

KNOWLEDGE CHECKS WHAT WE KNOW

WHEN PLAYER CHARACTERS encounter a new monster, one of the first questions is often "What do we know about this creature?"

A monster's stat block contains a lot of information; its description contains even more. Sometimes a player might want to know about the creature's feeding habits, or preferred climate; at other times he might want to know about its resistances or vulnerabilities, special powers, or Achilles Heel. This can all be accomplished using the simple rules found in this article.

The rules here apply to any knowledge check. While they focus on monsters, these rules may be used to learn information about objects, magical items, people, and places.

To use these rules you need two things: the rarity of the subject, and its fame (as indicated by its REP score).



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RARITY & REPUTATION

Some monsters are so common that almost everybody knows something about them. A human, for example, is a very common creature - it would be unusual to find somebody not familiar with the basics about humans.

Other creatures are famous; they have a high REPUTATION score. A fire dragon might be very rare, but everybody knows it breathes fire.

These two factors combine to determine a creature's (or object's) RECOGNITION score. This is the target number a LOG check needs to reach in order to recall information about a subject.

Rarity	RECOGNITION	REP
-	<i>Trivial [-]</i>	66-77 (11d6)
-	<i>Easy [7]</i>	55-65 (10d6)
Common	<i>Routine [10]</i>	45-54 (9d6)
-	<i>Challenging [13]</i>	36-44 (8d6)
Uncommon	<i>Difficult [16]</i>	28-35 (7d6)
-	<i>Demanding [21]</i>	21-27 (6d6)
Rare	<i>Strenuous [25]</i>	15-20 (5d6)
-	<i>Severe [29]</i>	10-14 (4d6)
Very Rare	<i>Herculean [33]</i>	6-9 (3d6)
-	<i>Superhuman [37]</i>	3-5 (2d6)
Unique	<i>Impossible [40]</i>	1-2 (1d6)

Check the subject's rarity and REP score on the table above, and use whichever results in the easier check. A creature can be recognizable because it is famous or because it is common.

SPECIFIC & GENERAL

INFORMATION

An individual NPC might be a member of a common race (making the racial information easy to learn), but that particular person is not famous. For that reason, it is often important to distinguish between specific knowledge about an individual and knowledge about his species. That can mean two different scores.

For example, Augusto the Magnificent is a renowned enchanter of magical items. He is unique (an individual human being) but a member of a common race (human). He also has a REP score of 36.

A *Routine [10]* LOG check will reveal the common information: basic data about humans. To learn about Augusto himself, we look at his rarity (unique) and his REP (36). Of those two factors, his REP makes for an easier check, so his individual RECOGNITION check difficulty is *Challenging [13]*.

WHAT IS LEARNED?

To determine information about a subject, simply make a RECOGNITION check as described above. If successful, you may ask one question about the subject, which the GM will answer. The question must be a short, specific one which the GM can answer in a short sentence. This check is a free action.



The question can be anything. It can be a piece of background information, or even a game statistic. It's fine to ask for game statistics - while your character will not think in those terms, statistics are an excellent abstract way to convey specific, detailed information.

FURTHER INFORMATION

You can continue to ask questions about the subject. However, each time you successfully ask a new question, you must remove 1d6 from your dice pool. A failed check does not require you to remove a die. The larger your dice pool, and the more recognizable the subject, the more questions you will be able to ask.

FINDING A MONSTER'S REP

To determine a creature's REP, take its Maximum Dice Pool and check what the minimum attribute score would be needed to achieve a dice pool of that size. Divide the result by 2 (round down, to a minimum of 1). This gives the creature's REP score.

For example, an attercop has a Maximum Dice Pool of 5d6. 5d6 would normally require an attribute of 15; therefore the attercop's REP is 7 - they're reasonably well known and probably the subject of one or two childrens' tales.

ATTERCOP

Medium semi-sentient uncommon insectoid [poison] (5d6)

Giant spiders which lurk in forest and cave.

STR 4 (2d6) **AGI** 15 (5d6) **END** 6 (3d6)

INT 6 (3d6) **LOG** 2 (1d6) **WIL** 2 (1d6) **CHA** 1 (1d6)

LUC 0 (0d6) **REP** 7 (3d6)

An attercop is uncommon (RECOGNITION 16) with REP 7 (RECOGNITION 33). The attercop's RECOGNITION difficulty is therefore *Difficult* [16].

AUGUSTO THE MAGNIFICENT

Medium sentient unique humanoid (8d6)

Renowned enchanter of magical items.

STR 4 (2d6) **AGI** 6 (3d6) **END** 6 (3d6)

INT 10 (4d6) **LOG** 15 (5d6) **WIL** 10 (4d6) **CHA** 8 (3d6)

LUC 6 (3d6) **REP** 36 (8d6)

Augusto's RECOGNITION difficulty is *Challenging* [13].

OBSCURE CREATURES

Obscure is a monster exploit. Obscure creatures are less well known than their power level or rarity would imply. A creature or NPC with the Obscure exploit uses the *higher* RECOGNITION difficulty given by its REP and rarity rather than the lower. Many undead or demons are considered obscure - they're powerful, but unknown.



EXAMPLE OF PLAY

The PCs are approaching a village called Calrow. They are still a few days away, and are about to camp for the night. The ranger spots some movement in the treeline a short distance away; after investigation, the party finds itself confronted with a 10' tall, club-wielding creature!

Ranger: OK, what is this thing? I make a LOG check, with my *nature* skill. That's 7d6. A roll of 28.

GM: You immediately realise that this creature is a mountain troll.

Ranger: Oh. I've heard bad things about them. Another check... I'm removing one die, so 6d6. 26 this time! Do mountain trolls regenerate?

GM: Yes. They regenerate 2d6 HEALTH each round.

Ranger: That's not good. I bet they have a weakness, though, if only I could remember it. I'm down to 5d6 now. I roll 15.

GM: No, you can't remember just now. However, you don't have to remove a die on a failed check, so you can try again.

Wizard: Let me try. My 7d6 gives me 30.

GM: You recall from an old textbook that mountain trolls will regenerate all damage, but that sunlight turns them to stone.

Wizard. Uh-oh. Dawn is about 8 hours away... run!



EQUIPMENT

The equipment part of a knowledge check will often come in the form of reference materials. In a fantasy setting, that may be an ancient tome; in a modern setting it might be a college textbook; in a future setting it may be a handheld scanner. The reference material offers bonuses to one specific skill - a high quality textbook on robotics gives you +1d6 when trying to identify the model of a sentry droid, but it doesn't help you to identify a species of man-eating octopus.

A standard book costs 5 gc, \$, or cr, with the usual multipliers for higher quality reference materials. There is no improvisation penalty for knowledge checks.

Some locations like libraries are considered "equipment" for a wide range of subjects.

SKILL USES

As with any attribute check, the dice pool for a knowledge check is supplemented with skill dice. Here is a list of suggested skills for fantasy and sci-fi games.

Fantasy. In a fantasy setting, many *[lore]* skills are useful. *Nature* helps with identifying beasts, plants, and animals; *religion* is useful for undead and demons, as is *demonology*. Fey creatures can be identified with *history* or *mythology*.

Future. In a sci-fi setting, *[scientific]* skills come into play. *Zoology*, *xenobiology*, *oceanography*, and *robotics* are very useful.