

## NONCOMBATANT CHARACTERS

*A new approach to handling 0-level normal men, decadent nobles, noncombatant monsters, and more*

ACKS, unlike many other role-playing games, affords non-adventuring characters a means of advancement. Mages can advance through spell research, thieves through hijinks, and all characters through domain rulership. This is, overall, a good thing for world-building and verisimilitude, but it can lead to a possibly unwanted outcome: Namely, that every domain ruler ends up a powerful high-level combatant.

Conversely, for those without domains to rule or spells to research, an opposite, but equally unwanted, dynamic occurs. Each and every non-adventuring and non-ruling character defaults to being a “normal man” (or elf, dwarf, etc.) or “noncombatant”. These “normal men” or “noncombatants” are always unclassed characters with worse attack throws, saving throws, and Hit Dice than their classed or monster equivalents. Class powers that might seem quite applicable to a noncombatant (like those of the bard or venturer) remain closed off no matter how much training, influence, or knowledge the character accumulates.

In short, ACKS does not seem to afford any possibility for a character to be highly important in society without being an elite combatant, nor any way for a character to advance in knowledge and ability without improving in combat. This article seeks to resolve both dilemmas by introducing a unified noncombatant mechanic that can be applied to any creature at any level or HD.

### NONCOMBATANT SUB-TYPE

A noncombatant is a character that is not devoted to adventure, combat, and exploration. Characters of any class or race can be noncombatants. A fighter noncombatant is someone who is ostensibly a soldier, but has never fought in a war or truly risked his life in combat; examples might be an overweight supply officer who never goes on campaign, a raw recruit who has never taken to the field, or an epicurean noble who has been placed in charge of an army due to high birth. A venturer noncombatant is a merchant who does not engage in risky ventures over land and sea, but focuses on counting coins and trading goods at home. A mage noncombatant is a wizard who studies books and conducts magical research, but avoids the stress and suffering of quests and adventures.

The advantage of being a noncombatant is that the character advances in level more quickly. Instead of having to maintain physical fitness, practice with arms and armor, and master adventuring arts, the noncombatant simply focuses on whatever is most likely to advance him. A noncombatant fighter might spend his time attending elite military academies, going to court functions, serving as an aid-de-camp to important nobles, and generally being a “peacetime soldier”. A noncombatant mage might spend his time lecturing parishioners on the need to go out and fight evil, overseeing alms-giving for the poor, and studying theology at the high temple.

Level	XP	Combatant	XP	Noncombatant
1	0	Man-at-Arms	0	Man-about-Town
2	2,000	Warrior	1,200	Courier
3	4,000	Swordmaster	2,400	Swordowner
4	8,000	Hero	4,800	Nero
5	16,000	Exemplar	9,600	Unexemplar
6	32,000	Myrmidon	19,200	Dastard
7	65,000	Champion	35,000	Championet
8	130,000	Epic Hero	70,000	Petty Lord
9	250,000	Warlord	120,000	Lord
10	370,000	Warlord, 10 <sup>th</sup> lvl	190,000	Lord, 10 <sup>th</sup> level
11	490,000	Warlord, 11 <sup>th</sup> lvl	260,000	Lord, 11 <sup>th</sup> level
12	610,000	Warlord, 12 <sup>th</sup> lvl	330,000	Lord, 12 <sup>th</sup> level
13	730,000	Warlord, 13 <sup>th</sup> lvl	400,000	Lord, 13 <sup>th</sup> level
14	850,000	Overlord	470,000	Overweight Lord

The base cost of advancing from 1<sup>st</sup> level to 2<sup>nd</sup> level is decreased by 800 XP, and doubles thereafter through 8<sup>th</sup> level. At 9<sup>th</sup> level and above, the base cost is decreased by 50,000 XP per level thereafter. The Combatant v. Noncombatant XP table above provides an example of the combatant versus noncombatant progression for the fighter class.

However, the penalties of being a noncombatant are high – at least for anyone who hopes to engage in combat! Apply the following as custom powers to any noncombatant of any race or class.

**Indolent:** A noncombatant avoids training in arms. He suffers a -1 penalty to attack throws at 1<sup>st</sup> level of experience. The effects of indolence become worse with time, so the penalty increases to -2 at 3<sup>rd</sup> level, -3 at 5<sup>th</sup> level, -4 at 9<sup>th</sup> level, and -5 at 11<sup>th</sup> level. (This counts as -3 custom powers.)

**Nonaggressive:** A noncombatant has never had to kill or be killed. He suffers a -1 penalty to damage rolls with missile and melee weapons. (This counts as -1 custom power.)

**Uncertain:** A noncombatant lacks the situational awareness and intensity of focus that keeps an adventurer alive. He suffers a -1 penalty to saving throws loss of morale. As the years pass, the noncombatant becomes ever more used to a calm and comfortable life, so the penalty increases to -2 at 3<sup>rd</sup> level, -3 at 5<sup>th</sup> level, -4 at 9<sup>th</sup> level, and -5 at 11<sup>th</sup> level. (This counts as -1 custom power.)

**Sedentary:** A noncombatant’s epicurean lifestyle contributes to the decrepitude of age. The penalties from age are increased, as shown on the table below:

Ability Score Adjustments by Age		
Age Category	Progressive Ability Score Adjustments	Cumulative Ability Score Adjustments
Middle Aged	-2 STR, -2 DEX, -3 CON	-2 STR, -2 DEX, -3 CON
Old	-3 STR, -2 DEX, -2 CON, -2 CHA	-5 STR, -4 DEX, -5 CON, -2 CHA
Ancient	-2 STR, -3 DEX, -2 CON, -4 CHA	-7 STR, -7 DEX, -7 CON, -4 CHA

Sedentary counts as -1 custom power. Even sedentary elves and other ageless characters suffer age penalties, representing “fading” or weariness with life.

**Tender:** A noncombatant has never been hardened by suffering and injury. He begins play with one-half normal hit points (excluding CON bonus). He gains one less hit point each level of experience thereafter. (This counts as -10 custom powers.)

**EXAMPLE:** Let’s compare two 1<sup>st</sup> level characters, Marcus Quintillus (a combatant fighter) and his brother Gaius Quintillus (a noncombatant fighter). To keep things even-handed, both brothers will have identical ability scores - Str 11, Int 10, Wis 9, Dex 11, Con 11, Cha 10 – and both will roll maximum hit points at 1<sup>st</sup> level.

Based on the above, the combatant Marcus Quintillus has 8 hit points, a base attack throw of 10+, and deals 1d6+1 points of damage. He saves as a 1<sup>st</sup> level fighter. Meanwhile, his indolent brother Gaius Quintillus has 4 hit points, a base attack throw of 11+, and deals 1d6 points of damage. He saves as a 1<sup>st</sup> level fighter with a -1 penalty, which is to say, as a normal man.

The noncombatant Gaius Quintillus, in other words, has the characteristics of a 0-level mercenary (from *Domains at War*), while the combatant Marcus Quintillus has the characteristics of a 1<sup>st</sup> level veteran mercenary. Put another way, the difference between being a 1<sup>st</sup> level fighter noncombatant and combatant is the difference between being a normal man and a veteran.

Now, let's advance both brothers to age 50 (middle aged) and 11<sup>th</sup> level. Marcus has been an adventurer and warrior, while Gaius has advanced through politics, ruling the estates of others. Assume that both brothers have rolled average for hit points (4 points on even levels, 5 points on odd levels).

Marcus Quintillus now has Str 9, Int 10, Wis 9, Dex 9, Con 9, Cha 10. He now has (8 + 4 + 5 + 4 + 5 + 4 + 5 + 4 + 5 + 2 + 2) 48 hp. His base attack throw is 3+ and he deals 1d6+4 points of damage. He saves as an 11<sup>th</sup> level fighter.

Gaius Quintillus now has Str 9, Int 10, Wis 9, Dex 9, Con 8, Cha 10. The low Con will impose a -1 penalty on hp for 1<sup>st</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup> level. In addition, he will gain 1 less hp for each level after 1<sup>st</sup>. Therefore he has (3 + 2 + 3 + 2 + 3 + 2 + 3 + 2 + 3 + 1 + 1) 25 hp. His attack throw is 8+ (the same as a 4<sup>th</sup> level fighter) and he deals 1d6+3 points of damage. He saves as an 11<sup>th</sup> level fighter, but with a -5 penalty, again about the same as a 4<sup>th</sup> level fighter.

### BECOMING A COMBATANT

From time to time, a noncombatant may become a combatant. This may occur almost accidentally, as when a person is thrown into difficult circumstances and survives; or deliberately, if a character is roused by some motivation to abandon their redolent lifestyle and get good.

A 1<sup>st</sup> level noncombatant can become a combatant simply by accumulating, then expending, 100 XP from adventuring (including war). These XP do not count towards his advancement to 2<sup>nd</sup> level, and are expended simply to remove the noncombatant sub-type from the character's class.

With age and advancement, a noncombatant becomes increasingly set in his ways, and it becomes increasingly difficult for a noncombatant to become a combatant. The Cumulative Noncombatant Penalty Removal table shows the number of XP that must be accumulated and expended at each level to overcome that level's noncombatant penalties. Each level's penalty must be bought off in order, cumulatively.

EXAMPLE: For 1<sup>st</sup> level Quintillus to become a combatant he would just have to 100 XP from adventuring. But for 11<sup>th</sup> level Gaius Quintillus to become a combatant is far more challenging, for he is far removed from his energetic youth. He has incurred a total penalty of -14 to hp, -5 to attack throws, -5 to saving throws, -1 to damage, and -1 to CON. After accumulating and expending 100 XP, these penalties would be reduced to -10 hp, -4 attack throws, and -4 saving throws. After accumulating and expending 1,700 XP from adventuring total, the penalties would be -8 hp, -3 attack throws and -3 saving throws, and so on.

Level	XP	Cumulative Noncombatant Penalty Removal
1	100	+1 attack throws, damage rolls, saving throws; +1/2 HD of hp; aging penalty removed
2	+800	+1 hp
3	+800	+1 attack throws and saving throws; +1 hp
4	+1,600	+1 hp
5	+3,200	+1 attack throws and saving throws; +1 hp
6	+6,400	+1 hp
7	+12,800	+1 hp
8	+64,000	+1 hp
9	+50,000	+1 attack throws and saving throws; +1 hp
10	+50,000	+1 hp
11	+50,000	+1 attack throws and saving throws; +1 hp
12	+50,000	+1 hp
13	+50,000	+1 hp
14	+50,000	+1 hp

Once a noncombatant decides to begin adventuring to become a combatant, he can no longer accumulate XP in his character class until he has removed all of his noncombatant penalties. He may abandon his efforts to become a combatant at any time, but doing so causes him to revert back to his noncombatant status, with penalties returning at a rate of 1 point per week. (As every athlete knows, its easier to decondition than to re-condition!)

## NONCOMBATANT MONSTERS

The following section provides the noncombatant characteristics of various human, demi-human, and humanoid creatures in *ACKS*. In calculating HD, we subtracted 0.5 for the first HD and 0.25 for each HD thereafter, then converted back into standard notion (+1 = 0.25 HD). Attack throws and saving throws are calculated by base (combatant HD), then modified by the penalties noted above.

- **Bugbear:** AC 3, MV 90', HD 2+1, #AT 1 (weapon) 9+, Dmg 1d6 or weapon, Save F1, ML +1, AL C
- **Dwarf:** AC 0, MV 120', HD ½ HD, #AT 1 (weapon) 11+, Dmg 1d6 or weapon, Save D1 -1, ML -1, AL L
- **Elf:** AC 0, MV 120', HD 1-1, #AT 1 (weapon) 10+, Dmg 1d6 or weapon, Save E1 -1, ML -1, AL N
- **Gnoll:** AC 1, MV 90', HD 1+1, HD, #AT 1 (weapon) 10+, Dmg 1d6 or weapon, Save F1, ML -1, AL C
- **Gnome:** AC 0, MV 120', HD ½, #AT 1 (weapon) 11+, Dmg 1d4 or weapon -1, Save D1 -1, ML -1, AL N
- **Goblin:** AC 0, MV 60', HD ½ -1, #AT 1 (weapon) 11+, Dmg 1d4 or weapon -1, Save NM -1, ML -2, AL C
- **Halfling:** AC 0, MV 90', HD ½-1, #AT 1 (weapon) 11+, Dmg 1d4 or weapon -1, Save E1 -1, ML -2, AL L
- **Hobgoblin:** AC 0, MV 90', HD 1-1, #AT 1 (weapon) 10+, Dmg 1d6 or weapon, Save NM, ML -1, AL C
- **Kobold:** AC 0, MV 60', HD 1d2 hit points, #AT 1 (weapon) 11+, Dmg 1d2 or weapon -2, Save NM -1, ML -3, AL C.
- **Lizardman:** AC 3, MV 60', HD 1+2, #AT 3 or 1 (claws/bite or wpn) 10+, Dmg 1d2/1d2/1d6 or wpn, Save F1, ML +1, AL C
- **Man:** AC 0, MV 120', HD ½, #AT 1 (weapon) 11+, Dmg 1d6 or weapon, Save NM, ML -1, AL N
- **Ogre:** AC 3, MV 90', HD 3, #AT 1 (weapon) 8+, Dmg 1d8 or weapon +2, Save F1, ML +1, AL C
- **Orc:** AC 0, MV 120', HD ½, #AT 1 (weapon) 11+, Dmg 1d4 or weapon -1, Save NM, ML -1, AL C

These characteristics stack up well compared to those noted in *ACKS*. For instance, in *ACKS* gnoll noncombatants "fight as orcs"; here they have nearly identical characteristics to orcs, save for one additional AC point and hp. In *ACKS* hobgoblin noncombatants "fight as goblins", and here they are identical to goblins save in movement speed. Lizardman noncombatants "fight as gnolls"; the creatures here are approximately of that strength but there are substantial characteristic differences. Ogre noncombatants "fight as bugbears", and these rules yield 3 HD monsters of about bugbear strength. Bugbear noncombatants "fight as hobgoblins" in *ACKS*; here they have more HD (2+1 instead of 1+1) but deal less damage.

The only real losers are, perhaps, orcs, whose noncombatants "fight as goblins" in *ACKS* but are more akin to kobolds using these rules. As for the goblins and kobolds themselves, their noncombatants "do not fight" in *ACKS*, so we have no characteristics to compare to! However a creature that has 1d2 hp and -3 ML and deals weapon damage -2 is about as close to "do not fight" as can be modeled with any mechanics so we hope this will suffice.