



CAREFUL CHARACTER CREATION

In Powers & Perils

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POWERS AND PERILS contains many elements representing a new approach to Fantasy Role-playing. From its conception, *P&P* was designed to provide as much information as possible. This allows nearly infinite possibilities in many of the most important sections of the rules. It will be what you choose to make it.

Because of its detail and variability, *P&P* can be a complex game if you use all the rule options. But its actual complexity will be determined by the referee, before the game starts and during play. The purpose of this article is to guide you in making these selections. It will also answer some important initial questions and tell you a bit about the future of this system.

As a referee, your first goal must be to structure your game world. This requires that you understand the rules, have an idea of what your players can comfortably handle, and decide which parts of *P&P* will not

be used in the game. These selections are best made after you have a clear understanding of the rules, and an idea of what you want your game world to be. Where your changes, deletions or additions will have a direct effect on the players, they should be informed of them before the fact. No major change in the house rules should be made without the players having foreknowledge of your actions.

The most complex parts of *P&P* lie in its Character Generation, Equipment Damage, Creature Variation, Creature Generation and Treasure systems. For your first few adventures, I suggest that you ignore the Creation Variation and Creature Generation sections. Both can be easily added at a later date. Their use is likely to be overly difficult to handle at first, and the resulting creatures could badly imbalance your game. Once your campaign has a few strong characters being played, these systems could be added now and again to

vary the danger of the encounters.

P&P involves some use of mathematics in its basic systems. In most cases, especially in Books One and Two, special tables have been included that solve most of the common mathematical problems that will arise.

The Equipment Damage section reflects the possibility that various items will be badly damaged or broken in play. It was added for the sake of realism only and may be deleted at your option. It is up to you to decide whether the added enjoyment that this system provides is worth the increased record-keeping.

The Character Generation system in *P&P* is unique; designed to reflect the Character's innate talents and the interests that determine how well he uses them. The result is a detailed, heroic character who is a unique and powerful individual.

Two sections of the Character Generation system require that the player make

selections that will have a permanent effect on his character. The answers to the following questions should help the player to make these selections and create the best character possible, given the random factors that he generated for it:

A) *How should I assign my Total Multipliers?*

B) *How should I allocate my character's Initial Increase Factor?*

Character Building Two Ways Part One : Total Multipliers

A character's Total Multipliers reflect his interests in life and his goals. As they are applied to the character's Native Abilities, they yield the Maximum Ability that the character can attain in each. This value is the maximum rating that the character can achieve in the characteristic without aid from magic or treasure.

A character's multipliers should be assigned to characteristics that he has a high Native Ability in, or to characteristics that the player believes his character will need in play. For example, if the character is to be a magic-user, it is important to assign a high multiplier to Intelligence, Will and Empathy regardless of how low his Native Ability in any of them might be. The best philosophy in assigning multipliers is to assign priority to those characteristics that are most useful for the type of character that the player is creating.

Except in rare cases, the player will find that the Total Multipliers that are available to his character are insufficient to fully develop everything.

Part Two : Initial Increase Factor

This factor reflects the knowledge, training and experience that the character has gained in life. The points that are gained when this factor is determined are assigned to the character's Wealth, Experience, Expertise and Characteristics. The results are then used to purchase equipment, determine the character's Combat Experience Level, acquire knowledge and set the Current Ability ratings for each of the character's modifiable characteristics.

The following simple suggestions may help the player to make these crucial decisions in forming his character.

1) WEALTH

The real value of the points assigned to wealth varies with the character's Station. Unless the character is to be a noble, the player should concentrate his points in other areas. He should allocate enough points to this area to give his character some starting equipment, and some gold to use once the game begins. Placing a great number of points in Wealth will give most characters a sizable amount of money BUT the money gained will not counter-balance the lost potential in other areas. For nobles, even the minimum wealth allocation will provide great riches. So the noble character has a simple choice: how rich does he want to be?

2) EXPERIENCE

Points that are assigned to this are will

determine a character's starting Combat Experience Level. They have no other value. For characters that are fighters, a high allocation in this area will be a great asset – as the Combat Experience Level is one of the major factors that determines the character's combat values. The higher the Combat Experience Level, the more survivable the character will be in combat. Though an allocation of 15 to 25 points would give the character a reasonable starting level, it would be advantageous to spend the full 30 points if the player has them to spare.

For magic-users, this factor is not crucial. None of the experience that is gained here may be used as magic experience. The value of points spent here will lie in giving the magic-user a Combat Experience Level that is high enough to give him some defense should he be attacked in combat. It is not an area that should be stressed in the development of a magic-user.

3) EXPERTISE

The player expends these points to determine the number of expertise points that he will have to purchase his character's starting skills. For fighting characters, the player should concentrate the expertise gained into combat skills and skills useful for surviving: Tracking, Survival and Climbing, for instance. Where extra points are available, the player may select other types of skills to enhance his character's abilities. He should always give priority, in his initial allocation, to the day-to-day skills that will keep the character alive.

Magic-users must expend a large number of the expertise points that are gained here to purchase their basic apprenticeship. After the training is paid for, the magic-user should select skills that are useful in combination with his magic powers. He should also select skills that enhance his chance of survival. Combat Skills, though some should be learned, are of secondary importance to the dedicated magic-user. A mage that stresses combat is likely to become a warrior that knows a few parlor tricks, rather than the powerful mystic forces that the true magic-user seeks to become.

The basic philosophies that the player can use to guide his selections of his character's skills are a choice between specializing in a few highly developed skills or learning a great number of skills at a basic expertise level. In the long run, the second course will be advantageous. He will be somewhat competent in handling many different situations and, with time, can develop into a very useful individual. On the other hand, players that choose to start their characters with a limited number of highly developed skills will gain immediate advantages that will increase their chance of survival. This is especially true for fighters that concentrate on their combat skills. The character will not have the overall usefulness of the "generalist" but, he will have important advantages in play.

But of the two paths – the eclectic and the specialist – the best course may be

neither extreme. Players should strive to achieve a balance between the two philosophies. In forming the character, purchase as many skills as you can that relate to the type of character that you want. Then, increase the expertise levels of those skills that are used regularly.

It is also a good idea in forming a character for the player to form a conception of who his character is. Then, select the skills that this type of person would have, or that he will need to achieve his future goals. The player will be better able to relate to the person that he will be playing and the skills that he selects will be of greater value in play.

4) CHARACTERISTIC POINTS

Characteristic points are used to set the Current Ability level in each of the character's eight modifiable characteristics. In allocating these points, the player should concentrate them into characteristics that are important to the individual character. Fighters should put their points into their physical categories. Mages should concentrate on their mental characteristics, especially the single factor that serves as the prime requisite for the Magic Path that the character is trained in.

But the word "concentrate" does not mean that all of your points should be put into a single area. It indicates that it is to the character's advantage if the lion's share of these points are placed in that general area. In general, it is not advantageous to build one or two characteristics to the exclusion of all others. While development of the character in this way may gain him some advantages, it is likely to reduce his effectiveness in more areas than it will enhance. (This is especially true if the Problem-Solving option is in use.)

POWERS & PERILS, as the rules repeatedly stress, is a guide to its participants. It should not be viewed as an immutable legal code. Where sections of the rules conflict with the rules that you choose to govern your world, ignore them. Where you encounter sections that are ambiguous or overly difficult to handle, modify them. Do not allow blind obedience to any rule force you away from the flavor and style that you want for your game. Your own imagination is easily as important as the rules you choose to form the foundation of your campaign. Do not restrict it without reason.

Future issues of *HEROES* will add additional layers of detail and imagination to the *POWERS & PERILS* environment. There will be regular features dedicated to answering your questions, while other articles will expand on portions of the rules, and detail options that you may use in playing your game. Finally, special articles will delineate important nations, cultures, cults and persons that exist in the *P&P* world.

Beyond *HEROES* magazine, *P&P* will be supported by a line of Companion products. The first Companions will detail an entire game continent and a major city.