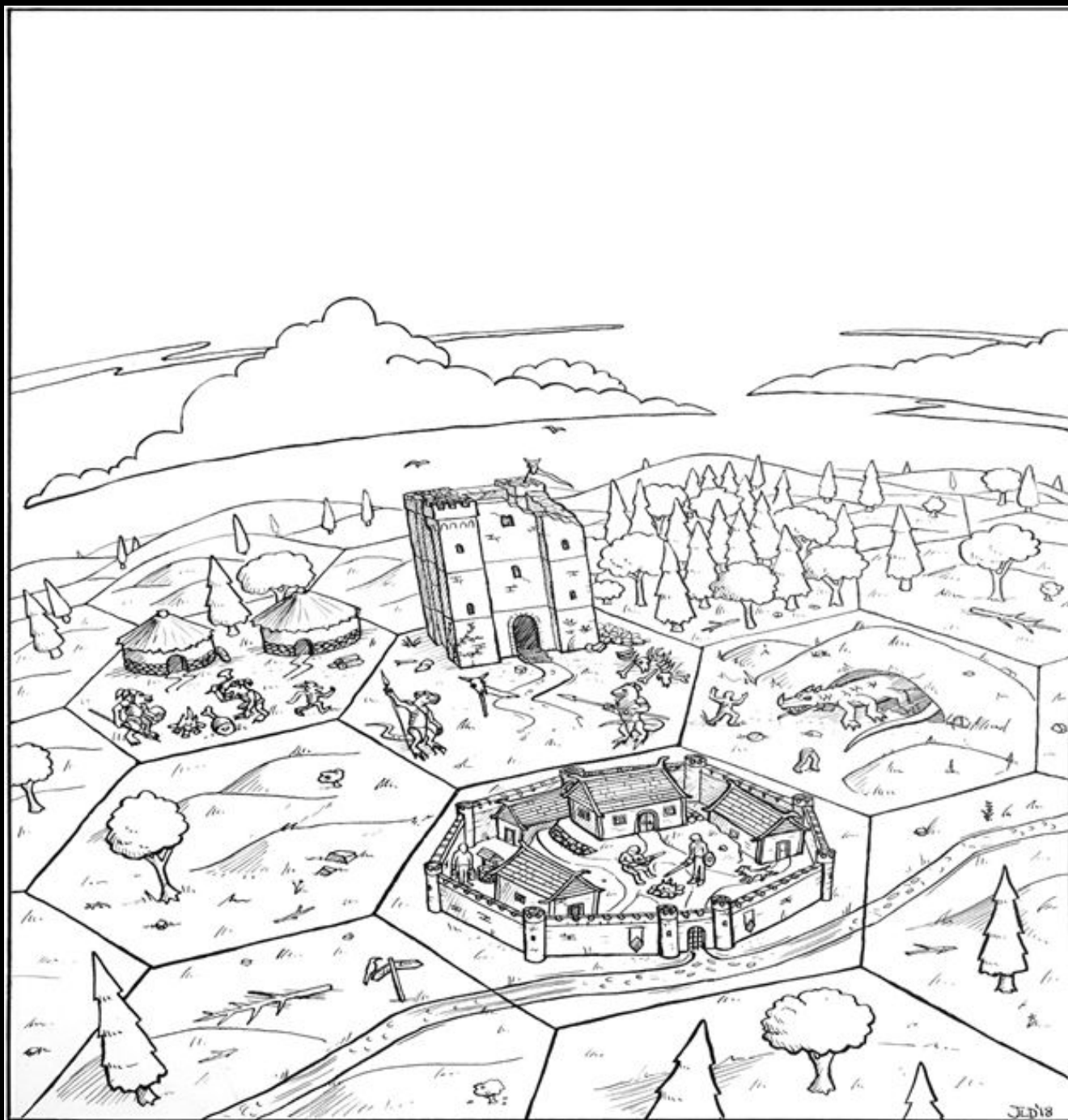


Classing Up the Joint: Character-Building Options for OSR



Todd Leback

DESIGNED FOR USE WITH
**OLD-SCHOOL
ESSENTIALS**

Classing Up the Joint:

Character-Building Options for OSR

Credits

Designer: Todd Leback

Editing: Brian Johnson

Layout: Tim Bannock

Cover Art: Jen Drummond (jendart.com)

Interior Art: Daniel Comerci, Dean Spencer,
Jesus Blones

- ❖ Daniel Comerci - page 1
- ❖ Dean Spencer - pages 3, 9
- ❖ Jesus Blones - page 8

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New Class Creation



This document will seek to explain and spell out the process for creating new classes for *Old School Essentials* (OSE) and related OSR-style games. Chiefly, it will establish guidelines for determining XP progressions and level limits based upon the abilities the classes possess.

There are two types of classes in OSE and B/X-style games: professions and race-as-class. Professional classes assume the character is human – or mostly human – and are based upon the framework presented by the four “core” classes: cleric, fighter, magic-user, and thief. Race-as-classes are based upon non-human races, each assumed to represent only one or two of the professional classes within the rubric of the race; non-human races do not have the flexibility of humanity.

This document starts off by explaining the basics of building classes and ends with a discussion of the modifications the Absalom supplements make to the OSE model of classes. Note that the math does not always work out perfectly; this system was engineered backwards from existing XP requirements. The goal here is not to perfectly replicate existing classes – although the math involved was engineered using them – but to provide a framework with which to build new classes that are balanced with those currently available.

Old School Essentials

The system presented herein is designed for use with Necrotic Gnome’s *Old School Essentials*, but can be easily adapted to any OSR-style game.

Class Creation Overview

When creating a class, the following factors must be taken into consideration:

- ❖ Attack Matrix
- ❖ Saving Throws
- ❖ Hit Dice
- ❖ Weapons Allowed
- ❖ Armor Allowed
- ❖ Spells
- ❖ Special Qualities
- ❖ Restrictions

Each factor is broken down into a number of options. Each option has a multiplier value (in **bold**). One (or more) options are taken, as noted in the description, and the multiplier values are all added together to yield a final multiplier. This number is then multiplied by 200 to get the total number of XP needed to reach 2nd level.

Attack Matrix

There are four distinct attack matrices that are used to calculate whether a character is able to hit a target:

- ❖ Magic-user **-1**
- ❖ Cleric/thief **0**
- ❖ Fighter **+2**
- ❖ Monster **+4**

Saving Throws

There are four distinct saving throw matrices:

- ❖ Magic-user **-1**
- ❖ Thief **-1**
- ❖ Cleric **-.5**
- ❖ Fighter **+1**

If using a custom saving throw matrix the following holds true:

- ❖ Total the saving throw values at 1st level and compare to the totals of the Core classes:
 - Cleric 68
 - Fighter 56
 - Magic-user 71
 - Thief 71
- ❖ Use the multiplier of whichever Core class is within 5 of the total of your custom matrix.
- ❖ If the difference is greater than 5 from the nearest Core class the Hardy quality needs to be selected (see **Special Qualities**, below). For example, dwarves and halflings both use the Fighter saving throw progression with the Hardy quality.
- ❖ It doesn't matter which order the saves are in, although the lower numbers are always found in the Death and Wands categories and the higher in Breath and Spells.
- ❖ Even though thieves, magic-users (and to some extent, clerics) have the same saving throw totals the numbers are distributed differently between the five categories.

Hit Dice

Each class has a given die they roll for hit points at each level 1-9, as follows:

- ❖ 1d3 **-.5**
- ❖ 1d4 **0**
- ❖ 1d6 **+.5**
- ❖ 1d8 **+1**
- ❖ 1d10 **+2.5**
- ❖ 1d12 **+4**

At 10th level and beyond the character gains hit points at a fixed rate, as follows:

- ❖ +1/level **0**
- ❖ +2/level **+1**
- ❖ +3/level **+2**

For creatures that have a base HD higher than one, or that have a + modifier to their hit points, treat the 1st-level creature as follows:

- ❖ For every +1 to their hit point total increase the multiplier by **+1**.
- ❖ For every HD beyond 1 at 1st level increase the multiplier by **+5**.

Example

An ogre class would have a multiplier of +16.1, as the base creature has 4+1 HD. This affects the starting XP needed to reach 2nd level, at which point the class gains 1 HD per level: a 3rd-level ogre would have 6+1 HD. A troll class would have a multiplier of +26.3, since the base HD for a troll is 6+3.

Weapons Allowed

Not all classes can use all weapons. There are four categories: 1, 2, 3, 4.

1. The class can use no more than two different weapons. For example, magic-users can only wield daggers and staves (the latter an optional rule from Advanced Fantasy: Genre Rules). **-1**

2. The class can only use one broad type of weapon. Ex.: clerics can only use blunt weapons. +03. There are a handful of weapons the class cannot use. Ex.: dwarves and halflings cannot use longbows or two-handed swords. +1

4. The class can use any weapon. +2

Armor Allowed

Likewise, the types of armor that can be used vary by class, and there are again four categories: 1, 2, 3, 4.

1. The class can wear no armor. Ex.: magic-user. -1

2. The class is restricted in its use of both armor and shields. Ex.: thieves can't wear anything heavier than leather and can't use shields. +0

3. The class is restricted in either armor or shield use. Ex.: ranger and barbarian. +1

4. The class can wear any armor and can use shields. Ex.: cleric, dwarf, elf, fighter. +2

Spells

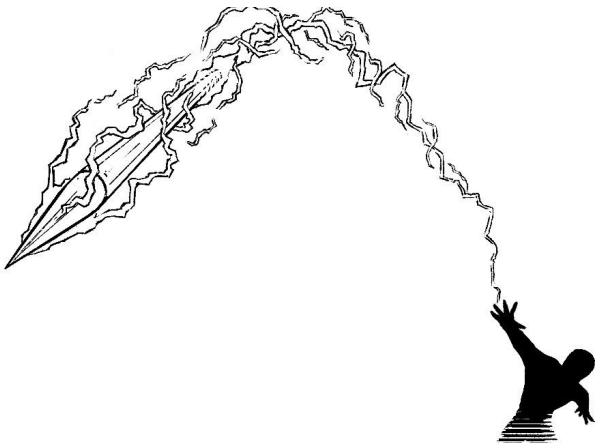
This category covers both arcane and divine forms of magic, and differentiates between several rates of progression, or the rate at which the class gains spells. The term "full progression" refers to a class that acquires spells at the rate of one of the two Core classes: cleric or magic-user. The progression can also be 125%, 75%, 50%, or 25%. Examples are as follows. It is recommended that spell progression not exceed 125% of full.

Arcane 125% Progression

Level	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	-	-	-	-	-
2	3	-	-	-	-	-
3	3	1	-	-	-	-
4	4	2	-	-	-	-
5	4	2	1	-	-	-
6	4	3	2	-	-	-
7	5	3	2	1	-	-
8	5	4	2	2	-	-
9	5	4	3	2	1	-
10	6	5	3	3	2	-
11	6	5	4	3	2	1
12	6	5	4	4	3	2
13	7	6	4	4	3	3
14	7	6	5	5	4	3

Arcane 75% Progression

Level	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	1	-	-	-	-	-
2	2	-	-	-	-	-
3	2	-	-	-	-	-
4	2	1	-	-	-	-
5	2	1	-	-	-	-
6	2	2	-	-	-	-
7	2	2	1	-	-	-
8	2	2	1	-	-	-
9	2	2	2	-	-	-
10	3	2	2	-	-	-
11	3	2	2	1	-	-
12	3	3	2	1	-	-
13	3	3	2	2	-	-
14	3	3	3	3	-	-



Chapter 1: New Class Creation

Arcane 50% Progression

Level	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	1	-	-	-	-	-
2	1	-	-	-	-	-
3	1	-	-	-	-	-
4	2	-	-	-	-	-
5	2	-	-	-	-	-
6	2	1	-	-	-	-
7	2	1	-	-	-	-
8	2	2	-	-	-	-
9	2	2	-	-	-	-
10	2	2	1	-	-	-
11	2	2	1	-	-	-
12	2	2	2	-	-	-
13	2	2	2	-	-	-
14	3	2	2	1	-	-

Divine 125% Progression

Level	1	2	3	4	5
1	1	-	-	-	-
2	2	1	-	-	-
3	2	2	1	-	-
4	3	2	2	-	-
5	3	3	2	1	-
6	3	3	3	2	1
7	4	3	3	2	2
8	4	4	3	3	2
9	4	4	4	3	3
10	5	5	4	4	3
11	5	5	5	4	4
12	6	5	5	5	4
13	6	6	6	5	5
14	7	6	6	6	5

Arcane 25% Progression

Level	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	1	-	-	-	-	-
2	1	-	-	-	-	-
3	1	-	-	-	-	-
4	1	-	-	-	-	-
5	2	-	-	-	-	-
6	2	-	-	-	-	-
7	2	1	-	-	-	-
8	2	1	-	-	-	-
9	2	1	-	-	-	-
10	2	2	-	-	-	-
11	2	2	-	-	-	-
12	2	2	1	-	-	-
13	2	2	1	-	-	-
14	2	2	1	-	-	-

Divine 100% Progression

Level	1	2	3	4	5
1	1	-	-	-	-
2	2	-	-	-	-
3	2	1	-	-	-
4	2	2	1	-	-
5	2	2	1	1	-
6	2	2	2	1	1
7	3	3	2	2	1
8	3	3	3	2	2
9	4	4	3	3	2
10	4	4	4	3	3
11	5	5	4	4	3
12	5	5	5	4	4
13	6	5	5	5	4
14	6	6	5	5	5

Chapter 1: New Class Creation

Divine 75% Progression

Level	1	2	3	4	5
1	-	-	-	-	-
2	1	-	-	-	-
3	2	-	-	-	-
4	2	1	-	-	-
5	2	2	-	-	-
6	2	2	1	1	-
7	2	2	2	1	1
8	3	3	2	2	1
9	3	3	3	2	2
10	4	4	3	3	2
11	4	4	4	3	3
12	5	5	4	4	3
13	5	5	5	4	4
14	6	5	5	5	4

Divine 50% Progression

Level	1	2	3	4	5
1	-	-	-	-	-
2	1	-	-	-	-
3	1	-	-	-	-
4	2	-	-	-	-
5	2	1	-	-	-
6	2	2	1	-	-
7	2	2	1	1	-
8	3	2	2	1	-
9	3	3	2	1	1
10	4	3	2	2	1
11	4	4	3	2	2
12	5	4	4	3	2
13	5	5	4	3	3
14	6	5	4	4	3

Divine 25% Progression

Level	1	2	3	4	5
1	-	-	-	-	-
2	1	-	-	-	-
3	1	-	-	-	-
4	1	-	-	-	-
5	2	-	-	-	-
6	2	1	-	-	-
7	2	2	-	-	-
8	2	2	1	-	-
9	3	2	1	1	-
10	3	2	2	1	1
11	3	3	2	2	1
12	4	3	3	2	2
13	5	4	3	3	2
14	5	4	4	3	3

It is assumed that with limited progression a spellcaster still casts those spells they do have at their actual caster level. Therefore, a 9th-level caster with a 50% progression rate would still cast spells as a 9th-level caster for purposes of damage, range, duration, etc.

Arcane Casting

- ❖ 125% **+20**
- ❖ 100% (full) **+16**
- ❖ 75% **+13**
- ❖ 50% **+10**
- ❖ 25% **+6**

Divine Casting

- ❖ 125% **+12**
- ❖ 100% (full) **+8**
- ❖ 75% **+5**
- ❖ 50% **+4**
- ❖ 25% **+3**

Note that clerics gain spells at 75% progression and druids at 100% progression.

There are also level-limited spell progressions, such as those possessed by the bard, half-elf, paladin, and ranger classes in the *Advanced Fantasy: Genre Rules*. In the case of the bard and the half-elf the level-limited progression functions normally; in the case of the paladin and ranger this progression is delayed (see Restrictions, below).

Level-limited progression subtracts **1.5** from the multiplier for each spell level that is eliminated. Bards, for instance, use 75% divine casting progression, but access to one level of spells – the 6th – is denied, for an adjustment of **-1.5**, or an actual multiplier of **+3.5**.

Example

An arcane spellcaster with full progression has a multiplier of +16. If the progression is level-limited to 5th-level spells the multiplier becomes +14.5. If limited to 4th level the multiplier becomes +13.

Casters with delayed progression have a caster level equivalent to that of a normal spellcaster at the same point in spell progression. For instance, paladins gain the ability to cast divine spells at 9th level. At 9th level they cast spells as a 1st-level caster.

Special Qualities

This list is by no means exhaustive but seeks to establish general guidelines for apportioning special abilities that a class could have. Discretion is advised when adding additional powers/abilities.

- ❖ Early name-level bonuses (ex.: barbarian) **+0.25** per level. Note this doesn't apply to classes with a maximum level of 8 or lower.
- ❖ Infravision (60'): **+0.5**
 - +30' **+0.25**
- ❖ Turning Undead as a cleric **+1.5**
- ❖ Read Languages (as thief) **+1**
- ❖ Detect (as dwarf or elf, per one "thing" detectable) **+0.5**
- ❖ Climb Walls (as thief) **+0.5***
- ❖ Find/Remove Traps (as thief) **+0.5***
- ❖ Hear Noise (as thief) **+0.5***
- ❖ Hide in Shadows (as thief) **+0.5***
- ❖ Move Silently (as thief) **+0.5***
- ❖ Open Locks (as thief) **+0.5***
- ❖ Pick Pockets (as thief) **+0.5***
- ❖ Backstab (as thief), or Tumbling (as acrobat) **+1.25**
- ❖ Use magic item otherwise restricted to specific class (as thief at 10th level) **+2**
- ❖ Awareness (as ranger) **+1**
- ❖ Tracking (as ranger) **+0.5**
- ❖ Pursuit (as ranger) **+0.25**
- ❖ Hardy (as dwarf and halfling, +2 to all saves; can only be applied to fighter saving throw progression) **+1.5**
- ❖ Immunity to ghoulish paralysis (as elf) **+0.5**
- ❖ Defensive bonus (as halfling) **+1** per 1 AC
- ❖ Hiding (as halfling) **+1**
- ❖ Initiative bonus (as halfling) **+1**
- ❖ Attack bonus **+1** per each +1 modifier per weapon
- ❖ Evasion (as acrobat) **+0.75**
- ❖ Jumping (as acrobat) **+0.5**
- ❖ Poison (as assassin) **+1**
- ❖ Assassination (as assassin) **+2.5**
- ❖ Strike invulnerable monsters (as barbarian) **+1.5**
- ❖ Agile fighting (as barbarian) **+1**
- ❖ Cure poison (as barbarian) **+0.5**
- ❖ Foraging and hunting (as barbarian) **+0.25**
- ❖ Anti-charm (as bard) **+0.5**
- ❖ Enchantment (as bard) **+2**
- ❖ Languages (as bard or druid) **+1**
- ❖ Lore (as bard) **+0.5**
- ❖ Energy resistance (as druid) **+0.75** for first energy type, **+1** per additional type
- ❖ Identification (as druid) **+0.25**
- ❖ Pass without trace (as druid) **+0.75**
- ❖ Path-finding (as druid) **+0.25**
- ❖ Shapechanging (as druid) **+1.5**
- ❖ Spell-like ability (as duergar) **+0.5** for a 1st-level ability, **+1** for each additional level, **+1** per use per day beyond one. Ex.: *Enlargement* mimics the 1st-level MU spell (from *LL AEC*) and adds a multiplier of +0.5. *Invisibility*, a 2nd-level spell, adds a multiplier of +1.5.
- ❖ Special mount (as knight or paladin) **+0.5**
- ❖ Horsemanship (as knight) **+0.5**
- ❖ Hospitality (as knight) **+0.25**
- ❖ Strength of Will (as knight) **+1**
- ❖ Holy Resistance (as paladin) **+1**
- ❖ Lay on Hands (as paladin) **+1**
- ❖ Stone murmurs (as svirfneblin) **+1**

Unless otherwise stated the above abilities can only be selected once.

*Classes with five or more of the standard thief skills (noted with asterisks) use a +0.25 modifier for each of the abilities, rather than +0.5. Thieves, therefore, have a total multiplier of +1.75 for their abilities, rather than +3.5.

Restrictions

These are imposed to reduce a class's XP requirements. All non-human classes have a base level restriction of 13 that does not modify the multiplier. Many non-human races have even lower level limits (such as dwarves, elves, and halflings). Further limits can be imposed to gain modifiers to the multiplier, but these are based upon the maximum level of 13. Therefore, elves, with a maximum level of 10, have been restricted three levels (13, 12, and 11), while halflings, with a maximum level of 8, have been restricted five levels.

- ❖ Level restrictions. Apply a modifier of **-1** for each level restricted
- ❖ Limited number at high level (as druid) **-.5** per each level for which a limited number may exist
- ❖ Alignment restrictions **-.5** for one alignment restriction, **-.75** for two
- ❖ Multiple ability score requirements. For each requirement past one, apply a modifier of **-.5**. Ex.: bard, with a minimum of 9 in both DEX and INT, would apply a **-.5** modifier.
- ❖ Multiple prime requisites. For each prime requisite past one, apply a **-.25** modifier. Ex.: Elves, with two prime requisites, have a modifier of **-.25**
- ❖ Possession of treasure/item restrictions **-1**
- ❖ Gear must be sized for class (gnome, halfling, etc.) **-.75**
- ❖ Code of conduct (must obey a set of strictures or lose class abilities) **-1.5**
- ❖ Delay in ability **see below**
- ❖ Equipment requirement (Ex.: cleric's holy symbol) **-.5**
- ❖ Hireling restrictions (as assassin) **-.5**
- ❖ Illiterate (as barbarian) **-.5**
- ❖ Fear of magic (as barbarian) **-1.5**
- ❖ Delayed name-level bonuses **-.25** per level delayed
- ❖ Light-sensitivity (as drow) **-.75**

Delayed Abilities

Some abilities are not granted right away. For every level a non-spell ability is delayed, reduce its multiplier by **.1**, to a minimum of **+1**. The ability cannot be delayed beyond that point. The delay is counted from 1st level; the thief ability to read languages would receive a **.3** reduction to its multiplier, since it is delayed until 4th level.

For every level that spellcasting ability is delayed, reduce its multiplier by **.5**. For instance, delaying the paladin's ability to cast spells until 9th level applies a modifier of **-4**.

Note that if, by delaying spellcasting, the caster would be unable to cast a given level of spells due to level limits, the modifier for level-limited progression does not apply.

Example

The ranger uses a full divine progression that is delayed until level 8. Because it is delayed, only the modifier for the delay is used, and no modifier for their inability to cast 4th and 5th-level spells.

Note that for all delayed abilities the class uses them at their base level once gained; a class that gains Climb Walls upon reaching 5th level would climb as a 1st-level thief at 5th level, a 2nd-level thief at 6th level, etc.

New Qualities & Restrictions

The Special Qualities and Restrictions given above are not the only ones that exist; others can be added as needed. New abilities should have multipliers in line with those given. Additionally, when creating new classes care should be taken to ensure that the XP required to reach second level is not less than 1000 or more than 5000.

Sample Class - The Ogre

Requirements: None
Prime Requisite: STR
Hit Dice: 1d8
Maximum Level: 8
Armor: Any
Weapons: Any except complicated mechanical weapons (bows, crossbows, etc.)
Alignment: Any (often Chaotic)
Languages: Alignment, Ogre

Ogres use all kinds of weapons except for complicated weapons such as crossbows and bows (category 3, +1 multiplier). They can wear all kinds of armor and use shields (category 4, +2 multiplier). Both armor and weapons must be sized for the ogre, however (restriction, -.75 multiplier).

Ogres have 1d8 hit points per HD (+1 multiplier) and start off at 1st level with 4+1 HD (+16.1 multiplier). They attack using the monster attack matrix (+4 multiplier) and save as fighters (+1).

The total multiplier for the base ogre class is +24.35, without any special abilities, and the XP required to reach 2nd level is 4,870. However, this is out of line with similar classes (such as fighter), so level restrictions are going to be used to bring it more in line. By dropping the maximum level of the ogre class to 8th, from 13, it reduces the multiplier by 5, to +19.35, for a 2nd-level XP requirement of 3,870. This is smoothed out to 3,900 for the progression above.



The Ogre

Level	The Ogre			Saving Throws				
	XP	HD	THACO	D	w	P	B	S
1	0	4d8+1	15 [+4]	10	11	12	13	14
2	3,900	5d8+1	14 [+5]	10	11	12	12	14
3	7,800	6d8+1	13 [+6]	9	10	11	11	13
4	14,600	7d8+1	12 [+7]	8	9	10	10	12
5	30,000	8d8+1	11 [+8]	8	9	10	10	12
6	60,000	9d8+1	11 [+8]	7	8	9	9	11
7	120,000	10d8+1	11 [+8]	6	7	8	8	10
8	240,000	11d8+1	10 [+9]	6	7	8	8	10

Expanded Class Options

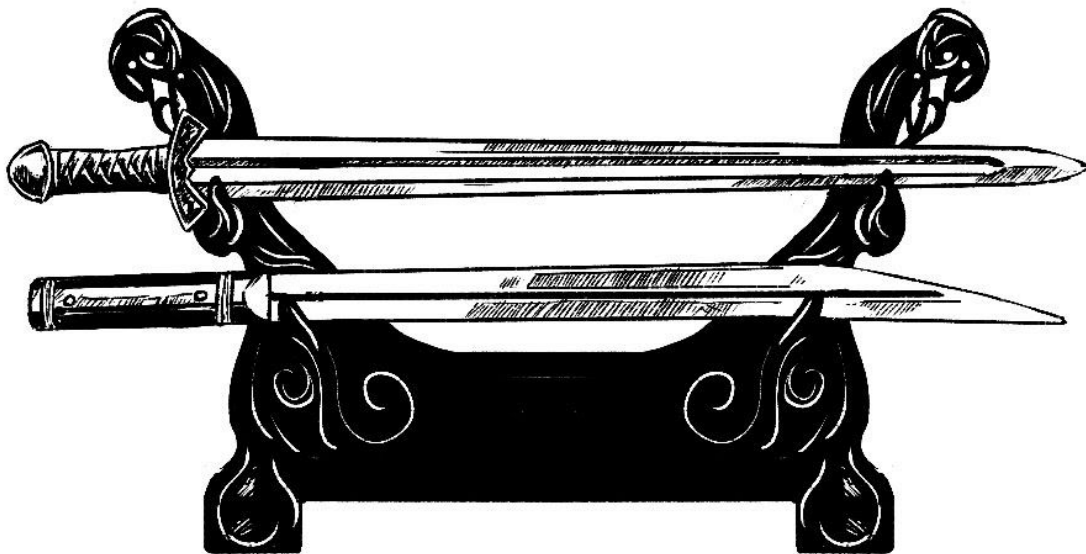
Additionally, the *Populated Hexes* supplements offer alternative class options for PCs, which fall into three broad categories:

- ❖ Class abilities
- ❖ Skills
- ❖ Knacks

These three options increase the power and durability of the classes without increasing the XP requirements for gaining levels. In addition to adding abilities to the classes, two main changes are made that involve smoothing out attack and saving throw progressions, as is made evident by the ogre saving throw in the previous section. The numbers have been smoothed out to avoid jumps of two or more from level to level. For example, a fighter's Save v. Death jumps from 12+ at 3rd level to 10+ at 4th level. The *Populated Hexes* series smooths that, so the progression is 12+ at levels 1-2, 11+ at 3rd, and 10+ at 4th. The same changes have been made to the attack tables, where needed.

If using the expanded class options, it is recommended that the difficulty of encounters be increased to make play more challenging. Some options for doing so include:

- ❖ Increasing the hit points of opponents. A suggested amount is +2 hp per HD the monster possesses.
- ❖ Increasing the number of opponents. If individual monsters have fewer HD than the characters' average level, add 1 monster per PC. If the HD are roughly equal to as PCs' level, add 1 monster per 2 PCs. If the monster HD are more than the average PC level add 1 monster.
- ❖ If adding monsters isn't an option, consider adding a number of minions of another type; a gang of ogres might have a dozen goblins serving them, for instance.
- ❖ Boss or solo monsters can be given the ability to either negate a small number of physical attacks or automatically succeed on saves. It is recommended that monsters with between 1-4 HD be able to do this once per day, those with between 5-8 be able to do it twice per day, and those with 9+ be able to do it three times per day.
- ❖ Give boss or solo monsters special attacks or actions that can be used in addition to those listed, whether it be a spell-like ability, the ability to automatically disengage from combat or move on another's turn, etc.



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